The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Report Sheds Light on Work of Wagner's 'Special Department'

February 20, 2023



Wagner group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin. **t.me/Prigozhin_hat**

The Wagner group's internal security division is marred by poor discipline and insubordination that has led to frequent leaks revealing the group's alleged crimes, according to an investigation published by Dossier Center on Monday.

The non-profit organization, which was set up by exiled Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky and is aimed at supporting the rule of law and civil society in Russia, found that Wagner's so-called Special Department is responsible for recruitment and oversight for the group, as well as data security, financial controls, and maintaining the secrecy of Wagner activities.

The Special Department's day-to-day work focuses primarily on controlling the social media activities of Wagner mercenaries, who have in the past repeatedly breached the group's protocols on military secrecy by posting mission photos to both public and private social media channels, according to information obtained by Dossier Center.

Related article: Wagner Commander Who Fled Russia Details Summary Executions

The Special Department's head, identified in the investigation as 38-year-old former police officer Ruslan Mikhailov, routinely broke the secrecy rules while serving in Syria, photo materials featured in the investigation suggested.

The Special Department, which employs as many as 20 operatives, also works to investigate instances of Wagner recruits breaking their code of conduct, including frequent cases involving alcohol and drug abuse, the report said.

However, given the group's shadowy existence and the lack of any legal norms governing its behavior, even grave crimes such as murder or the violent assault of colleagues are normally punished by little more than a fine, the Dossier Center report suggested.

The leaked documents detailing the Special Department's attempt to trace Wagner mercenaries responsible for filming and posting the 2017 video of a Syrian civilian's execution also allowed the Dossier Center to identify those it believed participated in the crime in an investigation carried out with Die Welt, Insider, Paris Match and Art.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/02/20/report-sheds-light-on-work-of-wagners-special-department-a80279