

# Russia's Wagner Mercenary Group Announces Border Militia Plan

By [AFP](#)

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The village of Zhuravlevka in the Belgorod region after shelling. [t.me/vvgladkov](https://t.me/vvgladkov)

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said on Friday that his organization had started training civilians in Russian regions bordering Ukraine to form a militia and build fortifications.

“Wagner is helping and will keep helping the population in border areas to learn how to build engineering structures, to train and to organize a militia,” Prigozhin was quoted as saying by the press service of his company Concord.

He said that “a huge number of people are already ready to defend their land.”

Prigozhin said Wagner's main aim was to start building fortifications and training schools in the Belgorod and Kursk regions, which have regularly come under fire in recent months in attacks blamed by Moscow on the Ukrainian army.

“If you want peace, prepare for war,” he said, insisting that every Russian has the right to defend their homeland as they see fit.

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Prigozhin in September disclosed for the first time that he founded the Wagner Group in 2014 to fight in Ukraine and acknowledged its presence in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

This came after years of both Prigozhin and the Kremlin denying that the group even existed, and despite it still being illegal to serve as a mercenary in Russia.

Wagner’s fighters have been at the forefront of Moscow’s offensive in Ukraine and a video emerged in September that appeared to show Prigozhin offering prisoners contracts to fight in Ukraine in exchange for their early release from jail.

Ukrainian officials say that thousands of soldiers recruited from Russian prisons have been sent to the front line.

Prigozhin, who has also long been accused of running a “troll factory” to influence public opinion in Western countries, also admitted to interfering in U.S. elections.

Formerly someone who eschewed the limelight, the 61-year-old Prigozhin is becoming an increasingly public figure in Russia, with analysts believing he may be considering a political role.

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