

Russia Detains Former Separatist Ukraine Commander

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Igor Strelkov (Girkin), former defense minister of the Donetsk People's Republic. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

Russian army veteran and ex-FSB officer Igor Girkin has been detained, his [wife](#) and the [RBC business daily](#)'s sources said Friday.

Girkin, who helped Moscow annex Crimea in 2014 and then organized pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine, was detained by law enforcement officers around 11:30 a.m. Moscow time, his wife Miroslava Reginskaya [said](#) on his Telegram channel.

According to the RBC business daily, the detention came after a complaint from a former member of the Wagner mercenary outfit, which Girkin had criticized in the past.

Public court records [show](#) that Girkin is being charged with "public incitement of extremist activity," which is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Moscone's Meshchansky District Court ordered Girkin to two months of pre-trial detention.

“I guess they [Kremlin leadership] got f***ing annoyed with him... pardon my French,” a Kremlin official told The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity.

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His arrest comes three days after he called on Putin to step down.

“The country will not survive another six years of this cowardly mediocrity in power,” Girkin [wrote](#) to his more than 800,000 subscribers on the Telegram messaging app Tuesday.

“He lost his sense of danger at some point, somehow believing he could say anything he wanted. But no one is allowed to do that here now,” another insider told The Moscow Times.

According to Russian political expert Tatiana Stanovaya, Girkin's arrest “undeniably serves the interests” of Russia’s Defense Ministry.

“This is a moment many within the *siloviki* have eagerly awaited. Strelkov had overstepped all conceivable boundaries a long time ago, sparking the desire among security forces — from the FSB to military chiefs — to apprehend him,” Stanovaya [wrote](#) in a Telegram post.

“It's unlikely that there will be massive repressions against 'angry patriots,' but the most vehement dissenters may face prosecution, serving as a cautionary tale for others,” she added.

Girkin was sentenced to life in prison in absentia by a court in The Hague in November 2022 for the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014, killing 298 people.

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