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Russia Returns 1K Bodies of Killed Ukrainian Soldiers

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Russia returned the bodies of 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed in combat and received the remains of 19 Russian soldiers under a deal reached during last month's peace talks in Istanbul, authorities in Moscow said Thursday.

Kremlin adviser and chief peace negotiator Vladimir Medinsky announced the exchange in a Telegram post. Ukrainian authorities later confirmed the handover, saying that the Red Cross helped with repatriating the bodies of its soldiers.

"Law enforcement investigators, together with experts from the interior ministry, will carry out all necessary examinations and identify the repatriated bodies," Ukraine's headquarters for the treatment of prisoners of war said in a statement.

Photos and videos shared by Russian state news agencies showed teams of people in white hazmat suits transferring body bags between refrigerated semi-trailers.

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An anonymous source told the state-run news agency RIA Novosti that Russia planned to return the bodies of 2,000 more Ukrainian soldiers in the near future.

The repatriation of fallen soldiers and the exchange of prisoners of war has been one of the few areas of cooperation between the warring sides since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Moscow and Kyiv agreed last month during talks in Istanbul to exchange the bodies of 6,000 soldiers each. The sides also agreed to a large-scale prisoner swap but failed to reach a ceasefire deal.

Tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed on both sides since the war began, according to independent monitors and Western intelligence. Neither country publishes regular or independently verifiable casualty figures.

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