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Ukraine Says Russia Returned More Than 1.2K Bodies of Killed Soldiers

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General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Russia has returned the bodies of 1,212 Ukrainian soldiers killed in combat under a deal reached during last week's peace talks in Istanbul, authorities in both countries said Wednesday.

Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War confirmed the repatriation, as did Russian lawmaker Shamsail Saraliyev, following days of mutual accusations over delays in the exchange of fallen soldiers.

On Saturday, Russia accused Ukraine of failing to show up for the handover and not agreeing on a date for a prisoner exchange. Kyiv, in turn, accused Moscow of playing "dirty games" by not honoring the terms of the agreement.

The Ukrainian agency said the returned soldiers had died fighting on the front lines in eastern and southern Ukraine. It also said some had fought in Russia's southwestern Kursk region, where Ukrainian forces staged a cross-border incursion last August.

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Later on Wednesday, Kremlin aide Vladimir Medinsky said Russia received the remains of 27 soldiers during the exchange. He also said that both sides would carry out an exchange of heavily wounded soldiers on Thursday.

Earlier, the Kremlin said it expected Ukraine to continue abiding by the terms of the June 2 Istanbul agreements, which included a large-scale prisoner swap and the return of 6,000 fallen soldiers on each side. The talks did not produce a ceasefire deal.

Ukraine and Russia have carried out sporadic exchanges of prisoners and bodies since the early months of Russia's full-scale invasion.

In February, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said more than 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since the start of the war.

Russia has not updated its official military death toll since late 2022, though an independent tally by Russian media has identified more than 111,000 names of soldiers killed.

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