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U.S. Mercs Nabbed in Ukraine

• What were these former U.S. military members up to?

By the AFP Staff

A pair of U.S. military veterans apparently operating as mercenaries on behalf of the Ukrainian government were captured in Ukraine by Russian forces earlier this month and will face trial.

Alexander Drueke, who served two tours in Iraq with the U.S. Army, and Andy Huynh, a former Marine who worked in logistics while stationed in Japan, were reported missing on June 9.

According to Russian officials, the “soldiers of fortune” who were engaged in “illegal activities” in Ukraine—which included firing on Russian troops—were shown alive and well in video footage in mid-June in a detention center in Donetsk.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for the Kremlin, told NBC News that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to mercenaries or other partisan fighters not officially enlisted in a national military. “They’re soldiers of fortune, and they were involved in illegal activities on the territory of Ukraine. ... They should be held responsible for those crimes that they have committed,” Peskov told NBC News.

As much as the U.S. and its puppets in the EU and NATO hypocritically carry on about a “rules-based international order,” the Russians appear to be one of the few countries insist-



ALEXANDER DRUEKE



ANDY HUYNH

U.S. mercenaries captured in Ukraine could face the death penalty.

ing on abiding by those rules, laws, and international legal and diplomatic standards. Ukrainian and Western rejection of international agreements, such as the Minsk Accords, and respectable standards of diplomacy is precisely what led to the current conflict.

Earlier this month, a court in Donetsk found three other foreign fighters guilty of “taking action toward a violent overthrow of power,” which is punishable by death. Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner, two British citizens, and Saadun Ibrahim, a Moroccan, were determined to be acting as mercenaries on behalf of the Ukrainian government. The trio were captured near Mariupol, a city on the coast of the Sea of Azov that saw intense

fighting but has since been captured by Russian and pro-Russian forces.

These three foreign fighters were tried on multiple criminal charges and pleaded guilty to “undergoing training for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activities” and also attempting to overthrow the government in Donetsk. They can appeal the decision.

When Peskov was asked if the captured American fighters would also face the death penalty, he simply responded that it all depends on the outcome of the investigation. Russia “cannot guarantee anything,” he said.

U.S. officials expressed outrage at Peskov’s recent comments and the ongoing investigation of Drueke and Huynh. However, rather than answer questions about why former U.S. military members were involved in combat against the Russians in Ukraine, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby skirted the issue, calling Peskov’s comments “appalling” and the Russian government’s perspective on the situation “alarming.”

Meanwhile, Russian officials continue to insist they will follow internationally agreed upon legal standards for the conduct of war. ★

THE INSIDE SCOOP



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