The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wagner Founder Prigozhin Admits He Was Behind Russia's Infamous Troll Farms

February 14, 2023



Wagner group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin. **Artem Krasnov / Kommersant**

The once publicity-averse founder of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has for the first time confirmed the widespread belief that he also founded the Internet Research Agency, better known as the network of troll farms used to push Kremlin propaganda narratives around the globe over the past decade.

"I was never just a financier of the Internet Research Agency. I invented it, I created it, I ran it for a long time," Prigozhin told journalists from Germany's Der Spiegel magazine, adding that he had set the organization up "to protect the Russian information space from boorish, aggressive anti-Russian propaganda by the West."

Prigozhin's candid admission — not dissimilar to the one he made in September when he finally confirmed that he had founded the Wagner group — is surprising given that he has taken legal action against multiple journalists and media outlets who have referred to him in

connection to Russian troll farms in the past.

The troll farm or troll factory, as the Internet Research Agency is referred to in the international press, is known to be based in St. Petersburg, but otherwise remains a shadowy organization despite efforts by multiple investigative journalists over the years to expose it to greater scrutiny.

According to the FBI, the Internet Research Agency undertook a massive disinformation campaign to influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and in February 2021, it announced it was seeking Prigozhin on suspicion of conspiracy to defraud the United States, interfering in U.S. domestic politics and attempting to influence a presidential election, offering a cash reward of up to $250,000 for information that could lead to his arrest.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/02/14/wagner-founder-prigozhin-admits-he-was-behind-russias-infamous-troll-farms-a80228