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Kazakhstan Jails Citizen for Joining Wagner, Fighting in Ukraine

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The Wagner mercenary group's insignia. **BelTA News Agency (CC BY 3.0)**

A man in Kazakhstan has been sentenced to six years and eight months in prison for fighting in Russia's war against Ukraine, the Kazakhstan service for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported Tuesday.

Alexei Shompolov, 34, was charged with "mercenarism" for joining the Wagner private military company, as well as with “committing a serious criminal offense against the peace and security of mankind.”

Shompolov, who admitted his guilt in court, said he chose to fight for Wagner in Ukraine because he was in desperate need of money.

According to him, an online advertisement for Wagner promised prospective fighters a monthly salary of 240,000 rubles ($2,696).

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Besides the jail sentence, the court confiscated 205,590 Russian rubles ($2,321) from Shompolov, who it said had acquired the money "by illegal means."

The court also described Shompolov's involvement in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine as being "aimed at overthrowing or undermining the constitutional order or violating the territorial integrity of a state," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported.

In May, Shompolov crossed the Russian-Ukrainian border to fight near the war-torn town of Bakhmut as a part of an artillery unit.

Russian authorities have sought to boost Moscow's troop numbers in Ukraine by offering lucrative salaries to men willing to fight in the war, including foreign nationals from nearby countries in Central Asia.

Last year, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree making it easier for foreigners to obtain Russian citizenship if they join the country's military.

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