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Russian Soldiers Charged With Killing U.S. Man Who Fought for Moscow in Eastern Ukraine

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Russell Bentley. **Russell Bentley / VK**

Four Russian soldiers have been arrested and charged with torturing and murdering Russell Bentley, a U.S. citizen who had fought alongside pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine, Russian investigators said Friday.

Bentley, a 64-year-old self-described communist from Dallas, Texas, joined pro-Russia separatists in 2014 to fight against Ukrainian forces. He went missing in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in April and was later found dead.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, identified the suspects as Russian Armed Forces servicemen Vitaly Vansyatsky, Vladislav Agaltsev, Vladimir Bazhin and Andrei Iordanov.

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According to investigators, three of the men tortured Bentley on April 8, leading to his death. Vansyatsky and Agaltsev then allegedly blew up a car with Bentley's body inside and ordered Bazhin to conceal the remains.

The men face charges including abuse of power resulting in death, as well as desecration and concealment of a body.

The motive behind Bentley's murder has not been disclosed, but his allies have speculated that he may have been mistaken for a spy. Bentley's wife, Lyudmila, previously claimed that Russian soldiers from a tank battalion abducted him.

Bentley, nicknamed "Texas" by his fellow servicemen, fought for the Donetsk-based Vostok battalion between 2014 and 2017 and became a Russian citizen in 2021.

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