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Wagner Group Founder Steps Up Feud With St. Petersburg Governor

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Yevgeny Prigozhin **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Kremlin-linked businessman and founder of the notorious Wagner Group, a shadowy mercenary organization, has upped the ante in his long-running spat with St. Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov by requesting the Russian authorities investigate the politician for high treason.

The Wagner founder has made formal requests to both the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Russia's prosecutor general to investigate Beglov, according to a statement issued by Prigozhin's press service on Sunday. The legal basis for the request was not given.

Last month, Prigozhin's Concord Group said he had sent requests to Russia's prosecutor general asking for an investigation into whether Beglov "had created an organized crime group ... with the aim of plundering the state budget and enriching the corrupt officials in his circle."

Prigozhin has in the past accused Beglov on more than one occasion of promoting "Ukrainian

nationalist" interests in Moscow's military campaign against Kyiv, prompting officials in St. Petersburg to declare in a September post on Telegram that the city administration had assisted Russian forces in Ukraine "in every possible way."

Related article: Prigozhin Admits He Founded 'Brave, Patriotic' Wagner Mercenary Group

The feud between Beglov and Prigozhin reportedly stems from Beglov's decision to terminate a number of lucrative contracts awarded to Prigozhin in 2021 for large state-funded projects in Russia's second city.

Prigozhin has seen his influence in Russia grow in recent months following his admission that he founded the Wagner Group after years spent denying any connection to the murky mercenary organization.

Last week, Prigozhin even admitted to interfering in U.S. elections after years of denials and launching defamation lawsuits against journalists who attempted to link him to so-called "troll farms," aimed at spreading targetted misinformation in an attempt to undermine faith in democracy around the world.

Last week, Bloomberg reported that Kremlin insiders were growing increasingly alarmed over Prigozhin's growing influence due to the war in Ukraine and his alleged calls for "urgent Stalinist repressions" within the ruling elite.

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