

Wanted American Man Flees to Russia, Signs Military Contract

April 04, 2024



A Russian government video that appears to show Wilmer Puello-Mota. **Video grab**

A former American city council member who faces trial in the United States on child pornography charges appears to have fled to Russia and joined the Russian military, according to footage [shared](#) by regional authorities in the northern Khanty-Mansi autonomous district.

Wilmer Puello-Mota, former city councilor of Holyoke, Massachusetts, [reportedly](#) left the United States on Jan. 7 in violation of court orders while being tried in Rhode Island for possession of child pornography.

The Massachusetts-based newspaper The Republican [reported](#) last month that people who know Puello-Mota had recognized his voice in a short video showing the capture of the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka in February.

On Wednesday evening, the Khanty-Mansi regional government's official channel on the Telegram messaging app published a video interview at a military enlistment center with a

man identified as former U.S. soldier “Wil.” The man appears to be Puello-Mota.

The Republican said Puello-Mota, 28, was a member of the U.S. National Guard before being separated from the service due to child pornography charges in October 2022.

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“An American signed a military contract at the patriots center in Khanty-Mansi,” reads a message accompanying the video on Telegram. “He liberated Avdiivka fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with Russians.”

“I definitely would do it again, I’d go back if I could,” Puello-Mota says in the video as he recounts his experience fighting in an “international brigade” alongside the Russian army.

The Khanty-Mansi government did not mention Puello-Mota by name or the outstanding criminal charges against him in the United States. The video was widely circulated among influential pro-war bloggers on Telegram.

Russian authorities have not commented on Puello-Mota’s reported recruitment into the military.

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