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Russian Police Probe Mass Street Brawl, Shootout in Chelyabinsk

May 27, 2024



Social media

Russian law enforcement authorities have launched a criminal investigation into a mass street brawl and shootout in the city of Chelyabinsk over the weekend that reportedly involved Ukraine war veterans.

In a video of the fight published by local media, a group of men could be seen beating a man lying face down on the ground with a blunt object. Some of the men wore masks and camouflage.

A few moments later, a separate group of black-clad men arrived in two cars and began opening fire on the first group of men, who then fled the area.

Law enforcement officials later said "all those participating" in what it called a "situational conflict" were arrested after the fight broke out on Saturday afternoon. It was not clear how many people were taken into police custody.

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News channels on the Telegram messaging app that are believed to have links to Russian security services claimed only three men, including one minor, had been arrested.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, announced late Sunday that the brawl and shootout was being investigated as a criminal "hooliganism" case.

"Those involved in the conflict opened fire with traumatic [non-lethal] weapons at their opponents on the basis of personal hostility," the law enforcement body said without specifying the cause of the dispute.

Conflicting reports suggested that the street fight may have erupted due to a relationship triangle between a woman, an army soldier and a Wagner mercenary group veteran.

However, according to one local media report, the fight broke out after a Wagner fighter and his girlfriend were allegedly attacked by an unknown group of men.

It was not immediately possible to independently verify the report, which claimed that all those arrested over the weekend were members of Wagner.

The Wagner mercenary outfit played a key role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine before its short-lived mutiny and the death of its founder Yevgeny Prigozhin last summer.

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