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Russia Spending $150M Monthly on Syria Mercenaries – Report

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Russia is spending up to $150 million every month on mercenaries fighting in Syria, the RBC newspaper reported Thursday.

Funds for the mercenaries come from the state and unnamed "private investors," RBC reported, citing a source who wished to remain anonymous.

There are an estimated 2,500 private soldiers working in Syria for the military company Wagner Group, RBC reported. Each contractor receives 300,000 rubles ($4,600) a month, compared to a monthly salary of 80,000 rubles ($1,200) for Russian soldiers, a Defense Ministry source told the newspaper.

Extra costs include 170,000 rubles ($2,600) for the mercenaries' accommodation, $1,000 per contractor for equipment, and 800 rubles ($12) daily to feed each mercenary.

The contractors' salaries are paid in cash, and "have

never officially been issued," the unidentified Defense Ministry source told RBC.

Wagner Group is formally registered in Argentina, St. Petersburg news website Fontanka reported in October 2015.

Officially, Russian law forbids the existence of private military companies, but Wagner is believed to operate in the southern Russia Krasnodar region, close to a Russian military intelligence training base in the village of Molkino, Fontanka reported.

British television channel Sky News reported in August that approximately 600 Wagner contractors had been killed in Syria, a claim refuted by the Russian media. Other news outlets have placed the number of dead Wagner soldiers between 27 to over 100.

Several media outlets have also reported that Wagner troops were used to support fighters in the self-proclaimed people's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.

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