The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

The Pro-War Russians and Ukrainian Defectors Killed Amid Moscow's Invasion

April 25, 2025



Aftermath of the bomb attack that killed General Igor Kirillov. **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, both sides' special services have been waging war on each other.

Ukraine has managed to assassinate several Russian officials, including high-ranking generals, pro-war bloggers, occupying officials and others.

Here, The Moscow Times takes a look at a few of them:

Yaroslav Moskalik

Lieutenant General Yaroslav Moskalik served as the deputy chief of the Russian General Staff's Main Operational Directorate, which is responsible for planning military operations and overseeing combat readiness.

On Friday, April 25, 2025, Moskalik was killed in a car explosion in the Moscow suburb of Balashikha.

“According to preliminary information, the blast killed Lieutenant General Yaroslav Moskalik,” a spokeswoman for Russia’s Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said in a statement.

“Early reports indicate the explosion was caused by an improvised explosive device packed with shrapnel,” the law enforcement agency said, adding that detectives and forensic experts were examining the scene of the blast.

Police said they launched a murder investigation, as well as a probe into the illegal trafficking of explosives.

Igor Kirillov

Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov headed the Russian military’s radiological, chemical and biological defense forces from 2017 until his death in December 2024.

Kirillov and his assistant were killed on Dec. 17 2024, when an explosive device attached to a scooter went off as the two men left a building in a residential area in southeastern Moscow early in the morning, investigators said.

Ukraine’s security services claimed responsibility for the targeted killing. A source in Ukraine’s SBU security service said that Kirillov “was a war criminal and a perfectly legitimate target,” and that “such a disgraceful end awaits all those who kill Ukrainians.”

He was killed a day after Ukraine charged him in absentia on allegations of committing “war crimes” against Ukraine.

Moscow has denied deploying chemical weapons in Ukraine.

Daria Dugina

Daria Dugina, the 29-year-old daughter of Russian ideologue Alexander Dugin, was killed in August 2022 when an explosive device detonated on the Toyota Land Cruiser she was driving.

Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) pointed the finger at Ukraine and said the person responsible was a Ukrainian woman born in 1979 who had rented an apartment in the same building where Dugina lived. Kyiv neither confirmed nor denied a role in the car bombing.

Dugin is an outspoken Russian ultranationalist intellectual who enthusiastically backs Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as did his daughter. Russian media reports suggested Dugina had borrowed her father's car at the last minute.

Vladlen Tatarsky

Russian military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky died when a statue handed to him as a gift exploded in a St. Petersburg cafe where he was giving a speech in April 2023.

Tatarsky, whose real name was Maxim Fomin, was an enthusiastic supporter of the invasion

of Ukraine but was also critical of the Russian military.

Daria Trepova, 27, who gave Tatarsky the golden figurine of himself, was found guilty of terrorism and other charges over the attack and sentenced to 27 years in a penal colony. It is the longest prison sentence Russia has handed to a woman since the Soviet collapse, according to state media and rights groups.

Russian investigators claimed Trepova acted on the instructions of individuals located in Ukraine. Trepova denied purposefully killing Tatarsky.

Alexei Kovalev

Kovalev, a former Ukrainian deputy who switched allegiance to Russian occupying forces in the southern region of Kherson, was shot dead in August 2022.

Kovalev was elected a deputy in 2019 in Kherson and joined President Volodymyr Zelensky's party in the Ukrainian parliament.

After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kovalev joined the invading forces and became a senior official.

Some media suggested he might have been killed for working with Russia.

Vitaly Gura

Vitaly Gura, a member of Russia's occupying administration in Ukraine's Kherson region died in an assassination attempt in August 2022.

Unknown assailants opened fire on Gura near his home in the occupied city of Nova Kakhovka.

Gura was taken to the hospital with multiple gunshot wounds and died during a transfer to another hospital in the occupied Crimean peninsula.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/04/25/the-pro-war-russians-and-ukrainian-defectors-killed-amid-moscows-invasion-a87373