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FSB declassifies testimony on WWII forest massacre of Polish soldiers inside Russia

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MOSCOW, April 12. /TASS/. The German military in January 1943 shot Polish soldiers and officers in the USSR's Smolensk Region and then buried their bodies in the Katyn forest, according to documents declassified by the Smolensk branch of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).

The materials include historical records, intelligence and special reports from the Smolensk counterintelligence service from 1944-1945. Among the documents is the interrogation report and personal testimony of German army member Walter Eber, who in January 1943, as a chauffeur in the German 567th Special Transport Battalion, transported Polish soldiers and officers from a camp near Minsk to the outskirts of Smolensk, where the Nazis shot them. In all, he says, about 1,000 prisoners of war were sent there in 20 six-ton vehicles.

"Each car was loaded with 50 Polish prisoners of war, both soldiers and officers, who were guarded on the way by Germans from the field gendarmerie and SS (the combat branch of the Schutzstaffel organization - TASS) troops. <...> Upon arrival at the forest, which stretches for 18 kilometers along the highway

from the city of Smolensk to the city of Vyazma, Polish POWs, soldiers and officers alike, were unloaded from the cars and under the escort of gendarmes and soldiers of the SS troops were sent to the forest, where they were shot with machine guns," the documents said.

According to Eber, in May 1943, while on an official assignment, he visited the Katyn forest, where he saw the excavated graves and still undecomposed corpses of Polish POW soldiers and officers. "According to Eber's testimony, in addition to conversations he overheard among the German soldiers serving with him, these were the corpses of the Polish soldiers and officers he was transporting," the declassified special report said.

"While examining the corpses (in the Katyn forest - TASS), I saw the Polish soldiers that we transported. <...> I think that Polish soldiers were shot in this forest (in the direction of Vyazma) and transported by trucks to Katyn and buried here to be used against the Red Army in their hatred and for propaganda purposes," the German soldier opined in his testimony.