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Russian Man Who Faked Death to Avoid Ukraine War Handed 5-Year Sentence

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Russian Defense Ministry

A man in Siberia who bought a fake death certificate to avoid military service in Ukraine has been sentenced to five years in a penal colony, the local news outlet Sibir.Realii reported Friday, citing public court records.

Zorigto Arabzhaev, from the republic of Buryatia, was mobilized to fight in Ukraine in November 2022 as part of the Kremlin's "partial" mobilization.

After four months of military service, Arabzhaev was allowed to take family leave but failed to return to his outpost on time.

When military police came to Arabzhaev's home, his son presented them with a forged death certificate issued in his father's name.

Authorities detected the forgery and arrested Arabzhaev in May.

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The Ulan-Ude Military Garrison Court in Buryatia found Arabzhaev guilty of deserting a military outpost at a time of mobilization and sentenced him to five years in a high-security penal colony.

Charges of desertion are punishable by a maximum of 15 years in prison.

Arabzhaev claimed in court that he chose to evade military service because of his wife's unstable mental state.

According to court records, Arabzhaev was mobilized shortly after the death of his eldest son and his wife threatened suicide if he returned to the frontlines.

The court concluded however that Arabzhaev made no attempts to seek professional help for his wife or otherwise "[improve] the situation" in his family.

Residents of Russia's poorest regions including Buryatia have been disproportionately sent to fight in Ukraine.

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