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Memorial for Wagner Chief Held in Private

By AFP

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The grave of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin at the Porokhovskoye cemetery in St. Petersburg. **Olga Maltseva / AFP**

A private ceremony was held to commemorate Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, his press service said Tuesday, urging mourners to pay their respects at a cemetery in his native city St. Petersburg.

Prigozhin — a Kremlin confidant turned "traitor" — was killed last Wednesday, two months after ordering his troops to topple Russia's military leadership.

"Yevgeny Viktorovich's farewell was held in a closed setting. Those wishing to say goodbye can visit the Porokhovskoye cemetery," it said in a statement, without specifying whether the mercenary chief killed in a plane crash had been buried.

Related article: Putin Will Skip Prigozhin's Funeral, Kremlin Says

Observers said the decision by the founder of the Wagner private fighting force to turn his troops on Moscow was the most significant direct challenge to President Vladimir Putin's authority since he came to power.

The Kremlin said earlier Tuesday that the Russian leader would not attend Prigozhin's funeral.

"The president's presence is not envisaged," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

There were no public announcements of when or where Prigozhin, who was 62, would be buried.

Putin last week described Prigozhin as a man who had made "serious mistakes in his life, but he achieved the right results."

The Kremlin has dismissed speculation that it orchestrated the crash in revenge for Wagner's march on Moscow in June.

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