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Russian Military to Drop Catering Contract With Prigozhin's Firm – Kommersant

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Russian soldiers waiting to be served in a military mess hall. **Sergei Medvedev / TASS**

Russia's military will sever its contract with the late Yevgeny Prigozhin's food catering business and begin using the services of a competitor company, the Kommersant business daily reported Thursday.

RBE Group, which had supplied Russia's Defense Ministry with rations until being replaced by Prigozhin's Concord Catering, will again provide food services to the army, according to an anonymous source close to the company.

Kommersant said RBE has been readying for the renewed contract by hiring managers and renting commercial space in central Moscow vacated by the French alcohol maker Pernod Ricard.

RBE Group was forced to fire 32,000 employees after losing its contract to Concord Catering in

2013, when Russian investigators launched a probe into the heads of RBE's several subsidiaries.

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Kommersant did not disclose the terms of RBE Group's reported contract with the Russian military.

In a statement to the newspaper, the company said only that it was "consolidating management personnel in one space" without confirming or denying a renewed deal with the military.

Neither Russia's Defense Ministry nor Prigozhin's Concord Catering have commented on Kommersant's report.

Concord Catering is a subsidiary of Concord Management and Consulting, which was indicted by the United States for allegedly carrying out a long-running scheme to interfere with the 2016 presidential election.

The U.S. Justice Department dropped its prosecution of the firm in 2020.

Prigozhin-linked companies signed nearly 5,400 state contracts worth $3.2 billion with the military, schools and hospitals between 2011 and 2019, according to the U.S.-funded Current Time news channel.

Kremlin banquets organized by Prigozhin's catering business earned the late mercenary chief the nickname "Putin's chief."

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