

Russia's Wagner Group Opens Dozens of Recruitment Centers

By [AFP](#)

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Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. [concordgroup_official / Telegram](#)

The head of the Russian mercenary group Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, announced the opening of Wagner recruitment centers in dozens of cities across Russia on Friday.

Wagner has been spearheading offensives against cities in eastern Ukraine including Bakhmut, in what has become the longest and bloodiest battle of Russia's year-long invasion. Both sides have suffered heavy losses around Bakhmut.

"Recruitment centers for PMC Wagner have opened in 42 Russian cities," Prigozhin said in a statement, referring to his private military company.

Fighters would be recruited from sports centers and martial arts clubs, Prigozhin added.

"Despite the colossal resistance of the Ukrainian armed forces, we will move forward," the 61-year-old pro-Kremlin businessman said.

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He also alluded to the apparent obstructionism of the Russian Defense Ministry, with whom he has been locked in a power struggle since Wagner began to play an important role in Russia's military campaign last year.

"Despite the spanners that they are throwing in the works at every turn, we will overcome this together," he said.

Prigozhin has for months been recruiting prison inmates to fight with Wagner, promising them commuted sentences upon their return to Russia if they survive a six-month tour of duty.

But in early February Prigozhin said that Wagner's recruitment from prisons had ended, apparently under pressure from the Defence Ministry.

Tensions between Prigozhin and the Defense Ministry have raged for months, but have continued to deteriorate as Prigozhin has claimed multiple battlefield victories ahead of the army proper, criticized Russia's top brass, and accused the military of not sharing ammunition with Wagner units.

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