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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Leader of Far-Right Russian Group Fighting in Ukraine Dies in Unknown Circumstances

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Stanislav Orlov. **Dmitry Yagodkin / TASS**

Espanola, an ultranationalist paramilitary group fighting on Russia's side in Ukraine, confirmed on Friday the death of its leader, Stanislav Orlov, under unclear circumstances.

Orlov, callsign "Spaniard," founded Espanola in the spring of 2022, soon after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, as part of the Vostok Battalion in eastern Ukraine's occupied Donetsk region.

Espanola's members, including Orlov, are far-right Russian soccer hooligans. Orlov himself was said to have fought alongside pro-Russian forces against the Ukrainian government since 2014.

Broadcaster RTVI, citing anonymous sources, reported on Dec. 10 that Orlov had been killed by return fire during an arrest on arms trafficking charges the previous day. His fate was the

subject of online debates in the ensuing days until Espanola confirmed his passing.

“Relatives and close friends of Stanislav Orlov invite everyone to say their final goodbyes to the leader, founder and inspiration behind Espanola,” the group announced on its Telegram channel.

It said that a farewell ceremony would be held at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow on Monday.

Espanola did not provide the date or cause of Orlov’s death.

“At present, the central investigative authorities are working to determine the exact cause and location of his death, as well as identifying those responsible,” Espanola wrote on its Telegram channel.

Russia’s Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, has not publicly commented on Orlov’s passing.

Unconfirmed reports by pro-war bloggers said Orlov was killed during an arrest, while others claimed that he was allegedly in a coma “for several days” before passing.

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