

Russian Actor Slammed on Twitter for Firing Weapon in Ukraine (Video)

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Mikhail Porechenkov

A Russian actor wearing a helmet marked "Press" has been caught on video firing a machine gun from a battle site in eastern Ukraine, in a stunt that provoked outrage on Russian and Ukrainian social networks.

After the video of Mikhail Porechenkov discharging his machine gun from Donetsk Airport was posted Thursday on the YouTube account of separatist "Novorossia TV," Russian-language hashtags "#PorechenkovKiller" and "#PorechenkovTerrorist" went viral on Twitter, with some journalists saying the actor had brought additional dangers to reporters in war zones.

"Every [individual] who uses weapons while hiding behind press identification assumes responsibility for the future deaths of journalists," Russian journalist Alexander Vishnevsky [said via Twitter](#) in a message that was retweeted hundreds of times within a few hours.

Instead of "individual," he used an expletive that can be loosely translated as "sh--head."

At least eight journalists and their assistants have been killed in Ukraine since the start of this year. They are Russia's VGTRK television correspondent Igor Kornelyuk and sound engineer Anton Voloshin; Italian photographer Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian fixer Andrei Mironov; Ukrainian journalist Vyacheslav Veremiy, who was shot in February during protests in Kiev; Sergei Dolgov, the editor-in-chief of a pro-Russian newspaper in eastern Ukraine; Russia's Channel One cameraman Anatoly Klyan; and Russia Segodnya photographer Andrei Stenin.

Porechenkov said after his stunt that he had visited rebel-controlled Donetsk to see how a cease-fire between separatists and government forces was holding up.

"In the airport I could already clearly see that there isn't and hadn't been any cease-fire," Porechenkov was quoted as saying by Gazeta.ru, without elaborating on which signs of continued fire he had witnessed. The video of Porechenkov mingling with rebels at what Novorossia TV described as a "battle position" featured no signs or sounds of a battle until the actor and a separatist next to him began firing their weapons.

The shooting appeared to be mostly a symbolic demonstration of valor in front of a video camera, and there was no indication that any of the shots hit Ukrainian forces' positions or civilians.

Separatists accompanying Porechenkov at the rebel stronghold were clad in military fatigues and camouflage helmets. But the actor wore a blue bulletproof vest and helmet marked with the word "Press" on its back. The letters are partially visible in the video posted by Novorossia TV and can easily be read in [photos of the incident](#) that have been circulated online.

Porechenkov said the goals of his visit included delivering "medications for hospitals" in separatist eastern Ukraine. The Russian government has also pledged to deliver "humanitarian aid" to rebel-controlled areas, though Kiev and Western nations accuse it of primarily supplying weapons and fighters — a charge Moscow denies.

A leader of Russia's democratic political opposition, Ilya Yashin, gave an account of Porechenkov's machine-gun firing [in a Twitter message](#), concluding: "A dove of peace."

Porechenkov is perhaps best known for his leading role in recent film "Poddubny," a biographical movie about famed Russian and Soviet wrestler Ivan Poddubny, who was born in what is now Ukraine.

The actor told Gazeta.ru that Russian filmmakers planned to show the film in eastern Ukraine, although the "Ukrainian authorities have banned it for some reason."

The Ukrainian Culture Ministry announced earlier this year that it was banning the distribution of "Poddubny," citing the same flaws for which the movie had been criticized by some Russian reviewers — distorting historical facts to promote Russia's greatness.

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