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‘Russians at War’ Film To Be Screened in Toronto Despite ‘Threats’

By AFP

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A still from "Russians at War." **TIFF**

The controversial documentary "Russians at War" will be shown in Toronto on Tuesday, after the city's film festival organizers initially decided to halt screenings due to "significant threats" over their decision to feature the film.

"Russians at War," directed by Anastasia Trofimova, was first presented at the 81st Venice Film Festival. Trofimova, who studied in Canada, previously worked at the Kremlin-funded RT news network and then with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The documentary sparked outrage in Ukrainian cultural and political circles over what critics consider to be a pro-Kremlin film that seeks to whitewash and justify Moscow's full-scale invasion.

The Toronto International Film Festival, which ended on Sunday, announced last week it was

pulling the film due to threats — calling the decision an "unprecedented move." However, it is now set to have two screenings at the TIFF Lightbox cultural center in Toronto, the festival said.

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Yulia Kovaliv, Ukraine's ambassador to Canada, condemned the festival for reinstating the screenings, saying its "persistence to serve as a platform to share Russian propaganda is beyond imaginable."

Canadian public broadcaster TVO, which helped fund the documentary, pulled its support for the film and said it would not be airing it. Likewise, Ukraine's state film agency had appealed to TIFF to drop the film, which it said was "a dangerous tool for public opinion manipulation."

Trofimova has rejected criticisms of her documentary, telling AFP that it was "an anti-war film" showing "ordinary guys" who were fighting on the side of Russia.

Throughout the film, soldiers appear to have little idea of why they have been sent to the front line and are shown struggling to make Soviet-era weapons serviceable. Others chain-smoke cigarettes and down shots of alcohol amid the deaths and wounds of their comrades.

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