



MUTINY IN RUSSIA... WHAT NEXT





THE MUTINY CHARACTERS AND MOTIVATIONS

WHAT IS WAGNER GROUP

The Wagner Group is a Russian private military company (PMC) actively involved in various conflicts globally, including in Eastern Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Before this, the group had taken control of the southern city of Rostov-on-Don, a major Russian military post. This has been termed as one of the most significant events in Russian domestic politics.

WHO IS PRIGOZHIN

Yevgeny Prigozhin is a Russian oligarch who is founded of the Wagner Group (PMC Wagner) in 2014 and a former ally to Vladimir Putin. On February 16, 2018, a federal arrest warrant was issued against him in the United States after he was charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States. He was placed under sanctions by both the United States and the European Union. Additionally, he allegedly funded the Internet Research Agency, a St. Petersburg-based troll factory where Russians posted pro-Kremlin propaganda online under fake names. In the context of the latest developments, Prigozhin, had for months publicly criticized Defense Minister Sergei K. Shoigu and other senior military leaders, accusing them of mismanaging the war in Ukraine and intentionally undersupplying his troops with ammunition

WHAT COULD BE THE MUTINY MOTIVATIONS

- High-degree of ideological difference
- Increasing mistrust between President Putin and Defence Minister Yevgeniy.
- As per various reports, the Russian government was drafting plans to absorb the Wagner group into the Russian Defense Ministry and gradually disband the group
- It cannot be ruled out that the latest rebellion was likely Yevgeniy's last-ditch effort to secure his power as the group's leader and resist the government's efforts.

**Risks to Russian State**

The latest coup attempt indicates a major fallout between the two entities, posing a major risk to a certain degree of operationalization of broad Russian interests and its alleged influence in various regional conflicts. This includes Russia's strong foothold in Africa, which is led by the Wagner group.

The fact that following the failed attempt, the Russian government has agreed to absorb members of Wagner group within the state army, indicates that the former's distrust in use of private army groups will likely elevate in the coming future.

This indicates a shift Russian government's policy to adjust its approach to proxy military operations or entirely re-evaluate the reported use of private military companies, entirely jeopardizing Wagner's activities and existence. This is also since the latest incident highlighted the risks associated with Putin's "venture-capital foreign policy" wherein crucial responsibilities are delegated to private actors who operate outside the established chain of command. Rather than relying on institutional structures, the Russian system heavily relies on informal patronage networks, with Putin as the ultimate authority. While this approach may prove effective to a certain extent, when Putin is in a position of strength, it can veer into chaos when his influence weakens.

Belarus as a deal maker

The implications of the Lukashenko-Prigozhin deal for the leadership of the Russian MoD also remain ambiguous. Some Russian sources, including internal Kremlin sources cited by Meduza, suggested that the Kremlin may be considering changes to MoD leadership as part of the deal. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov have not been seen or heard from since before Prigozhin announced the beginning of the armed rebellion on June 23.



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Prigozhin's fate

All his charges of treason have been dropped. He has been exiled to Belarus. Whether his security guarantees will be honored remain unclear. The role that he will assume in Belarus and whether his security guarantees will be honored remains unclear. It is important to note that the Putin regime has a history of targeting dissidents abroad, making Prigozhin's exile far from risk-free. Alternatively, he may choose to eventually return to Africa, where Wagner's operations were primarily focused prior to the invasion. Another possibility is that Prigozhin and remnants of his private military company may migrate to Belarus and assume new roles as security forces for the Lukashenka regime.

FORECAST

Power Consolidation

In the upcoming days and weeks, the Kremlin will actively work on mitigating the negative public perception of President Putin within Russia through informational damage control efforts. It is particularly crucial to restore and safeguard the domestic image of President Putin as a resilient leader, given the presence of video footage and photographs from Rostov-on-Don depicting local residents celebrating the Wagner forces. If the agreement remains intact and Yevgeny Prigozhin honors it, it will contribute to the stabilization of Russia's political and security situation in the near term.



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Defence Ministry changes

Some Russian sources suggested that the Kremlin may be considering changes to MoD leadership as part of the deal. Central to which are Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Army General Valery Gerasimov. Some Russian sources suggested that Alexei Dyumin, the current governor of Tula Oblast, former security officer to President Putin, and former head of Russia's Special Operations Forces, may replace Shoigu as the defense minister, if President Putin decides any major change. Any changes to the MoD leadership would notably represent a significant victory for Prigozhin, who justified his armed rebellion by directly accusing Shoigu and Gerasimov of the deaths of tens of thousands of Russian soldiers in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Counteroffensive

The extent to which Ukrainian forces were able to capitalize on the recent instability on the battlefield over the past 48 hours remains uncertain, given the rapid escalation and subsequent de-escalation of the crisis. While the Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that the mutiny had facilitated Ukrainian advancements in the Bakhmut area, this remains unverified. The mutiny has severely tested Russian military morale, and deep divisions mean there is doubt it will recover at a time when Ukraine is preparing for its principal counter-offensive effort

Furthermore, the impact of Wagner's capture of the Southern Military District (SMD) headquarters in Rostov-on-Don on the forces' command remains unclear. SMD forces have been active along the Donetsk-Avdiivka frontline, and any disruption to orders and coordination at the headquarters could have potentially provided Ukraine with opportunities to make progress. However, as stated before, while these incidents will serve to boost morale, it is unlikely that the Ukrainian forces were able to make any significant tactical advances in the battlefield.



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