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Wagner Deserter Arrested in Norway

By AFP

January 23, 2023



Andrei Medvedev. **gulagu.net**

A former member of Russian mercenary group Wagner who fled to Norway about 10 days ago has been arrested for violating immigration law, Norwegian police said Monday.

Twenty-six-year-old Andrei Medvedev crossed the Russian-Norwegian border in the far north in the early hours of Jan. 13 and sought asylum in the Scandinavian country.

His lawyer told AFP last week that he was "willing to speak about his experiences in the Wagner Group to people who are investigating war crimes."

Medvedev claims to have fought in Ukraine as a member of Wagner for four months before deserting in November, when the paramilitary organization led by businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin allegedly extended his contract against his will.

A potentially valuable witness in shedding light on the group's reported brutality in Ukraine, Medvedev has been questioned by Norwegian authorities since arriving in the country.

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"The concerned individual has been arrested under the immigration law and it is being considered whether he should be processed for detainment," Jon Andreas Johansen, a police official in charge of immigration affairs, told AFP in an email.

The police did not specify the exact reasons for his arrest and declined to comment further.

Medvedev's Norwegian lawyer, Brynjulf Risnes, told AFP that Medvedev was arrested for refusing to follow restrictions imposed by police since his arrival in the country.

"There are naturally lots of security measures that have been taken and he finds it difficult to conform to them," Risnes added. "He's not accused of anything."

Many questions remain about Medvedev's past and the circumstances of his escape, with some experts saying he could not have crossed the heavily guarded border without assistance.

He claims to have dashed across the frozen Pasvik river that marks part of the Russian-Norwegian border as he was chased by attack dogs and Russian border guards who fired at him.

AFP has not been able to independently confirm his account of events.

Wagner has not denied he worked for the controversial fighting force.

The Norwegian policy's criminal investigations service Kripos, which is taking part in an international inquiry into war crimes in Ukraine, has been interrogating Medvedev since Saturday.

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