

Putin Reveals Russia Paid \$1Bln to Wagner Group in Past Year

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Mikhail Tereshchenko, TASS / kremlin.ru

Russia's Wagner private military group received roughly \$1 billion in funding from state coffers over the past year, President Vladimir Putin [revealed](#) Tuesday.

His comments mark a departure from Moscow's previous [denials](#) of any links between the Russian state and Wagner.

Speaking after a [ceremony](#) thanking soldiers for "stopping civil war" during Wagner's aborted weekend rebellion, Putin said "the upkeep of the entire Wagner Group was fully provided for by the state."

"The Defense Ministry, the state budget fully financed this group," he told a group of servicemen inside the Kremlin.

Putin said the state paid Wagner 86.26 billion rubles (\$1 billion) between May 2022-May 2023 in maintenance and incentive payments alone.

He added that Wagner's owner, the U.S.-sanctioned company Concord, has earned another 80 billion rubles from catering contracts with the Defense Ministry over the past year.

“I hope that no one stole anything or stole very little, either way, we’ll deal with that,” Putin said, hinting at possible law enforcement inspections into Wagner’s finances.

Leading up to his called-off coup attempt, Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin had accused Russia’s military of starving his fighters of ammunition needed to fight in Ukraine.

Wagner Group and Prigozhin were brought out of the shadows after Russia launched a full-scale military offensive in Ukraine in 2022.

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Before that, Wagner engaged mostly covertly in global hotspots including Ukraine, Syria and several African countries, while Prigozhin previously denied the group’s existence.

Wagner fighters have been accused of committing mass executions, rape, child abductions and torture in their areas of operation.

Police raids in Prigozhin-linked properties during Wagner’s lightning-fast march toward Moscow from southern Russia on Saturday [revealed](#) stacks of U.S. dollars and gold bars that Prigozhin had said were intended as salaries for his fighters.

A St. Petersburg news outlet that published photographs of the money, as well as guns, fake passports and an unidentified white powder, deleted the footage after the Kremlin reached an agreement for Prigozhin to abort his revolt.

In exchange, President Vladimir Putin promised to drop criminal mutiny charges against the catering magnate if he agreed to go into exile in neighboring Belarus.

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