The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Regions Roll Back Security Measures After Wagner Rebellion

June 26, 2023



The Moscow River in the heart of Russia's capital. **Yaroslav Chingaev / Moskva News Agency**

Authorities in regions across central Russia have begun lifting security measures after an armed rebellion by the Wagner mercenary group ended with a deal to halt its advance toward Moscow.

Russia's National Anti-Terrorist Committee had declared an "anti-terrorist operation" regime in the Russian capital and the Moscow and Voronezh regions, as Wagner fighters descended on Moscow Saturday.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced an end to the city's "anti-terrorist operation" early Monday, which he declared a non-working day as a preventative measure against crowds gathering during a potential standoff between Wagner mercenaries and Russian security services.

"I thank Muscovites for their patience and understanding," Sobyanin said on social media.

Related article: Relief and Sympathy as Rebels Stand Down in Russian City

The Voronezh and Moscow regions called off their own "anti-terrorist operations" within an hour after Sobyanin's announcement, state-run news agencies reported, citing the Federal Security Service (FSB).

The "anti-terrorist operation" granted the FSB additional powers for monitoring citizens' online activities and restricting the movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Wagner fighters had taken over a key military headquarters in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don early Saturday, from where they launched what Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin called a "march of justice" to topple Russia's military leadership.

Videos shared on social media showed Wagner vehicles passing security checkpoints and roadblocks along a major expressway that links Moscow, Voronezh and Rostov-on-Don.

Regional authorities had resorted to desperate measures in an attempt to slow down the mercenary group's march on the Russian capital, with video showing excavators tearing up entire sections of road.

Embed:

> Alternative methods to block the roads when trucks are not an obstacle for Wagner: simply dig them up
>
> Video via SOTA pic.twitter.com/P4FN6XgqUf
>
> — Anna Chernova (@Anna_Journal) June 24, 2023

Tank tracks damaged more than 10,000 square meters of road in Rostov-on-Don, according to the city's mayor.

Meanwhile, a firefight between Wagner fighters and the Russian military damaged 19 homes in a village situated in the Voronezh region, local authorities reported Sunday.

Emergency officials in the Voronezh region also reported that a fire had broken out at an oil depot as the private military outfit approached.

Embed:

Wagner fighters returned to their base Sunday after President Vladimir Putin agreed to drop treason charges against Prigozhin, who has apparently been exiled to neighboring Belarus.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said late Saturday the "anti-terrorist operation" would be lifted "in the nearest future" after announcing the agreement with Prigozhin.

Authorities have not yet reported any loss of human life during the short-lived revolt. However, unconfirmed reports suggest that as many as 13 Russian pilots may have been killed by Wagner fighters.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/06/26/russian-regions-roll-back-security-measures-after-wagner-rebellion-a81635