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Wagner Chief Denies Offering Russian Troop Positions to Ukraine

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Wagner Chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. **Prigozhin Press Service**

The founder of Russia's Wagner mercenary group Yevgeny Prigozhin called reports that he offered information on Russian troop positions to Ukraine "laughable" and a result of a possible smear campaign.

The Washington Post reported earlier Monday that Prigozhin had offered to reveal Russian troop positions to Ukrainian military intelligence in exchange for Kyiv's withdrawal from Bakhmut.

Wagner's fighters have been at the forefront of Russia's monthslong effort to capture the embattled eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, whose value is more symbolic than strategic.

Prigozhin laughed off The Washington Post's report in an audio message posted on Telegram.

"Reading this is of course nice. It means I am not only fighting for Russia but Zelensky is also

fulfilling my orders," Prigozhin said.

"This is laughable."

He said "people from Rublyovka" — a luxurious Moscow suburb home to the Russian elite — could be behind the allegations.

"Of course they will pour as much s*** on me as they can," he said.

The Washington Post report, based on classified Pentagon documents leaked on the gaming platform Discord, said Prigozhin made the offer to Ukraine's military intelligence directorate, GUR, in late January amid intelligence indicating high losses and low morale among Wagner troops.

The Pentagon leak did not specify which Russian troop positions Prigozhin had offered to pass on.

Kyiv was said to have rejected Prigozhin's proposals due to a lack of trust in his intentions. The Washington Post cited an unnamed U.S. official as saying Washington shared Kyiv's doubts.

The Kremlin said it believed the report "looks fake" in its daily press briefing Monday.

Related article: Ukraine's Bakhmut 'Practically Surrounded,' Wagner Leader Prigozhin Says

Prigozhin's rivalry with Russia's Defense Ministry has boiled over during the months-long fight for the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut. He accuses the top brass of neglecting Wagner's ammunition needs.

According to The Washington Post, another leaked U.S. document said that Prigozhin had advised Ukraine's forces to advance toward the border with the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula.

The Washington Post said two Ukrainian officials confirmed that Prigozhin has spoken "several times" to GUR during the course of the war.

One of the leaked U.S. intelligence documents stated that Prigozhin has had phone calls and in-person meetings with GUR officers "in an unspecified country in Africa."

One Ukrainian official described Prigozhin's contacts with GUR as "keeping your friends close and your enemies closer."

GUR chief Kyrylo Budanov did not immediately respond to a question about Prigozhin's alleged offer.

The leaked documents reportedly indicate that Kyiv "suspects, or may know" that the Kremlin is aware of Prigozhin's talks with Ukrainian intelligence.

AFP contributed reporting.

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