

Did Moscow Intentionally Send Russian Mercenaries to Their Deaths in Syria to Solve a Problem in the Donbas?

Opinion

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UBO Commentary: The questions raised in the opinion piece are – to our mind – made all the more urgent for consideration since the source, Igor Eidman, is one of the most reliable Kremlin-watchers currently working. Also, just as we said when this subject came up earlier in the Goble column, we believe quite strongly that some of those “Russians” killed in this fashion were likely to be Russian-speaking Ukrainians, part of that considerable number who committed crimes against the Ukrainian state and chose to follow Viktor Yanukovich into exile.

By Paul Goble for “Window on Eurasia”: February 12 – Among the most unpleasant aspects of following Kremlin actions is that one must always be open to the possibility that its denizens will act in ways that seem too outrageous or immoral to be considered but then turn out to be exactly what they are doing. Igor Eidman [pictured], a Russian commentator for Deutsche Welle, suggests that may be the case with the recent deaths of Russian mercenaries in Syria. According to him, it may be the case that this project constituted “Operation ‘Utilization,’” one designed to have “other hands” get rid of its own “dangerous ballast” (kasparov.ru/material.php?id=5A88632C3868B). Specifically, he says, “the Russian authorities could have completely consciously sent ‘those who are not here’ [ikh-tam-nets] into the slaughter in Deir-es-Zor and not done anything to save them when the Americans warned about an upcoming attack” because in that way, some militants Moscow wanted out of the way would be disposed of after performing a final “service.” That could have happened, Eidman suggests, in order to remove some of the most hardened pro-Moscow fighters in the Donbas, at least some of whom had gone to take part in the Syrian conflict, and thus open the way for the kind of accord that the German foreign minister has suggested, placing UN peacekeepers in the Donbas and dropping sanctions. Had Moscow simply agreed to what Berlin is proposing without getting the radical militants out of the way, the Russian commentator suggests, any UN peacekeepers would have been opposed by its own militants in the Donbas. Eliminating them by having them killed in Syria could “solve” the problems they continue to present. “Now,” he continues, “the militants began to be quickly used up, that is, they were simply driven like swine to a slaughter (according to the expression of the widow of one of those killed) having only primitive weapons against those in the American arsenal and thus certain to be eliminated. According to Eidman, “the Russian command ‘apparently made the following calculation.’ Getting rid of these militants suits our purposes – the regular army has never liked such irregular and often undisciplined units -- and those of the Kremlin as well which has a broader agenda that by this action, we can be seen to have supported.

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com