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Ukraine's Bakhmut 'Practically Surrounded,' Wagner Leader Prigozhin Says

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Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's press service published a video appearing to show him in Bakhmut.
t.me/Prigozhin_hat

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, said Friday that the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut was "practically surrounded" by Russian forces.

In a video published by his press service, Prigozhin can be seen saying that Kyiv's forces had access to only one road leading out of the city, which has been the site of bloody fighting for months.

"If the professional Ukrainian army was fighting in [Bakhmut] before, today it's mostly the elderly and children," Prigozhin said.

"They are fighting, but their life expectancy in Bakhmut is now very short, one day or two... give them a chance to leave the city," he said.

Embed:

The video pans to three men identified as captured Ukrainian soldiers, who ask President Volodymyr Zelensky to meet Wagner's demands and ensure their return home.

Ukraine has vowed to hold on to Bakhmut, but Kyiv's military this week said that the situation there was "extremely tense," with Russia sending troops forward in relentless assaults.

The Wagner group, a once-shadowy force founded by Kremlin-linked businessman Prigozhin, has taken center stage in the fight.

Bakhmut, a city with a prewar population of 70,000 once known for its sparkling wine production and salt mines, carries little strategic value but would mark the first significant victory for Russian forces following months of battlefield setbacks.

AFP contributed reporting.

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