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# Russian Soldiers Returning From Ukraine Linked to Over 1K Killings and Injuries Inside Russia

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**Alexei Belkin / NEWS.ru / TASS**

Russian soldiers returning from the war in Ukraine have killed or injured more than 1,000 people inside Russia since the invasion began nearly four years ago, according to a review of court rulings by the exiled news outlet Vyorstka published Tuesday.

At least 551 people died in incidents involving veterans of the so-called "special military operation," Vyorstka reported.

Of those, 274 were murdered, 163 died after suffering severe bodily harm, 78 were killed in road accidents and another 36 died in other criminal cases, including drug-related offenses.

More than half of those killed, 163 people, died at the hands of former prisoners who had fought in Ukraine.

A further 465 people were seriously injured but survived, with many sustaining permanent

disabilities.

Former inmates again accounted for more than half of the victims at 252 cases.

Most incidents stemmed from domestic disputes, about half of which involved alcohol or drugs. In many cases, the victims were relatives or acquaintances of the perpetrators.

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Courts tried the former soldiers under a range of criminal statutes including attempted murder, infliction of grievous bodily harm, excessive self-defense, traffic violations and murder.

Out of more than 700 published judicial decisions reviewed by Vyorstka, fewer than 10% did not list participation in the Ukraine war as a mitigating factor.

In roughly 90% of cases, courts cited state awards, combat-veteran status, injuries, "military merits" and similar distinctions to reduce sentences.

Nearly a quarter of rulings also referenced the "unlawful" or "immoral" conduct of victims as grounds for leniency.

Judges frequently overlooked alcohol as an aggravating factor: in 486 cases involving intoxication, courts failed to acknowledge alcohol or drug use in 326 of them.

The true number of crimes committed by returning soldiers may be significantly higher, Vyorstka noted, as military garrison courts have largely stopped publishing decisions related to such cases since the war began.

Courts also often redact identifying details or remove information about defendants' wartime service and in some instances delete rulings after publication.

The total pool of returning veterans remains relatively small.

Russian authorities say no more than 140,000 service members have returned to civilian life so far, while President Vladimir Putin said in September that more than 700,000 Russian troops were currently deployed in Ukraine.

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