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Russia Opens Criminal Probe Into Italian Journalists Who Entered Kursk

By AFP

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Sudzha **AP/TASS**

Russia opened a criminal probe on Saturday into two Italian journalists who reported on Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk region, accusing them of crossing the border illegally.

Italian public broadcaster RAI aired a report on Wednesday showing the journalists driving into the region accompanied by Ukrainian military.

Kyiv has been carrying out a major cross-border ground assault in the Kursk region since August 6.

Russia's FSB security service said it had launched a case against "foreign journalists Simone Traini and Stefania Battistini, who illegally crossed the State Border of the Russian Federation", according to the RIA news agency.

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It said the journalists had "carried out video shooting in the territory of the settlement of Sudzha", a town in the region that Ukraine's forces claim to control.

The Italian reporters were shown driving in an armored vehicle past Russian road signs before arriving in Sudzha, around 10 kilometers (six miles) from the border, where a journalist spoke to local people.

Russia summoned Italy's ambassador to Moscow, Cecilia Piccioni, to protest the report on Friday.

Piccioni explained during the meeting that RAI, "and in particular the editorial teams, plan their activities in a totally free and independent way", an Italian foreign ministry spokesman told AFP.

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