

Soldier Awarded 'Hero of Russia' Title After Viral Close Combat Video

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Head of the republic of Sakha (Yakutia) Aisen Nikolayev and Private Andrei Grigoriev. [aisen_nikolaev / Telegram](#)

A private from Russia's Far East republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has been awarded the title of Hero of Russia after fatally stabbing a Ukrainian soldier in hand-to-hand combat in a widely circulated video, according to a decree [published](#) by the Kremlin on Saturday.

Andrei Grigoriev, 38, was awarded the title for "demonstrating courage and heroism," the Kremlin said.

In the graphic video, recorded on a camera attached to a Ukrainian soldier's helmet in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region last year, Grigoriev can be seen stabbing the soldier with a traditional Yakutian knife multiple times until the victim pleads to allow him to die in peace.

"I want to go on my own...You were the strongest fighter in this world. Farewell," the Ukrainian soldier told Grigoriev before his death.

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Yakutia's pro-war and pro-Kremlin bloggers were quick to hail Grigoriev for his heroism, spreading false claims that Grigoriev singlehandedly destroyed an entire squad of Ukrainian soldiers, according to the republic's largest anti-war and Indigenous rights group the Free Yakutia Foundation.

At the same time, the Free Yakutia Foundation said the video has prompted shock and condemnation from even some of Sakha's most "patriotic" residents.

"The situation sparked widespread debates about the morality of what was happening, as well as about the involvement of Russia's ethnic minorities in military actions of such scale in a foreign country," the foundation said in a post [published](#) last week.

The rights group also released an audio message that Grigoriev allegedly sent to his fellow soldiers in which he says he was not aware that the Ukrainian soldier had a camera on him.

"I couldn't watch the video myself...It makes me feel sick when I try to remember what happened," Grigoriev can be heard saying. "I am scared mothers will see this video, I don't want it to be shared further. Please don't republish it in your [WhatsApp] stories, guys."

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