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Night Wolves are Putin's 'Iron Cavalry,' Says Leader

By Anna Dolgov

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Leader of the motorcycling club Night Wolves Alexander Zaldostanov who also goes by the nickname "Khirurg" (Surgeon).

The leader of nationalist biker gang the Night Wolves has called his group the "iron cavalry" of President Vladimir Putin, joining the ranks of Russian political figures who have proclaimed their unflinching loyalty to the president.

Night Wolves leader Alexander Zaldostanov, who goes by the nickname The Surgeon, was speaking ahead of a massive show his group plans to hold Friday in the Crimean city of Sevastopol, Russian News Service reported Sunday.

The show will involve "technology, tanks and moving decorations" and is supposed to imitate the Red Army's advance across Europe during the final part of World War II. The show will also include a "message" about modern Russia's intentions to foreign leaders, Zaldostanov was quoted as saying.

He also said the Black Sea Fleet, which is based in Sevastopol, would "give" him technology and troops for the show, and that performers would include Russia's marines, Russian daily Kommersant reported recently.

"This will be the continuation of the theme of our battle march toward Berlin. A look at the victory through our eyes," Zaldostanov said, Russian News Service reported.

"We are doing this for Sevastopol, for all of Russia, and we are also sending a message across the border and across the ocean," he was quoted as saying.

Putin tops the list of guests invited to the show, though the Russian leader is yet to say whether he will attend, according to the report.

"We all are the iron cavalry of President Putin," Zaldostanov was quoted as saying. "So we would be greatly honored by his attendance at the event."

The profession of loyalty echoed the words of Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has described himself as Putin's foot soldier. Kadyrov is also the honorary leader of the Night Wolves in Chechnya.

In another proclamation of loyalty to the president, deputy chief of the Kremlin administration Vyacheslav Volodin was quoted by Russian media as saying last year "if there is Putin, there is Russia, if there is no Putin, there will be no Russia."

The Night Wolves are known for their close ties to Putin, and enjoy support from the state. But Zaldostanov has recently complained of a dispute with the head of Sevastopol's local legislature, Alexei Chalyi, whom the biker accused of refusing to hand over 270 hectares of land to the gang, Kommersant reported last month.

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