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Russian Servicemen Awarded $190K Bounty for Destroying F-16 Jets in Ukraine

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U.S. Air Force

A Russian company awarded a dozen servicemen a total of 15 million rubles ($190,000) for destroying U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets in Ukraine.

Fores, a Yekaterinburg-based fracking components supplier, said Friday that it handed out the cash prizes to troops at a location near the Russian-Ukrainian border. Photos shared from the ceremony showed the soldiers' faces blurred.

Ukraine received its first deliveries of F-16s last summer after a two-year campaign to secure them from then-U.S. President Joe Biden, who had initially resisted providing the military aircraft due to concerns over pilot training.

Kyiv reported in August 2024 that one F-16 had crashed during a Russian missile attack, killing its pilot.

Another F-16 pilot was killed during a combat mission on April 12. Russia's Defense Ministry claimed the next day that its air defenses had downed the fighter jet.

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Fores described itself as the first Russian company to offer financial rewards to servicemen for destroying Western military equipment.

To date, the company said it has paid out 52.4 million rubles ($665,400) in bounties for the destruction of Western-supplied Leopard 2 and Abrams tanks, as well as the first F-16.

Fores announced bounties of up to 5 million rubles for destroying Western tanks in early 2023. CEO Sergei Shmotiyev introduced the cash rewards for destroying F-16s later in 2024.

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