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Ukrainian Soldier Jailed 20 Years in Russia After Crimea Operation

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Oleksandr Lyubas. **Video grab**

A military court in southern Russia sentenced a Ukrainian special forces soldier to 20 years in prison after he was captured during a mission in annexed Crimea, federal prosecutors said Tuesday.

Oleksandr Lyubas was captured in October during an amphibious operation in which Ukrainian military intelligence soldiers reportedly arrived in Crimea on jet skis, unfurled a Ukrainian flag and declared that "Crimea will be Ukrainian."

Russian state media reported that Lyubas was apprehended after falling into the water from a jet ski.

The Southern Military District Court in Rostov-on-Don convicted Lyubas of terrorism, arms smuggling and illegally crossing the Russian border. He was sentenced to 20 years in a maximum-security prison.

Lyubas denied the charges, saying in court that he should be treated as a prisoner of war.

“I’m a simple soldier and should be considered a prisoner of war under international law,” the Memorial human rights group quoted him as saying.

Kyiv has repeatedly vowed to take back Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014.

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