The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wagner ‘Staged’ Cheering Crowds During Mutiny, Claims Rostov Governor

June 30, 2023



Wagner mercenaries seen on the streets of Rostov-on-Don. **AFP**

Public displays of support shown for Wagner mercenaries in southern Russia’s Rostov-on-Don as they took control of a military headquarters last weekend were "staged,” the regional governor said Thursday.

Rostov region Governor Vasily Golubev disputed claims that locals in the regional capital were sympathetic to Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin’s short-lived mutiny, arguing that those who cheered on Wagner mercenaries Saturday were affiliated with the private military company.

“I think it was staged by Wagner members themselves,” Golubev said on the sidelines of a state-sponsored nonprofit event in Moscow attended by President Vladimir Putin.

“Because [Wagner fighters] were in the city and, as far as I know, not all of them were dressed in military uniform,” he added.

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Golubev's remarks come as the Kremlin attempts to show that Putin's rule remains unshaken and stronger than ever amid the fallout from Prigozhin's armed revolt.

Putin has sought to evoke an air of normality in recent days with a number of PR stunts, from taking selfies with a cheering crowd of people in the southern republic of Dagestan to drawing a smiley face on an electronic whiteboard at Thursday's nonprofit event.

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