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British Volunteer Father Killed by Russian Drone in Ukraine on First Mission

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Alan Robert Williams, a 35-year-old British father and former school site manager, has been killed by a Russian drone strike during his first volunteer military mission in Ukraine. Williams, who had no prior military experience, joined Ukrainian forces to fight against Russian aggression despite his wife and 12-year-old daughter urging him not to go. His death occurred in the Kharkiv Oblast region, a key area of conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Williams signed up with a Ukrainian military unit on 10 June and was deployed on his first mission shortly after. His family lost contact with him on 2 July. Two weeks later, his wife, Stephanie Boyce-Williams, was informed by Williams's comrades that he had been fatally struck by a Russian drone while attempting to retrieve foreign officers under fire. His fellow volunteers reported that he became immediately unresponsive after the strike, and

they were forced to leave his body behind as they escaped the Russian assault. As a result, Williams has been officially declared Missing in Action (MIA) since his remains have not been recovered.

Stephanie Boyce-Williams described her late husband as a determined and strong-willed man who was motivated by a desire to help civilians, particularly children affected by the conflict. She recalled efforts by the family to persuade him not to go, highlighting the impact his decision had on their daughter and household. Earlier in the year, Williams had been hospitalised for mental health reasons following a period of unemployment. Following his discharge, he volunteered to fight in Ukraine because he felt he “couldn’t sit back and watch” as Russian forces advanced in Eastern Europe.

Legally, Williams will not be declared deceased until his body is recovered or unless his wife applies for a death declaration through Ukrainian courts. This legal process requires an in-person application in Ukraine and all documentation must be submitted in Ukrainian, complicating matters significantly for the family. Until this occurs, Boyce-Williams is unable to access any financial support or benefits related to widowhood. She noted that losing Williams’s income, which accounted for half of their household bills, has placed significant financial strain on her. Furthermore, she is ineligible for single person benefits due to her earnings and the presence of two adult children in her home.

A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) spokesman confirmed the department is supporting Williams’s family and remains in contact with local authorities in Ukraine. The tragic case highlights the complexities and risks faced by foreign volunteers in Ukraine, as well as the difficulties their families encounter when seeking support.