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Putin Awarded Prigozhin Secret Medal as 'Kremlin Employee' – BBC Russia

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Yevgeny Prigozhin. **Lev Borodin / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2006 signed a secret decree awarding Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin with a state decoration as a Kremlin staffer, the BBC's Russian service reported Tuesday.

The outlet noted that Prigozhin — who died in a plane crash on Wednesday — had already received the Medal of the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland" II class in 2004 and the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland" IV class in 2014.

BBC Russia said it obtained an unpublished decree awarding a third medal — the Medal of the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland" I class — to Prigozhin.

According to the outlet, Putin awarded the now-deceased mercenary leader alongside 18 members of the Presidential Administration for their contribution to holding the G8 summit in St. Petersburg.

Russia was kicked out of the G8 in 2014 over its unilateral annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

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Decree No. 1199, which Putin signed on Oct. 30, 2006, and left unpublished, carries the title: "On bestowing state awards of the Russian Federation to the employees of the Administrative Department of the President."

At the time, Prigozhin was the owner of the Concord management company, which he had founded in the 1990s.

Prigozhin's name alongside other Kremlin employees could indicate that he was either a Kremlin employee or was included to avoid being singled out with a separate decree, lawyer Sergei Markov told BBC Russia.

"The decree's title means that either Prigozhin held some hidden post in the Administrative Department of the President or his name simply added onto the list of awarded employees at the same time," Markov said.

Prigozhin was also known to have received the Hero of Russia medal — the country's highest title. Together with his involvement in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the awards indicate that Prigozhin is to be buried with military honors.

But the timing and location of Prigozhin's funeral remains shrouded in mystery two months after he launched a short-lived mutiny against Russia's military leadership.

The Kremlin said Tuesday that Putin will not attend Prigozhin's funeral and has no information about where and when it was going to be held.

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