

Russia Opens Memorial to Unacknowledged Boat Attack Victims – Reports

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Dmitry Shkrebet / VK

Military authorities in Moscow-annexed Crimea have opened a monument to Russian sailors who perished in a boat attack in Ukrainian waters, but whose deaths were never officially acknowledged, according to crew members and family who [spoke](#) to investigative news outlet Agentstvo.

Ukrainian forces [claimed](#) to have sunk the Russian tugboat Vasily Bekh in June 2022 as it transported supplies to Snake Island, a remote but strategic island off the coast of Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry has never commented on the ship's alleged sinking or the loss of its crew. A Russian court in April however [launched](#) a criminal case against Ukrainian navy admiral Oleksiy Neizhpapa on charges of attacking three Russian vessels, including the Vasily Bekh.

Dmitry Shkrebets, the [father](#) of a 20-year-old conscript killed in the sinking of the Moskva battleship, told Agentstvo that a monument dedicated to those who lost their lives in the Vasily Bekh attack was recently unveiled at a naval facility in Sevastopol.

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Shkrebets said that family members had their phones confiscated at the monument's opening ceremony and they were not allowed to take photos.

Nonetheless, Shkrebets obtained a photo of the monument prior to its unveiling.

He told Agentstvo that a total of 19 civilians and 14 military crew members were onboard the Vasily Bekh at the time of the attack, resulting in the deaths of seven civilians and four sailors.

The surviving crew members and their families said they had been pressing Russian authorities to acknowledge that the Vasily Bekh had been sent into the zone of what the Kremlin calls its “special military operation.”

Russian naval officials say the tugboat had not been under its command when it entered the war zone, Agentsvo reported.

According to one of the surviving crew members, the victims' families continue to face difficulties in receiving state compensation for their lost loved ones, as a presidential decree on social guarantees for civilian personnel of the Russian Defense Ministry has not been issued.

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