



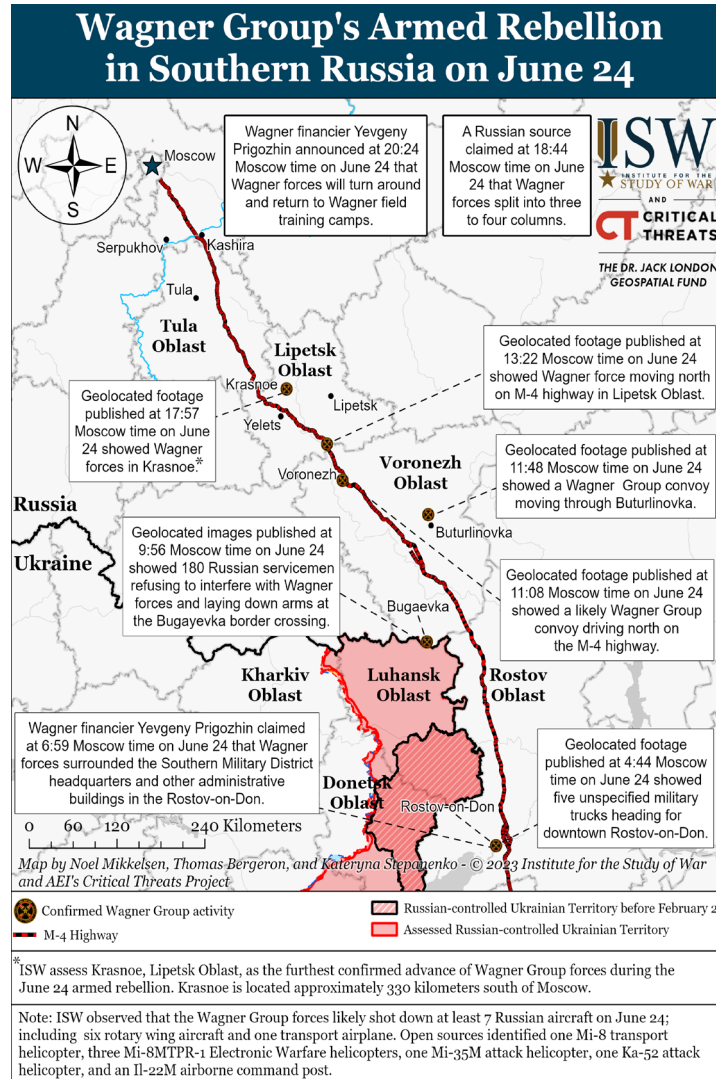
# (U) WAGNER GROUP REBELLION

**(U) This infographic describes the Wagner Group Rebellion.** On 23 June 2023, the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary organization, rebelled against the government of Russia. The revolt arose amidst escalating tensions between the Russian Ministry of Defense and Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of Wagner. Prigozhin portrayed the rebellion as a response to an alleged attack on his forces by the ministry. He dismissed the government's justification for invading Ukraine, blamed Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu for the country's military shortcomings, and accused him of waging the war for the benefit of Russian oligarchs. In a televised address on 24 June, Russian president Vladimir Putin denounced Wagner's actions as treason and pledged to quell the rebellion. Prigozhin's forces seized control of Rostov-on-Don and the Southern Military District headquarters and advanced towards Moscow in an armored column. Following negotiations with Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, Prigozhin agreed to stand down and, late on 24 June, began withdrawing from Rostov-on-Don. The Russian Federal Security Service opened a case for armed rebellion, but on 27 June closed it and dropped the charges stating that rebels had "stopped the actions directly aimed at committing a crime".



Yevgeny Prigozhin  
**23 JUN**

- Wagner Group co-founder/owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin launched an armed rebellion on June 23 to force a leadership change within the Russian MoD.
- Prigozhin set informational conditions for this effort earlier in the day by accusing the Russian MoD and unnamed oligarchs of deceiving Putin and the Russian public in order to launch the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- In response to Prigozhin's statements and Wagner movement, primarily towards Moscow and Rostov, Russian internal security forces activated. The Kremlin immediately opposed Prigozhin's actions.
- Prigozhin's start of the armed rebellion was the culmination of his campaign to retain control over his military forces, and he viewed the rebellion as an existential survival effort.
- Prigozhin's intention was to gain the allegiance of senior Russian officers and military personnel, but he was unable to secure sufficient military support considering that Wagner-affiliated Army General Sergei Surovkin denounced Prigozhin's call for armed rebellion.



## 24 JUN

- The Kremlin announced late on June 24 that Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko negotiated a deal under which Prigozhin will travel to Belarus without facing criminal charges in Russia; some portion of Wagner Group fighters will sign contracts with the Russian MoD; and no Wagner personnel will be charged for their involvement in an armed rebellion.
- The Wagner Group encircled the Russian SMD's headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and drove to within 330km of Moscow City prior to the announcement of the deal.
- The Kremlin struggled to cohere an effective rapid response to Wagner's advances, highlighting internal security weaknesses due to surprise and the impact of heavy losses in Ukraine.
- Putin backed the Russian MoD and its ongoing efforts to centralize control of Russian irregular forces (including Wagner) over Prigozhin.



Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, left, and Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov

## 25 JUN

- Russian sources speculated on the specifics of the deal mediated by Belarusian dictator Lukashenko to end the Wagner Group's June 23-24 armed rebellion, including the possible involvement of Putin's chief of staff.
- The implications of the Lukashenko-Prigozhin deal for the leadership of the Russian MoD also remain ambiguous.

## 26 JUN

- Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech on June 26 seeking to persuade as many Wagner fighters and leaders as possible to join the Russian military and continue fighting against Ukraine and to cause individuals most loyal to Yevgeny Prigozhin to self-identify.
- The Kremlin indicated that Russia aims to retain Wagner forces to sustain its operations in Ukraine and other international engagements.
- Prigozhin attempted to downplay his armed rebellion on June 26 in his first statement since the rebellion failed, likely to shield himself from accusations of attempting a coup against Putin.

## Outlook

- The Kremlin is likely attempting to signal that Shoigu will maintain his position for now and trying to present Prigozhin as corrupt and a liar to destroy his reputation among Wagner personnel and within Russian society.
- The future of the Wagner Group is unclear, but it will likely not include Prigozhin.
- Lukashenko likely seeks to use the Wagner Group in Belarus to buy maneuvering space to balance against the Kremlin campaign to absorb Belarus via the Union State and likely seeks to closely control any Wagner Group forces that move into Belarus.
- The ongoing Putin-Lukashenko-Prigozhin powerplay is not yet over and will continue to have short-term and long-term consequences that may benefit Ukraine.

ISW – Institute for the Study of War  
MoD – Ministry of Defense  
SMD – Southern Military District

In-depth information can be found at ISW website:  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/>