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Police Arrest Ex-Convicts After They Flee Military Base in Rostov Region

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A Russian military training ground. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

Russian law enforcement authorities arrested two of 10 former prison inmates who deserted from a military training ground in the southern Rostov region, the local media reported, citing anonymous military investigation sources.

Four of the deserters were initially caught soon after they fled on May 9, the day Russia held celebrations marking the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

The two latest detainees were reportedly captured near the border with eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which Russia claims to have annexed in September 2022. Both regions border Russia's Rostov region.

"The arrests were carried out successfully despite the fugitives' resistance," the news outlet 161.ru quoted one source as saying.

All 10 men were reportedly unarmed at the time of their escape.

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The deserters were said to have been serving prison sentences for crimes including murder, rape and drug trafficking before being recruited into the Russian military. They had signed contracts and were undergoing training ahead of deployment to Ukraine, according to 161.ru.

Four of the deserters remain at large. A manhunt is underway in the Rostov region and parts of occupied Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Ministry has not commented on the reported desertions.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian authorities have issued arrest warrants for at least 49,000 soldiers suspected of desertion, according to the exiled news outlet IStories. Nearly 300 were later reported dead, captured or missing.

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