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Putin Thanks Servicemen for 'Stopping Civil War' During Wagner Rebellion

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Servicemen on the Kremlin's Cathedral Square before President Vladimir Putin's address. **Yulia Bubnova / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday lauded Russian servicemen and security services for "stopping civil war" during the Wagner mercenary group's aborted insurgency this weekend.

"You have de-facto stopped the civil war, you acted in a clear and well-coordinated manner in a difficult situation," Putin said at a ceremony on the Kremlin's Cathedral Square.

Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin staged a short-lived insurrection on Saturday that ended with an agreement for the Kremlin to drop criminal mutiny charges if he went into exile in neighboring Belarus.

Putin boasted that Wagner's lightning-fast advance toward Moscow from southern Russia did not weaken the military's positions on the Ukrainian frontline.

"We did not have to remove combat detachments from the special military operation zone,"

he said, using the Kremlin-preferred term for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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CNN, citing an anonymous Western official, reported that Kyiv's Western allies had allegedly cautioned the Ukrainian forces against taking advantage of Russia's crisis to avoid the impression of the West helping Prigozhin and threatening Russian sovereignty.

"Make hay of opportunities on Ukrainian territory but don't get drawn into internal matters or strike at offensive military assets inside Russia," CNN quoted an anonymous Western official as saying.

Still, Russian National Guard chief Viktor Zolotov told the ceremony he "did not rule out" Western involvement in Wagner's rebellion.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu attended the ceremony alongside 2,500 soldiers and members of the National Guard, Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Service (FSB) intelligence agency and the Federal Guard Service (FSO).

A minute of silence was held in memory of the at least 12 Russian pilots killed during Wagner's march toward Moscow.

"The airmen didn't flinch and performed their orders and military duty with honor," Putin said, without specifying how many pilots were killed in the standoff with Wagner fighters.

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