

Anti-Kremlin Russians Call Armed Incursion a 'Success'

By [Anna Malpas for AFP](#)

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Belgorod Region Governor Press Office/TASS

Russian nationals fighting on Ukraine's side on Wednesday hailed as a "success" a brazen mission to send groups of volunteers across the border into southern Russia and back.

Russia on Tuesday said it deployed jets and artillery to fight off armed attackers who crossed into the southern region of Belgorod from Ukraine, exposing weaknesses on Moscow's frontier.

In northern Ukraine not far from the Russian border, the founder of the Russian Volunteer Corps, Denis Kapustin, known as "White Rex", told journalists: "Any crossing of the Russian state border and successful return you can definitely call a success.

"The operation is ongoing," the bearded Moscow-born fighter added in British-accented English.

"It definitely has various phases so phase one we considered a successful phase.

"Every operation that takes place on the territory of Russia forces the military leadership to move a large amount of forces precisely to that quadrant, therefore laying bare some parts of the front, parts of the border," he said.

'Amazing'

He was flanked by around 30 fighters in camouflage from his Volunteer Corps and allied group, the Freedom of Russia Legion, most concealing their faces with scarves, at a presentation for media offering the chance to question the shadowy groups.

The two anti-Kremlin groups claimed responsibility for the attack on the region of Belgorod. Russian authorities said one man was killed and a dozen received injuries.

A deputy commander for the Freedom of Russia Legion, who gave his call sign as Caesar, also hailed the operation as "amazing".

They posed for international media at a military shooting ground in front of an armoured personnel carrier they said was a trophy from the incursion, which they insisted did not require assistance and equipment from Ukraine's military.

The Russian nationals' headline-grabbing stunt embarrassed the Kremlin but also raised questions about possible escalation of the war beyond Ukraine's borders, involvement of far-right Russian nationalists and how this would affect Western allies' readiness to supply Ukraine with weapons.

The fighters said they spent almost 24 hours in Russia, returning in the early hours of Wednesday.

Moscow said Russian forces killed more than 70 fighters, but the groups denied Russia's claims of mass casualties.

Kapustin said two of his fighters were lightly wounded.

'Fighting our war'

Moscow's response showed that "Russia's military and political leadership is absolutely not ready for such things", he said.

Kapustin was previously founder of a neo-Nazi clothing brand also called White Rex and has been linked to football hooligans. Some of his fighters have openly espoused neo-Nazi views.

He described its members as "right-conservative, traditionalists, right-wing".

Asked if Western leaders would approve their move to extend the war into Russia, he shrugged:

"Up to you guys, I don't know. We are fighting our war, you might be fighting yours."

He painted the mission as a fight against "injustice" and "torture" under President Vladimir

Putin, spurring other Russians to act.

"I want to prove to them [Russians] that you can fight against tyrants and that Putin's power is not boundless."

Ukraine "did encourage us" but did not provide weapons or equipment or instructions for this mission, Kapustin said, after footage showed vehicles identified by The New York Times as American.

Caesar said that his group had bought humvees "in international shops, in war shops", using donations.

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