

TikTok Videos Glorifying Wagner Mercenary Group Viewed By Millions – Watchdog

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The PMC Wagner Center in St. Petersburg which was opened this fall. **Dmitri Lovetsky / AP / TASS**

TikTok kept up hundreds of videos that promote and glorify violent acts allegedly committed by Russian mercenary group Wagner despite their direct violation of the platform's policies, according to a new [investigation](#) by independent misinformation watchdog NewsGuard.

NewsGuard's analysts identified as many as 160 clips explicitly depicting or glorifying violent Wagner-linked activities on the video-sharing app. This includes 29 clips documenting or alluding to the recent [execution](#) of ex-Wagner recruit Yevgeny Nuzhin, who was killed by the mercenaries after he defected to Ukraine.

One of the execution videos identified by NewsGuard was viewed 900,000 times before TikTok moderators removed it over community guidelines violations.

Analysts also identified at least 500 other TikTok-based clips justifying Russia's invasion of

Ukraine and promoting acts of violence against and murder of Ukrainians.

Related article: [Wagner Mercenary Group Opens Tech Center in St. Petersburg](#)

Clips containing Wagner's Russian-language hashtags such as "PMC," "Wagner" or "PMC Wagner" received over 1 billion views combined, while those with English-language hashtags "wagnergroup" and "pmcwagnergroup" were viewed over 60 million times, according to the watchdog.

Some of the analyzed content contained professionally produced music videos glorifying Wagner and even direct links to the group's recruitment websites.

In addition to the content linked to Wagner's activities in Ukraine, NewsGuard found TikTok clips depicting a violent execution of a Syrian citizen allegedly by Wagner mercenaries deployed to Syria.

Syrian citizen Mohammed Taha Ismail Al-Abdullah was beaten to death by Wagner mercenaries in 2017 in retaliation for his attempted desertion of the Syrian army, according to an [investigation](#) by the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

TikTok kept up at least 130 clips containing depictions of the execution, which were viewed over 1 million times total, NewsGuard said. Some of the clips used the 2017 footage to promote Wagner's involvement in the ongoing war in Ukraine and incite violence against Ukrainians.

The user guidelines of TikTok, which is owned by China-based company ByteDance, explicitly ban the distribution of content that promotes or incites violence, including those directed at a particular group of people.

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