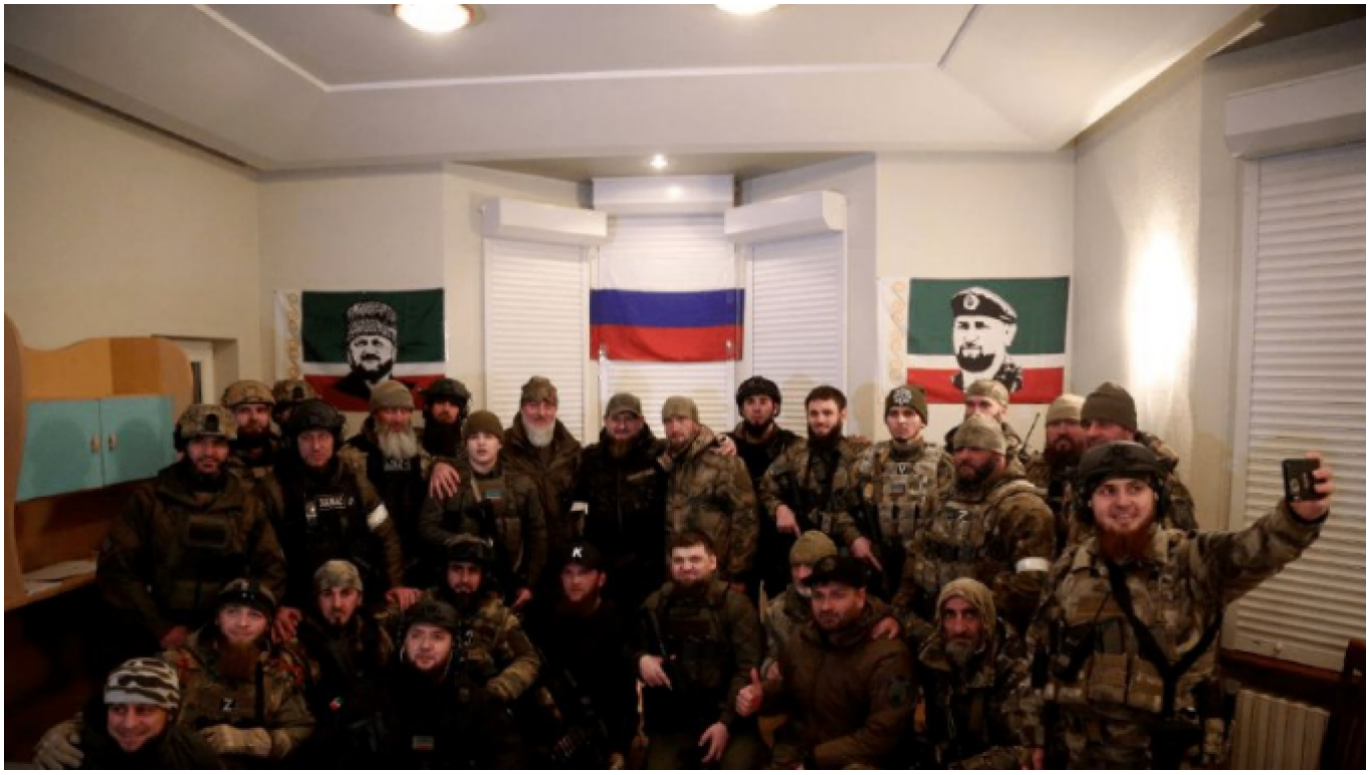
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Chechen Leader Travels to Mariupol: Reports

By AFP

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Russian state media shared a photo of Kadyrov with parliamentary lawmaker Adam Delimkhanov and around 20 Chechen fighters including what appears to be a young boy. **rian_ru / Telegram**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has arrived in the embattled southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol to raise morale among fighters, Russian media reports said Monday.

Chechen fighters have been taking part in Russia's military campaign in pro-Western Ukraine.

Ukraine has said that about 160,000 civilians remain encircled by Russian forces in Mariupol, with little or no food, water or medicine.

"Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov is in Mariupol to raise the fighting spirit of our fighters," as well as bringing them extra equipment, Chechnya's National Politics Minister Akhmed Dudayev told state news agency RIA Novosti.

The news agency posted a group photo of Kadyrov with parliamentary lawmaker Adam Delimkhanov and around 20 Chechen fighters including what appears to be a young boy in a brightly-lit room decorated with a Russian flag.

Related article: Chechen Strongman Kadyrov Says He Is in Ukraine

Dudayev said that Kadyrov, 45, had been promoted by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the rank of General-Lieutenant.

Formally, Kadyrov serves in the National Guard and previously had a rank of General Major.

Russian TV broadcast images allegedly showed Kadyrov in Mariupol meeting a man it said is Lieutenant General Andrei Mordvichev, one of the generals Ukrainian authorities say have been killed.

Dudayev told RIA Novosti that Kadyrov took part in a meeting with Mordvichev and other commanders.

He said that Kadyrov would help "correct and finalize strategy for further actions for a couple of days, in order to free Mariupol."

Kadyrov, a former war lord turned Kremlin ally, wrote on Telegram that "the clean-up of the city of Mariupol is going at full tilt."

"Russian servicemen are going from building to building to free Mariupol from Nazi bandit groups," he added.

"As always, our fighters are in magnificent spirits. Neither squally wind nor shelling from large-caliber weapons will break their will for victory," Kadyrov wrote.

"In a very short time Mariupol will be completely liberated."

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