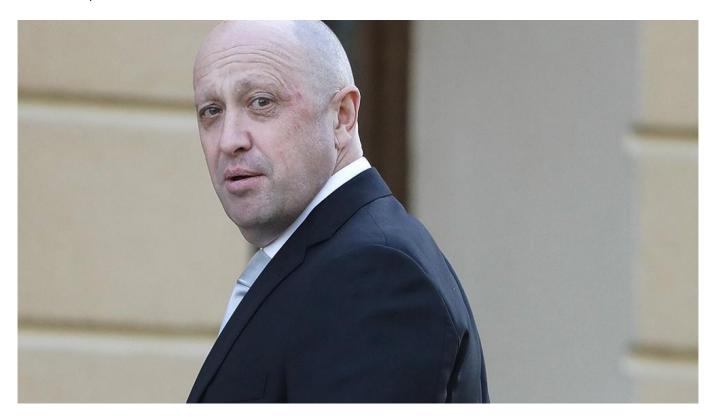


'Putin's Chef' Admits Links to Pro-Kremlin Media for the First Time

A new group of four news outlets called Patriot identified Prigozhin as chairman of its board of trustees.

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Yevgeny Prigozhin Mikhail Metzel / TASS

Businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin has for the first time said he is linked to pro-Kremlin media after years of denying the association, Russia's RBC news website <u>reported</u>.

A newly formed group of four pro-Kremlin outlets called Patriot mentioned Prigozhin by name, identifying him as chairman of its board of trustees.

"This is undoubtedly a big honor for me, so I agreed," RBC quoted Prigozhin as saying about the offer from Patriot, through his company Concord, after the news broke Friday.

The United States has charged Prigozhin — nicknamed President Vladimir Putin's "chef," because his ties to the Kremlin go back to catering dinner receptions in the early 2000s — for

allegedly interfering in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Russian media have <u>reported</u> that Prigozhin funded the private military contractor Wagner and owned the Internet Research Agency, also known as the "Kremlin's troll factory."

Related article: Alleged Troll Factory Mastermind Prigozhin, 12 Other Russians Charged With U.S. Election Meddling

Concord's press service said that Prigozhin had no role in creating any of the four outlets that comprise Patriot. The U.S. Treasury <u>blacklisted</u> two of the media group's outlets in December over allegations of election meddling and "a wide range of other malign activities."

Patriot's website says its mission is to "create a favorable information space" about Russia against the backdrop of "anti-Russian media that don't notice the good that's happening in the country."

The monthly audience of the four outlets that comprise Patriot totals 25.8 million people and tops another pro-Kremlin outlet RT's numbers, according to Russia's The Bell business outlet.

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