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Wagner Chief Says Pulling Out of Bakhmut After Blasting Russian Military Top Brass

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Yevgeny Prigozhin **Prigozhin's Press Service**

Updated to add Prigozhin's withdrawal announcement.

Russia's Wagner mercenary group will exit eastern Ukraine's Bakhmut next week after suffering losses due to critical ammunition shortages, the private military contractor's founder Yevgeny Prigozhin announced Friday.

Wagner fighters, many of whom are convicts recruited from Russian prisons, have been at the forefront of Russia's efforts to capture Bakhmut, taking heavy losses in a brutal, monthslong battle. Tensions between Wagner and Russia's Defense Ministry have simmered during this time, with Prigozhin accusing the Russian army of taking credit for victories won by Wagner fighters and of slowing down Wagner units' advances in Ukraine.

"My soldiers will not suffer senseless and unjustified losses in Bakhmut without

ammunition," Prigozhin said in a video address published by his press service in which he is flanked by masked Wagner soldiers.

"That's why we will exit Bakhmut on May 10, 2023," he said, adding that Wagner fighters will de-camp "until the Russian people need us again."

The Kremlin declined to comment on Prigozhin's threat, saying only that it had seen the one-time Kremlin chef's video address.

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The announcement came hours after he filmed an expletive-laden tirade against the military's top brass over the alleged ammunition shortage in Bakhmut.

"[Russian Defense Minister Sergei] Shoigu, [Russian Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Valery] Gerasimov, where the f*ck is the ammunition?" the fuming Prigozhin said on camera.

He filmed the address in the dark of night in front of about 30 dead men, some covered in blood, who he said were Wagner soldiers who would be alive if the ammunition shortage had been resolved.

"You sit there, bastards, in expensive clubs," Prigozhin said. "You think you're the masters of this life and that you have the right to dispose of their lives."

"They came here as volunteers and are dying for you to live it up in your redwood offices. Keep that in mind."

There is a rift between Prigozhin and top Russian military commanders who raised doubts about the mercenary force with President Vladimir Putin, Bloomberg reported earlier this year.

Wagner has taken a leading role in the fighting for the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut since the summer of 2022, which has still not been fully seized by Russia despite the loss of thousands of lives on both sides.

After a spring offensive that largely failed to make any significant territorial gains, military analysts believe that Russian forces in Ukraine are shifting to the defense ahead of a major Ukrainian attack.

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