

Russia's Wagner Boss Says Fighters Can 'Learn' from Ukraine's Army

By [AFP](#)

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Yevgeny Prigozhin. **Alexei Smagin / Kommersant**

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary force, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said on Thursday the group could "learn" from Ukraine's army as battles continue for the key east Ukrainian town of Bakhmut.

"The Ukrainian army is working clearly and harmoniously. We have a lot to learn from them," Prigozhin said in a statement published by his press service.

But he insisted "the settlement of Artemovsk will be captured," using the Russian name for Bakhmut.

For several months, Russia's Armed Forces and Wagner mercenary fighters have been trying to capture the town in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

Moscow seeks to take control of the whole of Donetsk.

Prigozhin and the Russian military last week made contradicting claims about the seizure of Soledar, a salt-mining town near Bakhmut, sparking rumors of a rift that the Kremlin denied.

Related article: [Wagner Boss Claims Control of Eastern Ukraine's Soledar Amid Ongoing Battles](#)

Russia's Defense Ministry announced the "liberation" of Soledar on Friday. It followed up with a statement praising the "courageous" Wagner forces, in an unusual recognition of the contribution made by the private fighting group.

Also on Thursday, Prigozhin said his units had claimed more ground near Bakhmut, capturing the village of Klishchiivka.

"We can safely say that the settlement of Klishchiivka, which is one of the important suburbs of Bakhmut, has been completely taken under the control of Wagner PMC units," Prigozhin said.

AFP could not immediately verify these claims.

The mercenary outfit founded in 2014 — which has been involved in conflicts in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East — shot to prominence after President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Prigozhin has criticized Russia's regular army in Ukraine in the wake of several setbacks on the ground over the past months, and has suggested his fighting group has not been given proper recognition.

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