

Putin Signs Decree Forcing Paramilitary Fighters to Swear Oath

By [AFP](#)

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PMC Wagner Center building in St. Petersburg. **Anatoly Maltsev / EPA / TASS**

Russian paramilitary fighters will have to swear an oath to the Russian flag, according to a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin on Friday, two days after the presumed death of mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin.

The measure is aimed at "forming the spiritual and moral foundations for the defense of the Russian Federation" and applies to members of volunteer formations — a term often used to describe mercenary groups.

It also applies to groups "contributing to the execution of tasks given to the armed forces" and territorial defense units, according to the decree published on the Kremlin's website.

Fighters must pledge "their loyalty to the Russian Federation... strictly follow their commanders and superiors' orders, and conscientiously fulfill their obligations."

The document was signed two months after Prigozhin led his Wagner fighters on a deadly rebellion against Moscow's top brass.

Asked about the future of Wagner, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that "legally the Wagner private military group does not exist."

Private military companies are officially outlawed in Russia.

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