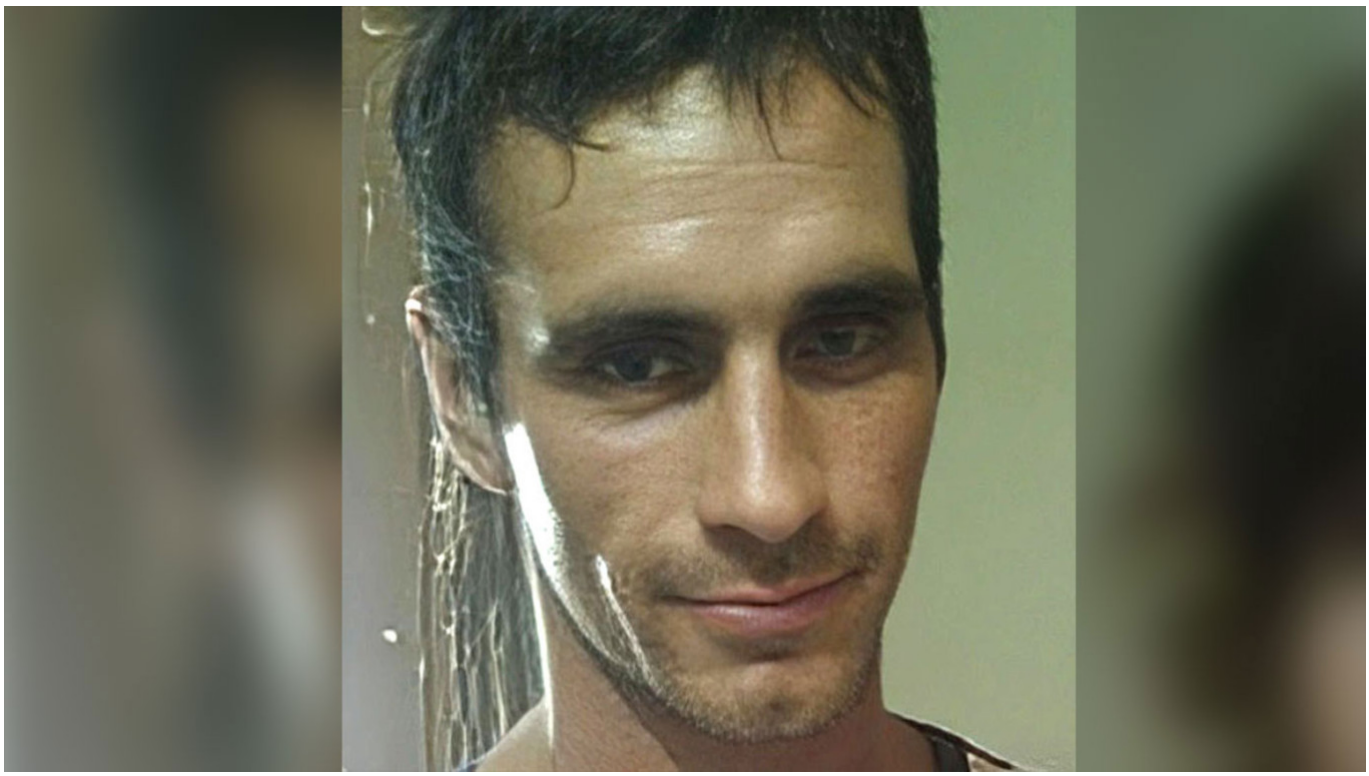
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Pardoned Russian Killer Slain Fighting in Ukraine – Mediazona

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Denis Zubov. **Denis Zubov / Ok.ru**

A Russian serial killer pardoned by President Vladimir Putin in exchange for fighting in Ukraine was killed on the front lines, the independent Mediazona news website reported Thursday.

Denis Zubov, 41, from the southern Russian city of Volgograd, was sentenced to 21 years in a maximum-security colony in 2017 for the murders of three people. According to Russian media, Zubov cut off his victims' body parts in an attempt to portray the killings as the work of a serial killer and confuse investigators.

Zubov was sent to Ukraine after being recruited from prison and killed in April 2023, Mediazona said. According to journalists, he was pardoned by a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin.

"Judging by the date on the tombstone — April 20, 2023 — he could have been killed near Bakhmut, like most of the prisoners recruited by the Wagner private military company,"

Mediazona said.

Russia launched a prisoner recruitment campaign in the summer of 2022, spearheaded by the Wagner mercenary group, to replenish its military presence in Ukraine. In exchange for military service in Ukraine, prisoners are promised to be pardoned and their criminal records expunged.

Related article: Murders, Drugs and Brawls: Russia's Pardoned Ex-Convicts Return Home After Fighting in Ukraine

Last year, Russian media reported several cases of convicts who committed serious crimes being released after fighting at the frontline.

Nikolai Ogolobyak, who was sentenced to 20 years for the ritualistic murder of a group of teenagers in 2008, was freed seven years early in November 2023 after serving with the Russian army for six months in Ukraine.

Murderer and cannibal Denis Gorin, 44, from the Sakhalin region, was sent to Ukraine from prison, where he was sentenced to 22 years in a special-regime prison colony for a 2018 murder. Russian media reported in November that Gorin was recovering at a hospital in the Far East.

And in the Primorye region, Maxim Volkovoy, a convicted murderer who was released seven years early after fighting in Ukraine, was sentenced to seven years in prison for killing a drinking companion who reportedly criticized the Kremlin's military campaign in Ukraine, the Ostorozhno Novosti news channel reported Friday.

The Kremlin has acknowledged the use of prisoner recruits to fight in the conflict but said convicts could "atone for their crime on the battlefield with blood."

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