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Wagner Announces Closure of Russian Base

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Wagner fighters announce the closure of the Krasnodar training grounds. **Wagner group / Telegram**

Members of the Wagner mercenary outfit have announced the closure of the group's main base in southern Russia as it redeploys in neighboring Belarus following a failed mutiny against Russia's military leadership.

The Molkino military range in the Krasnodar region had served as Wagner's main training grounds until mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin launched a short-lived revolt last month.

An agreement mediated by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko allowed Prigozhin and his Wagner fighters to go into exile in Belarus in exchange for the Kremlin dropping criminal mutiny charges.

Footage shared by the Telegram channel Razgruzka Vagnera ("Unloading Wagner") late Monday showed the fighters ceremoniously lowering the Wagner flag and the Russian tricolor at the Krasnodar training ground.

“The base will cease to exist. PMC Wagner is leaving for new areas of deployment,” one of the fighters said on camera without specifying the group’s final destination.

Related article: 'Several Hundred' Wagner Fighters Arrive to Belarus

Another unnamed Wagner fighter, flanked by dozens of mercenaries in similar combat fatigues, said the Molkino training center will suspend operations by July 30.

The video comes after confirmations from Ukrainian and Polish officials over the weekend that “several hundred” Wagner mercenaries had arrived in Belarus.

The National Resistance Center — a Ukrainian Defense Ministry affiliate — citing “Belarusian partisans,” estimated Tuesday that more than 700 Wagner fighters had already settled in Belarus.

A Belarusian monitoring group that tracks troop movements said the day before that a convoy of more than 100 vehicles carrying Russian flags and Wagner insignia was headed toward a field camp in the Asipovichy region, some 90 kilometers southeast of Minsk.

Belarusian authorities said last week that Wagner fighters were acting as military instructors for the country’s territorial defense forces.

The U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW) said Wagner fighters will likely continue to redeploy from Molkino to Belarus in the coming month.

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