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Russia Recruits Prisoners En Masse for Ukraine Deployment – NGO

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Andrey Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

Prisoners with combat experience across Russia are being recruited en masse to fight in Ukraine, the Gulagu.net prisoner's rights group has reported.

Representatives from the Kremlin-linked Wagner private military contractor and Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) are reportedly offering convicts deployment or work on restoring and demining occupied Ukrainian territories.

According to Gulagu.net, the recruitment campaigns took place recently at penal colonies in Russian cities including St. Petersburg, Tver, Ryazan and Smolensk, as well as Rostov, Voronezh and Lipetsk.

Around 300 prisoners in southern Russia's republic of Adygeya had allegedly agreed to join the Russian forces in Ukraine.

An expletive-laden video from Adygeya published by Gulagu.net on Sunday showed convicts

loitering around the prison yard ahead of what its authors said were talks with Wagner.

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Gulagu.net reported Saturday that 10 prisoners had been recruited from a Nizhny Novgorod penal colony last week.

On Monday, it reported that another 60 prisoners from a different Nizhny Novgorod penal colony had agreed to sign military contracts.

Gulagu.net said it obtained the information from relatives and prisoners who had reached out to the NGO themselves via its hotline.

The NGO's report corroborates independent media investigations detailing Wagner recruiters offering high salaries and compensation to their families in case of their deaths.

The unconventional recruitment drive appears to be an attempt by the Russian military to replace its forces that have been depleted by four months of war in Ukraine.

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