

## **The Fate of the Wagner Group was decided in Rostov, “Reorganization”**

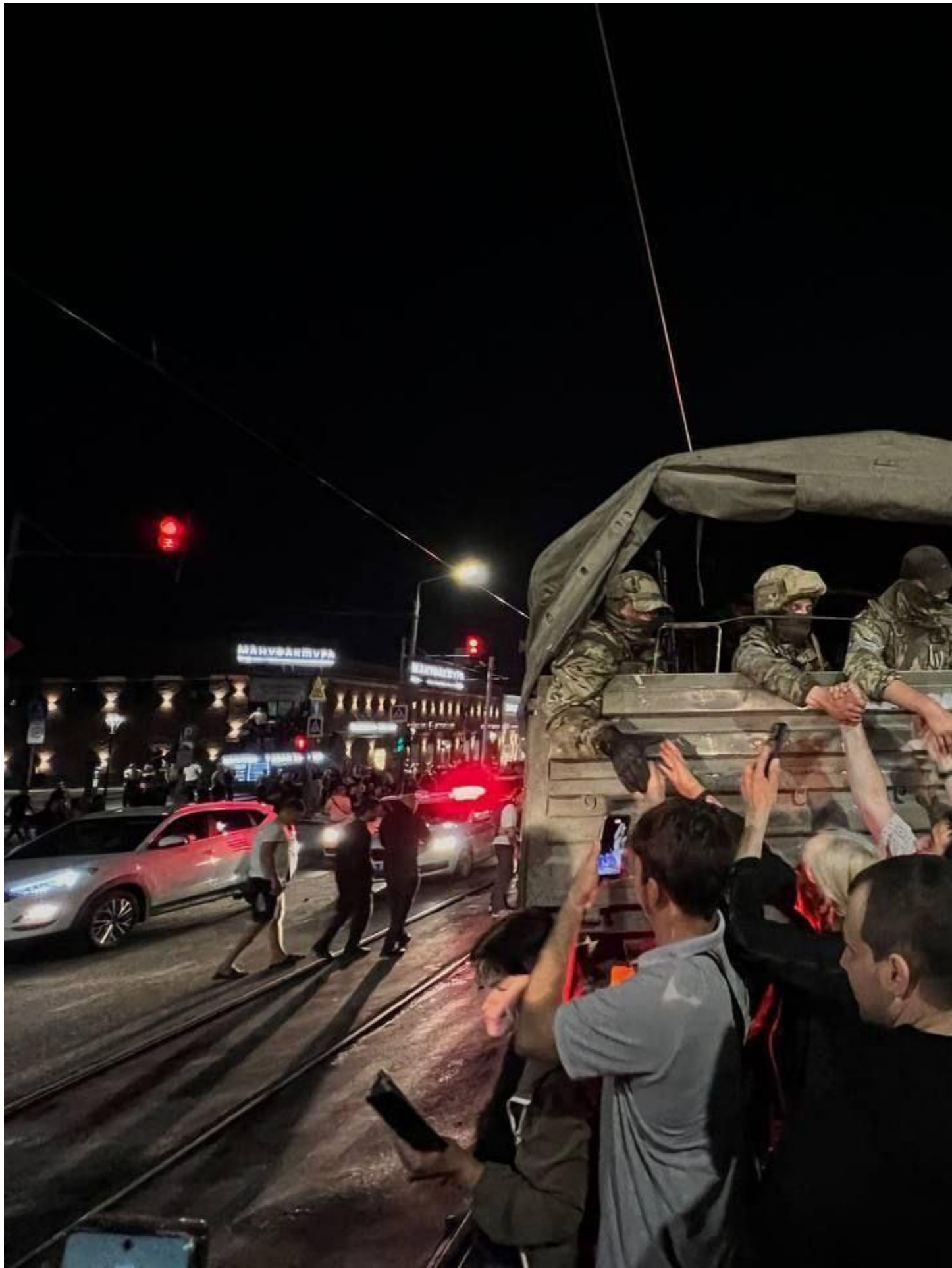
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**Note:** Mr. Dimitrios Kalliontzis permitted RIEAS to publish his article.

The short-lived mutiny of Wagner PMC ended as unexpectedly as it started on the evening of the 24th of June with Prigozhin's announcement that the so-called "Justice march to Moscow" was abandoned. At the same time, Wagner's paramilitaries started withdrawing from Rostov on Don, which have been briefly controlled by Wagner since the 23rd of June 2023. A part of the public actively and overtly supported Wagner in its brief presence in Rostov as was attested by video footage in various social media.



