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Russia Returns 1K Bodies of Ukrainian Soldiers

August 19, 2025



General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Russia has returned the bodies of 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers, five of whom died while in Russian captivity, authorities in Kyiv and Moscow said Tuesday.

Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said the exchange was part of agreements reached during Russian-Ukrainian peace talks held in Istanbul earlier this summer.

The agency said the soldiers had died in southeastern Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions, as well as in southwestern Russia's border region of Kursk, which Ukrainian forces briefly occupied following a surprise incursion last August.

Kremlin adviser and chief Ukraine peace negotiator Vladimir Medinsky later confirmed the exchange, saying Russia received 19 bodies as part of the Istanbul agreements "just like a month ago." A similar 1,000-for-19 exchange took place on July 17.

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The Ukrainian headquarters said five of the repatriated bodies had been on its list of severely wounded and seriously ill soldiers who were due to be part of a prisoner exchange.

“The Russian side continues to delay and does not fulfill its obligations,” the agency said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

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

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

The Ukrainian headquarters said law enforcement investigators and military experts would work to identify the recently repatriated bodies.

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