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# Pro-War Blogger Polynkov Arrested in Moscow

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Mikhail Polynkov. **Social media**

Law enforcement authorities arrested pro-war blogger Mikhail Polynkov in Moscow, Russian media reported on Wednesday.

Polynkov, a close associate of jailed ex-separatist commander Igor Girkin, runs the Telegram channel "Soldier's Truth" and has been described in media reports as a recruiter of foreign fighters for pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.

He reportedly held a contract with the Russian Defense Ministry until August 2023, when he was asked to resign after criticizing President Vladimir Putin. The ministry ultimately reassigned him to another unit that November, according to the news website RBC.

Federal Security Service (FSB) agents arrested Polynkov in Moscow and transferred him to a military investigative office, his lawyer said. He faces criminal charges of desertion, anonymous law enforcement sources told the state-run news agency TASS.

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Polynkov, writing on his Telegram channel early Wednesday, suggested the arrest was retaliation for having criticized pro-Kremlin TV host Vladimir Solovyov for his support of Israel in its war against Iran.

RBC and TASS identified Polynkov as deputy chairman of the Russian Strelkov Movement, a nationalist group led by Girkin. The movement said Polynkov had worked to locate Russian soldiers missing in action in Ukraine, suggesting that those activities may have prompted authorities to arrest him.

Girkin, better known by his nom de guerre Igor Strelkov, commanded separatist forces in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and was sentenced in absentia by a Dutch court in 2022 to life in prison for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17.

In 2023, a Russian court sentenced Girkin to four years in prison for "inciting extremism" after he criticized Putin's handling of the full-scale invasion against Ukraine.

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