

Video Shows Prigozhin Recruiting Russian Prisoners for Ukraine Fight

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Sergey Vedyashkin / Moscow News Agency

A man closely resembling Kremlin-linked businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin was [filmed](#) recruiting Russian prisoners to fight in Ukraine.

The undated footage circulating on social media since late Wednesday is believed to be the first detailed and firsthand look into the Wagner mercenary group's [prison recruitment process](#) that was widely reported over the summer. Between 7,000 and 10,000 Russian prisoners, including a convicted cannibal, have been recruited by Wagner since this summer, Olga Romanova, the head of the Russia Behind Bars prison-monitoring NGO, [said](#) in a YouTube interview Wednesday.

“We only need stormtroopers,” the man, who introduces himself as a “Wagner representative,” is seen telling a large group of black-clad inmates inside a prison yard.

“Nobody goes back behind bars,” he says, promising the prisoners either a presidential pardon or a future career with Wagner after a six-month contract.

Around 150 inmates were said to have signed up for service after the publicized speech at a penal colony 800 kilometers east of Moscow, independent news website The Insider [reported](#), citing rights activist Ivan Astashin.

Embed:

"Those who arrive and on the first day say, "I must've come to the wrong place," are marked as "deserters," and that's followed by a firing squad."

"Putin's chef" Yevgeny Prigozhin, who is also known as the owner of the Wagner PMC, recruiting inmates (video) pic.twitter.com/p9l8nHLeoj

— The Insider (@InsiderEng) [September 15, 2022](#)

The man in the video further details the conditions for being recruited into Wagner's ranks before giving inmates "five minutes" to deliberate and make a decision.

Recruits must be aged between 22 and 50, with a few exceptions allowing younger or older soldiers. Those convicted on drug and sexual abuse charges are closely monitored during their deployment. The man in the video adds that drug and alcohol abuse, as well as looting and rape, are banned on the battlefield.

The person threatens deserters with "execution" and instructs recruiters to self-detonate with one of two Wagner-issued grenades if they are captured.

"I take you out of here alive, but don't always bring you back alive," he says in the video edited down to a runtime of five and a half minutes.

Prigozhin is widely believed to control the notorious Wagner Group, whose involvement in the Ukrainian, Syrian and African conflicts has been documented extensively in recent years. Prigozhin is also referred to as "Putin's Chef" for catering dinners for the Kremlin.

On Thursday, Prigozhin's U.S.-sanctioned management and consulting company appeared to confirm that he was in fact the man in the video.

The company, Concord, [said](#) its press team was responding to a media inquiry into the video's appearance because Prigozhin himself was on a "business trip."

Concord said it "confirms" that the man in the video "looks terribly similar" to and sounds like the catering magnate because of his "well-delivered manner of speech."

"The person who looks like Yevgeny Viktorovich [Prigozhin] explains simple things to ordinary people in a very understandable way," Concord said on its social media page without directly confirming that he was Prigozhin.

Commenting via Concord without directly addressing the video, Prigozhin himself [said](#):

"It's either private military companies and prisoners [fighting in Ukraine], or your children

— decide for yourself."

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/09/15/video-shows-prigozhin-recruiting-russian-prisoners-for-ukraine-fight-a78801>