



# **WAGNER ENGAGEMENTS IN UKRAINE AND ACROSS THE GLOBE**

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# The Wagner Group (PMC Wagner)



- An illegal Russian transnational terrorist organization, that has been tracked in **Ukraine, Syria, Libya, the Central African Republic, Mali, and elsewhere**. It is known as a deadly fighting force of mercenaries to **further Russia's military interests around the world, protecting the ruling or new ruling elite, as well as, the critical infrastructure**.
- Its **management and operations** are deeply intertwined with the Russian military and intelligence community, despite the fact that private military contractors are officially forbidden in Russia.
- **Yevgeny Prigozhin** – a close associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin – is believed to be financially supporting the Wagner Group. He has been repeatedly sanctioned by the United States for funding the **Internet Research Agency** that meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

# The Wagner Group in 2014





## Prior Wagner Engagements

Wagner Group was officially established in **2014**. Since then the group played a prominent role, fighting alongside the Russian army in a series of conflicts.

- In 2014, the Wagner Group provided military support for Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. The Wagner Group was **repeatedly accused of war crimes and human rights abuses**.
- In 2017, the Wagner group deployed ~**500 men** to suppress local uprisings against the government of Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir. Russian mercenaries were accused of deadly attacks on mines, killing dozens.
  - As a payment, Prigozhin received exclusive rights to mine gold in Sudan through his company M-Invest. Before his overthrow in April 2019, Bashir offered a naval base on the Red Sea to Moscow.

# The Wagner Group in Syria







## More of Wagner Engagements

- Since 2018, the Wagner Group was supporting the government of Faustin-Archangel Touadera in Central African Republic (CAR), opposed by various rebel groups. UN experts accused Russian mercenaries of committing **human rights violations** in CAR.
  - After campaign, Prigozhin-linked company obtained licenses for **diamond** and **gold mining** in the region
- In December 2021, the Wagner group arrived in Mali to train local forces and protect the Malian government. The first quarter of 2022 saw civilian deaths higher than all of 2021. In March 2022, Wagner group facilitated a massacre of approximately **300 civilians during a siege**. They have also attempted to plant evidence to accuse the French army of atrocities.
- Wagner has also been found propping up regimes in **Venezuela, Madagascar, Mozambique**, and **Libya**.

# Russian security forces in CAR





# Wagner Engagements in Ukraine

- First public during Russia's **invasion and annexation of Crimean Peninsula in 2014**. There, as reported, the fighters of the "Wagner" group were among the so-called "little green men" - unidentified special forces - who occupied the peninsula.
- There are around 50,000 Wagner Group fighters currently deployed to Ukraine, the U.S. Intelligence suggests, including 10,000 contractors and 40,000 convicts.
- Wagner's personnel and experience made it a capable force early in the 2022 Ukraine operation, capturing territory that the Russian forces couldn't. Nevertheless, Wagner is suffering more setbacks as time goes on. Their offensive in Eastern part of Ukraine is slow going, despite substantial artillery support. A Wagner base in Popasna was destroyed in August by a Ukrainian HIMARS strike after a reporter accidentally shared the group's location via a photo posted on Telegram.





# Expansion

- The group's responsibilities have expanded, and now it must continue to support thousands of fighters abroad while maintaining a section at the frontline in Ukraine. These lines of effort, which are a stark contrast to Wagner's past roles in Syria and Africa, have forced Wagner to hire whoever it can to meet its short-term needs in Ukraine.
- While the **foreign operations are filled with ex-Russian servicemen** who originally worked for Wagner, the company's soldiers in Ukraine are **now represented by a wide variety of people, from disgraced generals to prisoners recruited directly from penal colonies**; which has ultimately led to high losses among them, and is still ongoing.



## Efforts to Stop Wagner

- Both the U.S. Congress and the U.K. Parliament launched inquiries last year into Wagner's operations and what they can do to counter them. The U.S., and the EU have also slapped sanctions on the group, including a series of sanctions directly targeting Prigozhin and his businesses.
- The expansion of the multilateral sanctions against Wagner puts a constant pressure on its ability to operate. However, Wagner's financial structures appear to be deliberately complex and ambiguous. It mostly relies on front companies to hide its operations and assets, that are linked to the Russian government. This **weakens the effectiveness of sanctions** and other financial targeting policies, which private military companies can avoid by changing their structure as well as reorienting their financial activities and obscuring them.
- The Wagner Group is in the process of being designated as a "**transnational criminal organization**" by the U.S. Treasury Department, though designating them as an FTO has been discussed. The European Parliament has also adopted a resolution encouraging the European Council to put it on the terrorist list. Estonia has designated them as a terrorist organization

# Thank you!

