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Russia Returns Bodies of 1K Ukrainian Soldiers in First Exchange of 2026

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Employees of the International Red Cross involved in a body exchange on Jan. 29, 2026. **@Koord_shtab / Telegram**

Russia and Ukraine returned bodies of their soldiers on Thursday, marking the first such exchange between the two warring countries this year.

Russia transferred the remains of 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers while receiving the bodies of 38 Russian servicemen, State Duma lawmaker Shamsail Saraliyev, a member of the ruling United Russia party, told the RBC news website.

Saraliyev shared photos showing people in white hazmat suits gathered around refrigerated trucks, as well as cars marked with the International Red Cross logo.

Ukraine's headquarters for the treatment of prisoners of war confirmed the exchange, thanking the Red Cross for its help.

"Repatriation efforts took place today, resulting in the return to Ukraine of 1,000 bodies,

which the Russian side claims belong to Ukrainian defenders," the headquarters wrote on Telegram.

"Law enforcement investigators, in collaboration with Ukrainian forensic experts, will now carry out all necessary measures to identify the repatriated deceased," it added.

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While the location of the exchange was not disclosed, a photo shared by the Ukrainian headquarters showed a road sign in the distance saying "Chernihiv," suggesting it took place in northern Ukraine near the border with Belarus and Russia's Bryansk region.

The repatriation of fallen soldiers and the exchange of prisoners of war have been one of the few areas of cooperation between Russia and Ukraine since the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Moscow and Kyiv carried out 14 exchanges in 2025, with 14,480 bodies returned to Ukraine and 391 bodies returned to Russia.

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