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Wagner Recruiting Kyrgyz, Uzbek Citizens to Fight in Ukraine – Reports

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

Shadowy Russian private military company Wagner has started recruiting citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to fight in Ukraine, Kyrgyz media reported Wednesday.

Russia has faced heavy military casualties in its five-month invasion of Ukraine, pushing Moscow to search for ways to shore up its manpower without declaring a full mobilization.

Kyrgyzstan's MediaHub investigative outlet said it found a misleading advertising campaign for private security guards on several Kyrgyz and Uzbek news channels and a job-seeking Instagram account.

When contacted, the recruiter said it was no longer seeking security guards "due to a change in priorities" and instead offered the caller a job "performing tasks in the special operation zone in Ukraine" for 240,000 rubles ($4,383) per month.

"For service longer than six months, they provide a simplified form of obtaining Russian

citizenship. But most importantly, they write that the recruit will perform tasks in the zone of special operations in Ukraine and that the organization works in the interests of the Russian Defense Ministry. No compensation is provided in the event of injury," MediaHub said.

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The offer specified that employees should not have European or NATO-member citizenship and that the job will take more than four months.

Using a phone number identification service, MediaHub's journalists found that the contact number listed in the advertisements was saved under the name "PMC Wagner."

Wagner, which is believed to be owned by Kremlin-linked catering magnate Yevgeny Prigozhin, has reportedly sent its mercenaries to conflict zones in Syria, the Central African Republic, Libya and eastern Ukraine, where they have allegedly fought alongside pro-Moscow separatists since 2014.

Some 1,200 Wagner workers were reportedly pulled out of Libya and Syria this year to fight in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Previous reports have said citizens of Central Asian countries living in Russia have also faced pressure to fight in the war.

Central Asian nationals who have gone to eastern Ukraine to fight since 2014 have faced criminal prosecution on mercenary charges in their home countries.

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