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## **Probe launched against members of gang kidnapping Russians in Ukraine to exchange them for Ukrainians**



The Department for crimes related to the use of prohibited ways and methods of war of the Investigative Committee's Head Office has opened a criminal investigation against unidentified people from among leaders and personnel of law-enforcement, security and intelligence agencies of Ukraine suspected of crimes under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 2010, Part 3, item "a" of Article 126, Part 3 of Article 30, Part 3, item "c" of Article 127.1, Part 3, item "a" of Article 126, Part 3, item "c" of Article 127.1 of the RF Penal Code (setting up a criminal community, abduction, human trafficking).

According to investigators, since the beginning of an armed conflict in southeast of Ukraine, that is since April 2014, some unidentified persons from among senior officers of the Ukrainian law-enforcement, security and intelligence agencies have used their power and set up an organized criminal community to commit major crimes - abductions and human trafficking for getting material benefits. The leaders of the gang involved in their wrongdoings their inferiors from regional offices of the agencies. The gang planned crimes carefully, had a single form and method of crime, clear hierarchy and was single-minded in their intentions.

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The target of their crimes was Russian citizens. The scheme involved illegal prosecution and conviction of Russian citizens, their abduction and illegal capture with the purpose to get them exchanged for Ukrainian military men taken prisoners by soldiers of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

Thus, in 2014, a Russian citizen was detained on a farfetched suspicion of encroachment on territorial integrity and inviolability of Ukraine. Threatened and coerced, the man confessed and made a plea bargain with the prosecutor. A court then released him on probation. After that, members of the said community took him to another region of Ukraine by force and are still holding him there in a closed building,

Similar story happened with a Russian citizen in 2014, when he was in the area controlled by the Ukrainian Military Forces. He was also apprehended on a farfetched suspicion of trafficking people through the Ukrainian border, and then got a suspended sentence. On the same day, he was held by members of the gang and put into a so-called "secret prison", where he was held until exchanged for Ukrainian soldiers taken prisoners by military men of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

At present, investigators are looking into all the details of the crimes and are identifying other victims of the gang.

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