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Russia, Ukraine Swap 190 POWs - Ministry

By AFP

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Ukrainian soldiers freed in the swap **Telegram/@V_Zelenskiy_official**

Russia said Friday that it had swapped 95 Ukrainian soldiers held captive for an equal number of Russian troops in an exchange deal brokered by the United Arab Emirates.

"As a result of the negotiation process, 95 Russian servicemen were returned from territory controlled by the Kyiv regime," Russia's Defense Ministry said.

"In return, 95 Ukrainian army prisoners of war were handed over," it said.

Embed:

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also confirmed the exchange, adding that soldiers who surrendered to Russian forces at the Azovstal steel plant were among the returned.

Ukrainian human rights center Zmina said prominent rights activist Maksym Butkevych was freed in the swap, citing his father.

Butkevych, a co-founder of the independent Hromadske radio station and also a Ukraine serviceman, was serving a 13-year sentence on charges of wounding two civilians while firing an anti-tank grenade launcher in the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk.

He joined the Ukrainian army in March 2022, was detained in June and convicted of war crimes by a court in Luhansk in occupied eastern Ukraine in March 2023.

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Despite ongoing hostilities, Russia and Ukraine have swapped hundreds of prisoners since the launch of Moscow's offensive in 2022, often in deals brokered by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia or Turkey.

The last reported swap was in September, when 206 POWs were exchanged, in a deal also mediated by the UAE.

Earlier Friday, Kyiv said it had received the bodies of 501 soldiers killed fighting Russian forces, mainly in eastern Ukraine, as a result of repatriation measures.

Russian lawmaker Shamsayil Saraliyev told the RBK media outlet that Russia received 89 bodies of its soldiers in return.

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