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Wagner Halts Recruitment After Botched Mutiny

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A Wagner recruitment office in Moscow. **Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS**

Russia's Wagner mercenary group has announced it is suspending the recruitment of new fighters in the aftermath of its failed mutiny and as the Russian military's deadline for volunteer units to sign contracts passed over the weekend.

Wagner's recruitment channel on the Telegram messaging app said late Sunday that a one-month recruitment suspension was linked to its "temporary non-participation" in the war in Ukraine and its relocation to neighboring Belarus.

At the same time, Saturday marked the Russian Defense Ministry's deadline requiring all "volunteer detachments" to sign contracts with the military.

Wagner's now-exiled leader Yevgeny Prigozhin had refused to comply with the Defense Ministry's order and launched a short-lived mutiny to "save" the mercenary outfit on June 23, days after the order was made public.

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A deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko spared Prigozhin criminal mutiny charges in exchange for his exile in Belarus.

Prigozhin has since dismantled his media holding — which included the infamous troll farm known as the Internet Research Agency — after reports suggested it would be taken over by other Kremlin-linked tycoons.

It was not immediately clear how Wagner's suspended recruitment of new fighters would affect its operations in Africa and Syria, where the mercenaries have been accused of committing abuses.

Wagner played a key role in the fight for the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, the longest and bloodiest battle in the war until it was captured by Russian forces in May.

Prigozhin had announced the withdrawal from Bakhmut later that month after revealing the loss of 20,000 out of the recruited 50,000 Wagner fighters in the fight.

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