

# Anger over reported killing of Oscar Jenkins

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**Samantha Donovan:** The Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, is threatening Russia with the strongest action possible if Melbourne man Oscar Jenkins has been killed by his captors. The schoolteacher had been fighting for Ukraine. Australian authorities are emphasising they have had no formal confirmation of his death. The ABC has been told Ukrainian soldiers are trying to determine his fate. Kathleen O'Connor prepared this report.

**Oscar Jenkins:** I'm from Australia. I'm Australian.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** It was just over three weeks ago that the video of Oscar Jenkins surfaced on social media, captured and repeatedly slapped in the face by Russian troops.

**Oscar Jenkins:** Oscar Jenkins, 32 years old.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Now there are grave fears the 32-year-old Melbourne teacher was executed. Dr Glenn Kolomeitz is a former Australian soldier and international law consultant.

**Glenn Kolomeitz:** I'm hearing from Australian members of the Legion on the ground, including one bloke who worked with Oscar, that Ukrainian forces identified some remains on the ground in an area which was known to be a Russian temporary holding area, so a holding area for prisoners of war.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Glenn Kolomeitz says he's been in contact with the team leader who worked with Oscar in Ukraine's international Legion.

**Glenn Kolomeitz:** As I understand, the Ukrainians have said, came from a Ukrainian drone, and they've said that they identified remains on the ground. I don't know how many bodies are there in that footage, but they've said that the remains that they're speaking about are, or are likely to be those of Oscar, one of these Legionnaires who were there, Australians who were there now, said that he got this information a week or so back that Oscar had been killed. So it does tend to tie in with the fact that this isn't necessarily a recent development.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Dr Kolomeitz says the team leader hasn't seen the drone vision, but has sent a team to the location.

**Glenn Kolomeitz:** He's concerned enough to be sending his guys out to a reasonably hostile area to try and confirm whether their mate has in fact been killed.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** He says if Oscar Jenkins was in fact executed.

**Glenn Kolomeitz:** It's a grave breach, a serious war crime, and Russia has to be held accountable for this.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Former Australian member of the Ukrainian International Legion, Call sign "Bush", was in Ukraine for a year.

**Bush:** It's very well known that the Russians generally do not comply with any kind of laws of armed conflict. They will generally, yes, it was expected by our guys when we were over there, our RSOPs, our standard operating procedures were to carry a thermobaric grenade in case of capture. And you know, if because of you are captured, you will almost certainly be tortured and likely killed. It's a very dangerous conflict. The Russians are very brutal.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Authorities stress they've received no formal confirmation of the death of Oscar Jenkins. Senator Penny Wong spoke on AM this morning.

**Penny Wong:** I will make it also clear that we are making urgent inquiries following the reports of his death. These reports have not yet been verified. But as I started, we hold grave concerns for his welfare.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Prime Minister Anthony Albanese also addressed the issue.

**Anthony Albanese:** We call upon Russia to immediately confirm Oscar Jenkins' status. But if there has been any harm caused to Oscar Jenkins, that is absolutely reprehensible and the Australian government will take the strongest action possible.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Opposition leader Peter Dutton agrees.

**Peter Dutton:** If there is confirmation that Oscar has been killed, then the government should take the strongest possible action. And that is that the ambassador should be withdrawn and that the ambassador here in Australia should be sent packing.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Retired major general and military strategist Gus McLaughlan says Russian ambassador Alexei Pavlovsky should remain in Australia.

**Gus McLachlan:** I think this particular case will probably not warrant exclusion. Diplomatic presence are more useful for negotiation, discussion and even the repatriation of Oscar's body if it turns out that is on the Russian side of the of the fighting line.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** He was surprised to learn Oscar Jenkins may have been killed.

**Gus McLachlan:** I thought Oscar may have been more use in an information warfare sense had the Russians been able to keep him alive.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** Gus McLaughlan believes the war is entering a critical phase with Donald Trump preparing to re-enter the White House and promising to end the Russia-Ukraine war within a day.

**Gus McLachlan:** We know both sides are posturing everything that they possibly can to have an advantage in any discussion. And we are seeing human beings used as pawns in that process. So foreign prisoners are a very high profile addition to that, let's call it, information war.

**Kathleen O'Connor:** The last known Australian prisoner of war to die was in the Korean War more than 70 years ago. But many are still holding on to hope that Oscar Jenkins will return home. Former Australian member of the Ukrainian International Legion, "Bush", again.

**Bush:** I think in the course of time, things are going to become much clearer for people. That's sort of all I'll say on that. But yeah, effectively right now, we're just kind of focusing on what we can do if that has happened and what pressure we may have to put on the government to try and if it has happened, get his body home.

**Samantha Donovan:** That's an Australian former member of the Ukrainian International Legion who goes by his call sign, Bush. That report from Kathleen O'Connor and Kimberley Price.