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# Wagner Shows Prison Recruit Alive Following Alleged Sledgehammer Killing Video

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**t.me/grey_zone**

A Wagner Group fighter who deserted in Ukraine was kidnapped and executed by fellow fighters, a Telegram channel with links to the Russian mercenary outfit claimed Monday, sharing video of the alleged killing.

This is the second publicly shared video of a Wagner recruit's apparent death by sledgehammer in recent months after its leader threatened extrajudicial measures for convicted criminals who flee the battlefield.

But a video released later Monday by Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's press service showed Yakushchenko alive.

In the video, he expresses gratitude to Wagner for "sparing" him in return for "bringing valuable information from captivity that saved many" Russian fighters' lives.

“Everyone has the right to fix their mistakes,” he said on camera.

Dmitry Yakushchenko, 45, had fled the battlefield days after signing up for Wagner, which recruited him while he was serving a 19-year prison sentence for murder, according to the Grey Zone Telegram channel.

“Today I was on the street of the city of Dnipro when I was hit on the head, lost consciousness and woke up in this facility, where I was told I’d be put on trial,” he is heard saying in the video.

The footage then goes blurry and Yakushchenko is shown being presumably bludgeoned with a sledgehammer three times.

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The gruesome video’s authenticity was immediately disputed by independent journalist David Frenkel, who claimed the slow-motion sledgehammer execution may have been staged.

It was not possible to independently verify the footage shared by Grey Zone.

According to the independent Agentsvo news outlet, Ukraine returned Yakushchenko to Russia in December as part of a prisoner exchange.

Prigozhin was filmed threatening Russian prisoners with execution for deserting in widely circulated recruitment videos last fall.

In November, another video of Wagner fighter and convicted murderer Yevgeny Nuzhin’s sledgehammer killing for deserting in Ukraine was widely circulated on social media.

Prigozhin initially welcomed Nuzhin's killing, saying he deserved a “dog’s death,” but later distanced himself and denied Wagner’s involvement in his murder.

Footage of Yakushchenko’s alleged execution was published after a CNN interview with two unidentified captured Wagner fighters who recounted commanders shooting other recruits for disobeying orders on the battlefield.

Prigozhin was estimated to have recruited up to 50,000 prisoners into Wagner before abruptly declaring last week that the enlistment campaign was over.

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