Wagner forces withdrew from Rostov on Don on the night of 24th of June 2023

During the Wagner uprising, the losses of Russian Aerospace forces consisted of 3x Mi-8 MTRP-1 EW helicopters, 1 Mi-8 transport helicopter, 1 Ka-52 attack helicopter, 1 Mi-35 M attack helicopter, and 1 Ilyushin Il-22 (airborne command post). Moreover, 13 to 20 crewmen were KIA. It was the worst day in terms of loss of air assets for the Russian Aerospace forces since the beginning of Ukraine's invasion.



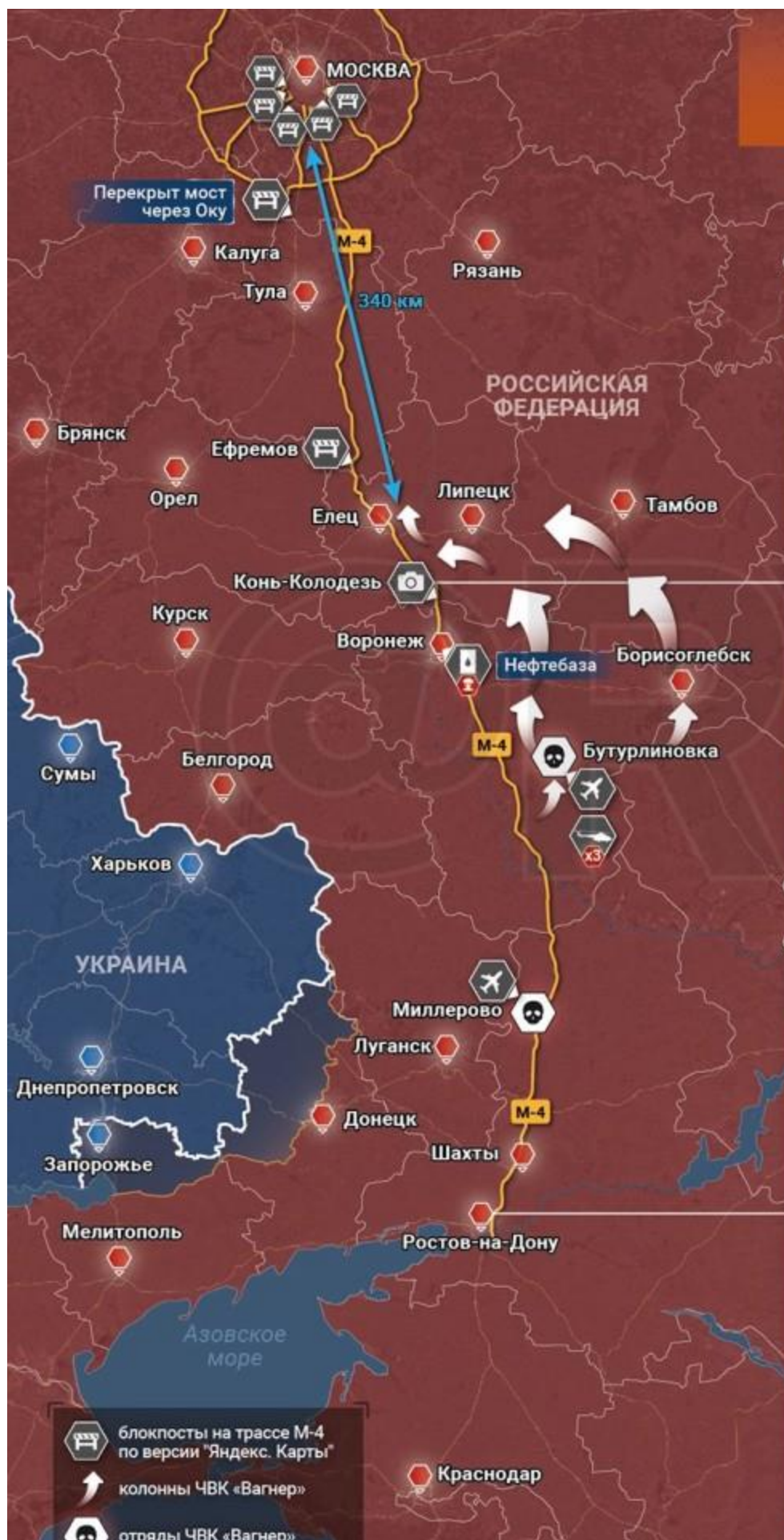


Debris of a Russian Ka-52 attack helicopter which was shot down by Wagner paramilitaries near Talovaya, Voronezh Oblast

