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Wagner Boss: Women Should Also Get Early Jail Release to Fight in Ukraine

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Inmates at a Russian women's prison. **Yevgeny Yepanchintsev / TASS**

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Kremlin-linked businessman and Wagner Group founder, has voiced his support for commuting the sentences of female prisoners in Russia who agree to fight in Ukraine, according to a Wednesday press release.

Women could serve "not only as nurses and signallers but also in sabotage groups and sniper pairs," Prigozhin said, adding that he had been working toward that end for some time. "There is resistance, but I think we'll get there," the boss of Russia's largest private military company said.

Prigozhin said his statement came in response to a letter he received from Vyacheslav Vegner, a member of parliament in Russia's Sverdlovsk region, in which Vegner proposed the idea of recruiting female as well as male recruits from prisons in his region.

The plan echoes an already well-documented Wagner Group recruitment drive personally spearheaded by Prigozhin that offered male prisoners commuted sentences in return for six

months' military service in Ukraine.

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

Vegner said he wrote the letter after receiving a request from female prisoners who wanted to serve in Ukraine.

In September video footage showed Prigozhin addressing inmates in a prison yard in an attempt to gain recruits to fight for Wagner in Ukraine.

Since then, as many as 35,000 prisoners have been granted early release from jail and deployed to Ukraine by Wagner, prisoners' rights activist Olga Romanova said in an interview on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, jailed Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny reported that Prigozhin had recently come to the prison camp where he is serving his sentence to drum up more recruits.

"Some 80-90 people agreed to go to war," Navalny said in a letter that was later published on Twitter.

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