

Zelensky Announces 49 Ukrainian POWs Returned to Kyiv

By [AFP](#)

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t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced Friday that 49 Ukrainian POWs had been returned from Russia, with AFP witnessing the group being greeted at the border with Belarus.

Zelensky did not clarify whether it was part of an exchange with Russia, as is usually the case, but AFP journalists had earlier seen Russian prisoners of war being loaded onto a bus near the border.

It would be the second exchange between the warring countries since Kyiv's surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

Zelensky said civilians were also among the returnees, including a "girl who was taken hostage when she came to take care of her sick father."

Embed:

Задержанную в РФ по обвинению в шпионаже украинку Ление Умерову освободили в рамках обмена пленными

Президент Зеленский сообщил о крупном обмене пленными между Россией и Украиной. В этот раз в обмене участвовали не только военнослужащие, но и гражданские лица:

«49 украинцев и... pic.twitter.com/TCphJ7O3ip

— SOTA (@Sota_Vision) [September 13, 2024](#)

He said the exchange also included fighters from Mariupol's 2022 Azovstal battle, as well as soldiers, border guards and police officers.

AFP spoke to two women in their 20s wrapped in Ukrainian flags and receiving flowers, who said they were at the Azovstal plant that fell to Russia after a siege in 2022.

"I'm finally home, I can't believe it," said 28-year-old Tamara Miroshnikova, commander of an armed vehicle of Ukraine's National Guard, said.

Another woman, 29-year-old Tetiana Bugay, said she was a medic at the Azov brigade that fought for Azovstal.

Earlier, AFP saw the Ukrainian military driving Russian POWs in a bus, some were wearing hoods hiding their faces, which were removed as they were loaded into a minivan.

AFP spoke to some of them briefly, and all those who spoke said they were taken captive during Ukraine's surprise Kursk offensive last month.

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