As the war continues, Russia & Ukraine continue to exchange prisoners of war and return bodies

Ukrainian prisoners of war returning Monday as part of exchange agreed at Istanbul..

When the Russian and Ukrainian representatives met in Istanbul for the first time on May 16, both sides agreed to return 1,000 prisoners of war to the other side over three days on May 23-25 and subsequently did so. Although the second meeting of the representatives on June 2 lasted only a little more than an hour and produced no movement toward a ceasefire, the two sides did at least agree, building on the success of the earlier exchange, to an all-for-all exchange of prisoners of war who were seriously wounded or seriously ill, an all-for-all exchange of prisoners of war who are 18 to 25, and the return by each side of 6,000 bodies.

The first exchange of prisoners of war took place Monday, involving some of the prisoners of war who were wounded or seriously ill or under the age of 25. Draped in a flag, those returning to Ukraine were greeted with cheers of "Slava Ukraini!" (Glory to Ukraine!) and "Heroiam slava!" (Glory to the heroes!) from crowds who welcomed them home, some of whom held up photographs and sought information about missing loved ones. On Tuesday and again yesterday, there was an exchange of prisoners of war who are severely wounded or seriously ill. On Wednesday, Ukraine said Russia had returned 1,212 bodies and Russia announced Ukraine had returned 27 bodies. Yesterday, the exchange continued, involving prisoners of war who were severely wounded or seriously ill or under the age of 25. Neither side announced a total number of prisoners of war returned thus far this week. But the important thing, obviously, is that the exchange continued.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian General Staff reported yesterday, which happened to be Russia Day, that Russia's "combat losses" – that is, soldiers killed or wounded

and removed from combat since the war began on Feb. 24, 2022 – had surpassed one million for the first time and totaled, as of yesterday, 1,000,340. Ukraine doesn't announce its daily and cumulative "combat losses," and the Russian estimates of Ukrainian losses are obviously unreliable. Nevertheless, Ukraine is estimated to have lost 60,000-80,000 killed and several hundred thousand wounded in the war. And despite the huge losses suffered by both sides, the war continues with no end in sight. The only good thing that can be said at this point is that some of the prisoners of war on both sides are going home.

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