Russian Special Forces Threaten Retribution for Helicopter Pilot Who Defected to Ukraine

In a shocking revelation, soldiers claiming to be members of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of Russia's Armed Forces appeared on the Russian TV channel "Russia-1," threatening the life of helicopter pilot Maxim Kuzminov, who defected to the Ukrainian Armed Forces by hijacking a Mi-8 helicopter in early September. Speaking with correspondent Sergei Zenin, who was off-camera, it was noted that Kuzminov's physical elimination is only a matter of time, as the corresponding order has already been given. The soldiers, in turn, declared that the pilot would be "found and punished to the fullest extent of the law" for his act of betrayal.

"One of the unnamed soldiers said, 'He won't make it to trial, I believe he won't survive,'" Zenin reported. The soldiers present in the footage did not have any distinguishing signs or unit insignia. The soldiers' claim of belonging to the GRU suggests that they serve in the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, as this is the current name of the agency responsible for intelligence.

Maxim Kuzminov, who the military promised to capture, hijacked the Mi-8 helicopter from Kursk and flew it to the Kharkiv region on August 9. Two other crew members were on board, whom, according to the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, Kirill Budanov, they "had to get rid of." The investigation into Kuzminov's case is being handled by the FSB.

It was previously reported that the crew members of the Mi-8 had friendly meetings before the defection to Ukraine.

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