
UKRAINE DETAINS SEPARATIST FIGHTER FROM UZBEKISTAN

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Ukrainian security service has said it has detained a citizen of Uzbekistan engaged in fighting alongside separatist forces with the self-declared Donetsk Peoples Republic.

Just as significantly, the news has also been reported by media inside Uzbekistan, which has tried to adopt a neutral position toward events involving Ukraine, and Russia by extension, in recent years.

In a video confession posted on the website of the Ukrainian Security Services (SBU), the suspected 20-year old fighter identifies himself as Alexander Brikin and says he joined the ranks of separatist forces in December 2014 as a way of earning some money. Brikin, who bears clear signs of rendering his confession under duress, said he had been engaged in fighting in Horlivka and Shyrokyne, two intense hotspots in the eastern Ukrainian conflict.

Ukrainian authorities said Brikin was captured after he traveled to the government-controlled city of Mariupol in an attempt to register as a Ukrainian citizen.

The government in Uzbekistan is only too aware that volunteers and mercenaries have been heading to Ukraine. In January, the Uzbek Embassy in Ukraine posted a statement on its website warning people against trying to enroll with separatist forces.

The Embassy is hereby informing that according to Article 154 of Uzbekistan Criminal Code * it is a crime to participate in any armed conflict or military activities in foreign states even where there is no evidence of mercenary activity. Such actions envisions punishment of up to ten years in prison, the statement read.

Tashkent is concerned about its citizens fighting on either side of the conflict, however.

In March, the BBCs Russian service reported on another native of Uzbekistan, 33-year old Shavkat Muhammad, fighting with Ukraines volunteer Aidar battalion.

In an interview to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Muhammad said that he had joined in the fight against the separatists on purely ideological grounds and was seeking no compensation.

This may not tell the entire story though. Some appear drawn by a law adopted by Ukraine in late 2015 allowing foreigners to enroll in its National Guard. Service can act as a precursor to receipt of Ukrainian citizenship, which could serve as a temptation for some economically desperate young men. That is just as well since Uzbekistans President Islam Karimov last August signed legislation giving authorities to strip any citizens found to be providing mercenary services overseas of their Uzbek citizenship.

Kaynak/Source: