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Chechnya's Kadyrov Nearly Triples Loyal Military Units During Ukraine War – Proekt

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Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechnya. **Yelena Afonina / TASS**

The number of military units loyal to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has more than doubled during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the independent investigative outlet Proekt reported Wednesday.

Before 2022, Kadyrov had seven battalions, regiments, police and rapid response units under the formal command of Russia's National Guard and the Interior Ministry. These military and paramilitary units are known colloquially as "the Kadyrovtsy."

Since then, Kadyrov has created 10 additional units, eight of which are under the formal command of Russia's defense ministry and the other two under the National Guard.

Separately, Proekt noted that Kadyrov also gained control of two other National Guard regiments by appointing commanders loyal to him at the height of the Ukraine war.

It is not publicly known how many soldiers are in these units.

Kadyrov, who describes himself as a loyal foot soldier of Russian President Vladimir Putin, said in October that Chechnya had 70,000 fully equipped and armed soldiers.

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Earlier in August, Kadyrov claimed to have deployed 47,000 fighters to Ukraine, including 19,000 volunteers recruited from other Russian regions.

"The key caveat is that Kadyrov's loyal units are kept in [the Chechen capital of] Grozny, while the new recruits are dying on the frontlines [in Ukraine]," wrote Proekt.

Kadyrov's soldiers have faced criticism for filming staged combat videos in Ukraine and abandoning their positions when Ukrainian troops captured parts of southwestern Russia's Kursk region in August.

Kadyrov has ruled Chechnya, a region in Russia's North Caucasus that was devastated by two bloody wars between Moscow and separatist forces in the 1990s and early 2000s, with an iron fist since Putin formally appointed him in 2007.

Critics have accused Kadyrov of grave human rights abuses, including systemic torture and extrajudicial killings.

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