



Russia publishes data on foreign mercenaries in Ukraine

Description

UKRAINE/RUSSIA: 400 foreign fighters remain trapped in Mariupol, where Kiev forces have refused an offer to surrender

An estimated 6,824 foreign mercenaries from 63 countries have come to Ukraine to fight for Volodymyr Zelensky's government, the Russian Defense Ministry stated on Sunday. Of these, 1,035 have been "destroyed," while several thousand remain. Four hundred foreign fighters are holed up in Mariupol, where nationalist forces, including the neo-Nazi fighters, have refused to surrender.

The most numerous group of foreign fighters (1,717) arrived from Poland, while around 1,500 came from the US, Canada and Romania. Up to 300 people each came from the UK and Georgia, while 193 arrived from the Turkish-controlled areas of Syria.

These figures were announced on Sunday by Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov. According to the general, 1,035 foreign mercenaries have been killed by Russian forces and 912 fled Ukraine, leaving 4,877 active in the cities of Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Nikolaev and Mariupol.

Roughly 400 of these foreign fighters remain embedded with Ukrainian nationalist battalions in the besieged port city of Mariupol, Konashenkov stated. With most of the city under Russian control, these forces have dug in at the sprawling Azovstal metallurgical plant, a gargantuan Soviet-built factory complex spread over 11 square kilometers.

“Most of them are citizens of European countries, as well as Canada,” Konashenkov stated, adding that Russian forces have intercepted radio communications from the plant in six foreign languages. After the surrender of more than 1,000 members of Ukraine’s 36th Marines Brigade at the Ilyich Steel and Iron Works in Mariupol earlier this week, which Ukraine denies, the Russian military offered the defenders at Azovstal a [final chance](#) to lay down their arms and surrender on Sunday morning, promising that “all who lay down their weapons are guaranteed the preservation of life.”

No such surrender took place, and the pounding of heavy guns could be heard near the plant on Sunday afternoon. *“In case of further resistance, all of them will be destroyed,”* Konashenkov said.

“Let me remind you that foreign mercenaries do not have the status of ‘combatants’ under International Humanitarian Law,” Konashenkov said. *“They came to Ukraine to earn money by killing Slavs. Therefore, the best that awaits them is criminal liability and long prison terms.”*

Within days of Russia’s military assault on Ukraine, the government in Kiev promised visa-free entry for foreigners willing to take up arms against Moscow’s forces. Potential recruits visited Ukrainian embassies across the West and signed up to fight – often with the blessing of their own governments – and made their way to the battlefield.

However, recruitment was narrowed in March to those with military experience, and [paused entirely](#) at the beginning of April. A spokesman for Ukraine’s so-called *“International Legion”* told Canadian media that sending untrained volunteers to the front was becoming more of a hindrance than a help, and supplies of firearms and ammunition were running low.

Some of those who made the journey shared horror stories online of being sent to the front lines with inadequate weapons and ammo, while recruitment suffered after a Russian missile strike leveled a training center for these foreigners near the Western Ukrainian city of Lvov. *“Up to 180 foreign mercenaries and a large quantity of foreign weapons were destroyed,”* Konashenkov said at the time.

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