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Finland Deports Alleged Ex-Wagner Fighter Back to Russia

By AFP

November 17, 2025



A photo purportedly of the Russian man Yevgeny, who was deported from Finland. **Telegram**

Finland deported a Russian man who illegally crossed the border between the two countries in June, the border guard told AFP Monday, with local media reporting that he was a former mercenary for the Wagner private military company.

Finnish border guards had arrested the man, whose name and age were not disclosed, on June 17 after he illegally crossed the border through a forest near the town of Kitee in eastern Finland. He sought asylum in Finland, but immigration authorities rejected his request and ordered him to be deported.

A border guard official said the deportation was carried out on November 14.

"Our patrol escorted him to the border at the Niirala border crossing. From there, the person crossed over to the Russian side," Mikko Kallinen from the North Karelia Border Guard

District told AFP.

While officials declined to reveal his identity, public broadcaster Yle reported that his first name is Yevgeny and that he used to be a contract mercenary for Russia's Wagner group.

Kallinen said a preliminary investigation confirmed the man's military background, but he declined to comment on his reported ties to Wagner.

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On social media, the man identified himself as a Wagner soldier and criticized Russia's military leadership, Yle reported.

According to pre-trial investigation reports seen by AFP, the man claimed he had been fighting in Ukraine and subsequently fled the country.

Finland sealed its border with Russia in December 2023 amid an influx of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, which Helsinki claimed was a hybrid operation orchestrated by the Kremlin.

The Nordic country is now building a 200-kilometer (124-mile) fence along its border with Russia. The fence, scheduled to be finished in 2026, has an estimated cost of 380 million euros ($441 million).

In 2023, a Russian man claiming to be a Wagner deserter sought asylum in Norway after fleeing to the Scandinavian country. His asylum request was later rejected, but he was granted a temporary residence permit due to threats to his safety that he might face upon returning to Russia.

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