

Criminals Running Ukrainian National Guard Tornado Battalion

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It was found that 43 fighters of the Tornado battalion have criminal records, according to Ukrainian Military Prosecutor Anatoly Matios. Earlier, the Ministry of Internal Affairs arrested Tornado commander Ruslan Onischenko and seven other fighters from the battalion and charged them of conducting violent crimes in Lugansk Region.

Almost 50 percent of the fighters of the dissolved Tornado police battalion are previously convicted criminals, Ukrainian Military Prosecutor Anatoly Matios said during a TV show.

“The number of personnel in the battalion is 109. There are some 80 identified persons, one of them, the most violent member of a criminal organization, has not been arrested yet. He is at the base now. He is a Belarusian citizen, a former police officer who was previously convicted. It was found that 43 fighters of the Tornado battalion have criminal records. Some fighters have several past convictions,” Matios said.

He added he would again visit the Lugansk Region where the battalion is stationed.

Meanwhile, Tornado Commander Nikolai Tsuruk said he knows nothing about the claimed torture reportedly used by battalion fighters.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Internal Affairs arrested Tornado commander Ruslan Onischenko and seven other fighters from the battalion and charged them of conducting violent crimes in Lugansk Region.



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Following the notorious Azov battalion, Tornado has become another Ukrainian battalion at the center of a scandal.

On Thursday, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said he had signed an order dissolving the battalion.

Later Thursday, Matios said nearly 170 Tornado fighters barricaded themselves at their base in the Lugansk Region, mined the territory around the base and threatened to open fire on government troops. The Interior Ministry held negotiations with the fighters on the site.

The General Prosecutor Office said the base could be assaulted if the talks gave no results.

However, later Avakov said the battalion obeyed his orders and kept discipline and order.

Tornado is a volunteer territorial defense battalion serving under the Ukrainian Interior Ministry. It was established in 2014 after the dissolution of the Shakhtyorsk police special unit.

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