The increased presence of EW assets among the destroyed air assets, specialized in the disruption of communications and in SIGINT, indicated that the Russian armed forces were desperately trying to intercept Wagner's communications in order to acquire intelligence regarding current and future movement plans. The fact that Russian National Guard units effectively isolated Moscow denying all access to the capital by creating roadblocks, and obstacles indicated that Wagner, to a certain extent, achieved operational security leaving the Russian planners in a state of limbo and highlighting once more the inefficiency of the Russian military planning and operational foresight.



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по Ростовской об

Wagner's advance towards Moscow and the location of roadblocks that effectively isolated Moscow.(Source: Rybar Tgm)

Wagner's mutiny ended after Prigozhin accepted an offer by the Belarusian President, Alexander Lukashenko to halt the advance toward Moscow and take further de-escalation steps such as withdrawing from Rostov on Don and other military areas which they controlled. In return, security guarantees were provided to all Wagner members including Prigozhin and other Wagner's high-ranking members. President Putin in a video message offered three options to the PMC's members, to integrate into the Russian army by signing new contracts with the Russian MOD, to demobilize and return to their homes, or to relocate to Belarus.

Immediately after the end of Wagner's mutiny, the Russian authorities started to implement measures against the Private Military Company. All the official Wagner's social media accounts in VK (the equivalent of Facebook in Russia) were blocked under the request of Roskomnadzor which is Russia's media watchdog. [Russia blocks access to Wagner boss' company on social media as regulators crack down on dissent - UPI.com.](#)

Moreover, the media group Patriot Media holding company which publishes "People's News", "Neva News", "Politics Today" and "Economy Today", and was owned by Prigozhin, either shut down or announced that they are seizing their operations. Wagner's promotional and recruiting banners were torn down all over Russia in yet another indication of eliminating the communication footprint of Wagner all over Russia. [Russian media watchdog blacklists outlets linked to Wagner mercenary chief | AP News](#)







Wagner's banner is torn down in St Petersburg on the 24th of June.

The stripping of Wagner's assets continues at a steady pace. According to one of the Wagner-affiliated Telegram accounts ([https://t.me/wagner\\_group\\_pmc](https://t.me/wagner_group_pmc)), on 01/07/23 the sign "PMC Wagner Center" was removed from the multistory building which housed the organization's HQ and technological center in St Petersburg. The Russian authorities at a steady pace but without fanfare are stripping Wagner from its tangible assets.

It has to be noted that the same Telegram channel stated that "The main reason for the withdrawal was the relocation of the main part of the Wagner Center PMC to production areas in order to improve interaction with the production units of the center", a clear indication that also some of the social media accounts affiliated with Wagner are now handled by pro-regime administrators aligning their rhetoric with that of Putin's regime.



