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Putin's Chef Prigozhin Splits His Business Empire – Reports

27-year old lawyer named as co-owner of Kremlin ally's food business by Russian news sites.

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Yevgeny Prigozhin is under U.S. sanctions for his links to the Internet Research Agency — the Kremlin-backed "troll factory" **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Kremlin-linked business owner Yevgeny Prigozhin — dubbed "Putin's Chef" — has carved up his catering company, handing half to a 27-year-old lawyer who previously founded a dog shelter in Siberia, the Current Time news site reported.

The Concord Food Plant, Prigozhin's main business asset, was divided on October 30, according to data from the Contour Focus business registry of Russian companies which was analyzed by journalists from Current Time, the Tomsk-based TV2 and the Scanner Project.

Half of the firm was retained by Prigozhin, while half is now controlled by 27-year-old lawyer Yekaterina Roslikova.

According to the report, Roslikova previously founded the Good Hands pet shelter in Tomsk, Siberia, and was a leading member of the Tomsk branch of the right-wing Liberal Democratic party (LDPR). Roslikova's colleagues contacted by Current Time said she left Tomsk to take up a job in St. Petersburg with a company called Megaline two years ago. A company with that name is part of Prigozhin's business empire.

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Prigozhin is under U.S. sanctions for his ties to the Internet Research Agency, the Kremlin-backed "troll factory" which has been indicted in the U.S. for interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.

A close Putin ally, Prigozhin is also linked to the Wagner Group of private mercenaries which has reportedly fought alongside Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, been sent to provide personal security to Venezuelean President Nicolas Maduro, and been deployed in the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Madagascar, Libya, eastern Ukraine and Sudan.

Prigozhin's decision to cede half of his main business interest is motivated by self-protection, Stanislav Danilov, a partner at law firm Pen & Paper, told Current Time.

"This is clearly some kind of defense ... such a decision, as a rule, is dictated by the desire to protect the business from the appearance of third parties: creditors, a former spouse or other elements that a beneficiary does not want to see," Danilov said.

"Fifty-fifty is a classic deadlock. If [Prigozhin's] half is taken away from him, then no real control will be given to a third party, since they will not be able to make a decision on changing the composition of governing bodies, the company structure or place requirements on the CEO," Danilov said.

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