

Senior Russian General Knew About Wagner Leader's Mutiny Plans – NYT

June 28, 2023



Russian General Sergei Surovikin in a video address to Prigozhin Saturday. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

Updated with Peskov's comments.

Russia's former top commander in Ukraine, General Sergei Surovikin, had advanced knowledge of Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's plans to topple the country's military leadership last weekend, The New York Times [reported](#) Tuesday, citing unnamed U.S. officials.

"Prigozhin would not have launched his uprising unless he believed that others in positions of power would come to his aid," according to the officials cited by the newspaper.

Surovikin commanded Russia's forces in Ukraine for three months between October 2022 and January 2023 until he was replaced by General Valery Gerasimov.

Prigozhin had praised Surovikin in the past while criticizing Gerasimov and Russian Defense

Minister Sergei Shoigu for their handling of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Related article: [What Do Russians Think of Prigozhin's Rebellion?](#)

According to The New York Times, U.S. officials were now trying to ascertain whether Surovikin "helped plan Mr. Prigozhin's actions last weekend."

President Vladimir Putin "must now decide, officials say, whether he believes that Surovikin helped Prigozhin and how he should respond," the paper noted.

It added that Ukraine's American allies are interested in undermining Surovikin's standing, whose removal would "undoubtedly benefit" Kyiv's efforts to reclaim captured territory during its counteroffensive.

Surovikin himself appeared in a video Saturday [denouncing](#) Prigozhin's short-lived mutiny.

"We are of the same blood. We are warriors. I urge you to stop," Surovikin, with one hand placed on a submachine gun, said in the video.

A former U.S. official cited by The New York Times said Surovikin's "body language suggested he was uncomfortable denouncing a former ally."

Related article: [Putin Thanks Servicemen for 'Stopping Civil War' During Wagner Rebellion](#)

Surovikin, whom Russian media has referred to as "General Armageddon," oversaw the Russian forces' retreat from encirclement in the only regional capital they held to date, the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson.

The New York Times said U.S. officials saw signs that other Russian generals may have also supported Prigozhin's rebellion against Shoigu and Gerasimov.

Putin appeared to fully back Shoigu in the aftermath of Prigozhin's mutiny. The Defense Minister has made several public appearances this week after being notably absent in the hours of Wagner's lightning-fast march toward Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [dismissed](#) the report as "speculation" and "gossip" on Wednesday, suggesting that Putin had not given in to Prigozhin's demands for an imminent reshuffle of the Russian military's top brass.

Prigozhin flew into exile in Belarus on Tuesday as part of a Minsk-brokered deal to have his criminal mutiny charges dropped.

But Putin suggested another criminal probe may be launched when he revealed that Wagner had been financed by the Russian state, saying: "I hope that no one stole anything or stole very little, either way, we'll deal with that."

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/06/28/senior-russian-general-knew-about-wagner-leaders-mutiny-plans-nyt-a81673>