

Wagner Neared Russian Nuclear Base During Rebellion – Reuters

July 11, 2023



Wagner fighters seen during their revolt in the city of Rostov-on-Don. **AP / TASS**

Wagner mercenaries came close to reaching one of Russia's nuclear weapons storage sites during their short-lived revolt last month, Reuters [reported](#) Tuesday, based on accounts from Ukrainian and Russian officials, local residents, and geo-located videos of the fighters.

Reuters said it tracked the movements of a 75-vehicle Wagner column that split off from the main convoy advancing from southern Russia to Moscow on June 23 and reached as close as 110 kilometers from the Voronezh-45 military base.

Voronezh-45 is a nuclear weapons storage site operated and guarded by part of the Russian Defense Ministry's 12th Main Directorate, which is responsible for protecting the country's nuclear arsenal.

Local residents reported sporadic gunfire and explosions along Wagner's route, including the downing of a Russian military helicopter at the small column's last identifiable location in the Voronezh region town of Talovaya.

Related article: ['Half Patriot, Half Traitor': Wagner Fighters Reflect on Botched Rebellion With Resentment, Uncertainty](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/11/wagner-neared-russian-nuclear-base-during-rebellion-reuters-a81796)

One resident told Reuters that Wagner fighters remained in Talovaya until Sunday when they turned around and returned south.

But the head of Ukraine's military intelligence Kyrylo Budanov suggested — without providing evidence — that an unspecified number of Wagner fighters pressed on to Voronezh-45 and “came close” to acquiring nuclear weapons and escalating the mutiny.

“The doors of the storage were closed and they didn't get into the technical section,” Budanov told Reuters in a video interview.

Nuclear weapons experts told Reuters that even if Wagner fighters had managed to acquire nuclear weapons, they would have found it “virtually impossible” to break through several layers of security to assemble or detonate the bombs

Others cast doubt on whether the specific nuclear weapons stored at Voronezh-45 were operational, characterizing them as “old crap stuck in storage.”

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