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Belgorod Territorial Defense Forces Accuse Police of Harassment, Call on Governor for Help

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Screen grab from Vyacheslav Gladkov VK

Members of a territorial defense unit in Russia's southwestern Belgorod region accused law enforcement authorities of arbitrary arrests and searches, the regional news outlet 7x7 reported Friday.

In a video address to Belgorod region Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov published on Thursday, uniformed members of the Opolcheniye 31 unit voiced concerns about police harassment.

"We face danger when performing our duties and did not expect our own security forces to endanger us," a female member of the unit said in the video.

According to another member, police searches and interrogations were undermining the volunteer group's ability to do their work.

"We carry out our duty in good faith, but someone has been lying and slandering us,

discrediting the honor and dignity of our members," he said.

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The unit also claimed that law enforcement officials broke the arm of a 20-year-old female member during her arrest.

It was not immediately clear what prompted the arrests and police inspections, and 7x7 said it was not known whether Opolcheniye 31's leader, Vadim Tarasenko, was under formal investigation.

Created in the fall of 2022, Opolcheniye 31 patrols streets during cross-border shelling, helps evacuate civilians and delivers humanitarian aid.

Governor Gladkov and Belgorod city Mayor Valentin Demidov both promised later on Friday to meet with the unit and "look into" their concerns.

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