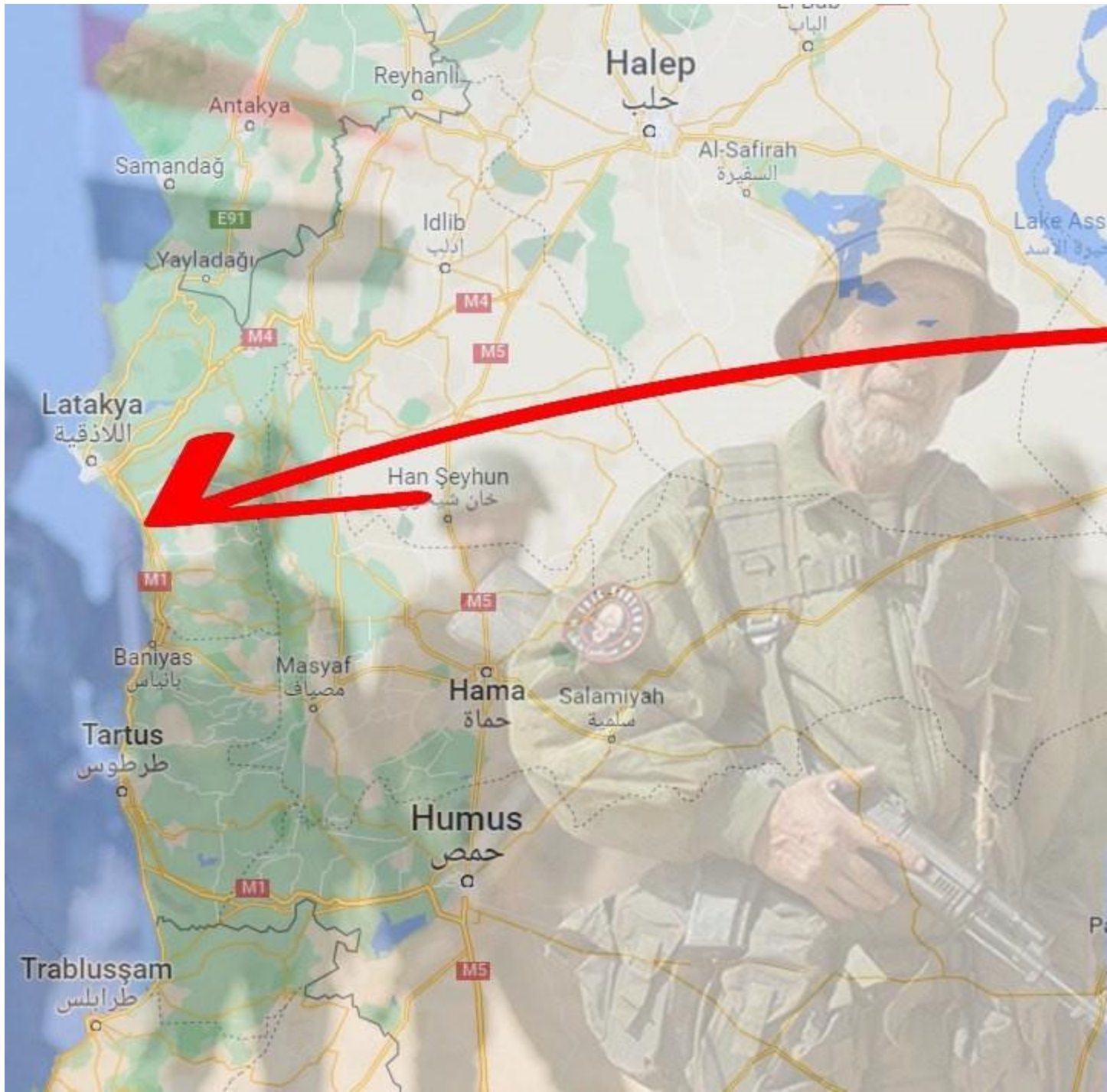
Removal of the sign "PMC Wagner Center" from the organization's HQ and technological center in St Petersburg.

The whole turmoil affected also Wagner's forces deployed in Syria and in Libya. According to open sources, Wagner's offices in Damascus, Hama, and Deir Ezzor were raided by the Syrian Intelligence Service and Russian military police. Unconfirmed reports suggested that several people affiliated with Wagner were detained [Syria: Wagner fighters reportedly detained and offices raided | Middle East Eye](#).

Moreover, according to an open-source related to local Kurdish militias, a number of Wagner paramilitaries were transported from the Maaden military base in Syria to the Hmeimim Russian military base in Latakia, Syria. As per the same source, the paramilitaries will be transported to Belarus. The provided information is in line with recent reports which suggest that Wagner's paramilitaries were given the option either to incorporate into the Russian Army or migrate to Belarus.

The weakening of Wagner's units might have a number of on-ground implications which can be exploited by ISIS terrorists who are active in Eastern Syria. Moreover, the vacuum could be exploited by Iran by sending more of its militias into the area.





Source:Rojava Media Center

According to multiple open sources, in Libya, on the 30th of June, an unknown UAV targeted the Al-Kharouba air base which is hosting Wagner's units and is located in northeastern Libya. Information about the strike is limited. According to a usually reliable open source, the strike was conducted by a Turkey-made Bayraktar Akıncı UCAV recently

purchased by GNA. [Wagner base in eastern Libya hit by 'unknown' drone strike - Al-Monitor: Independent, trusted coverage of the Middle East](#)

Although it is not clear whether the attack was directly related to Wagner's mutiny, it is yet another indication that various actors will take advantage of the current situation in order to promote their interests and increase their influence in places where Wagner is operating.



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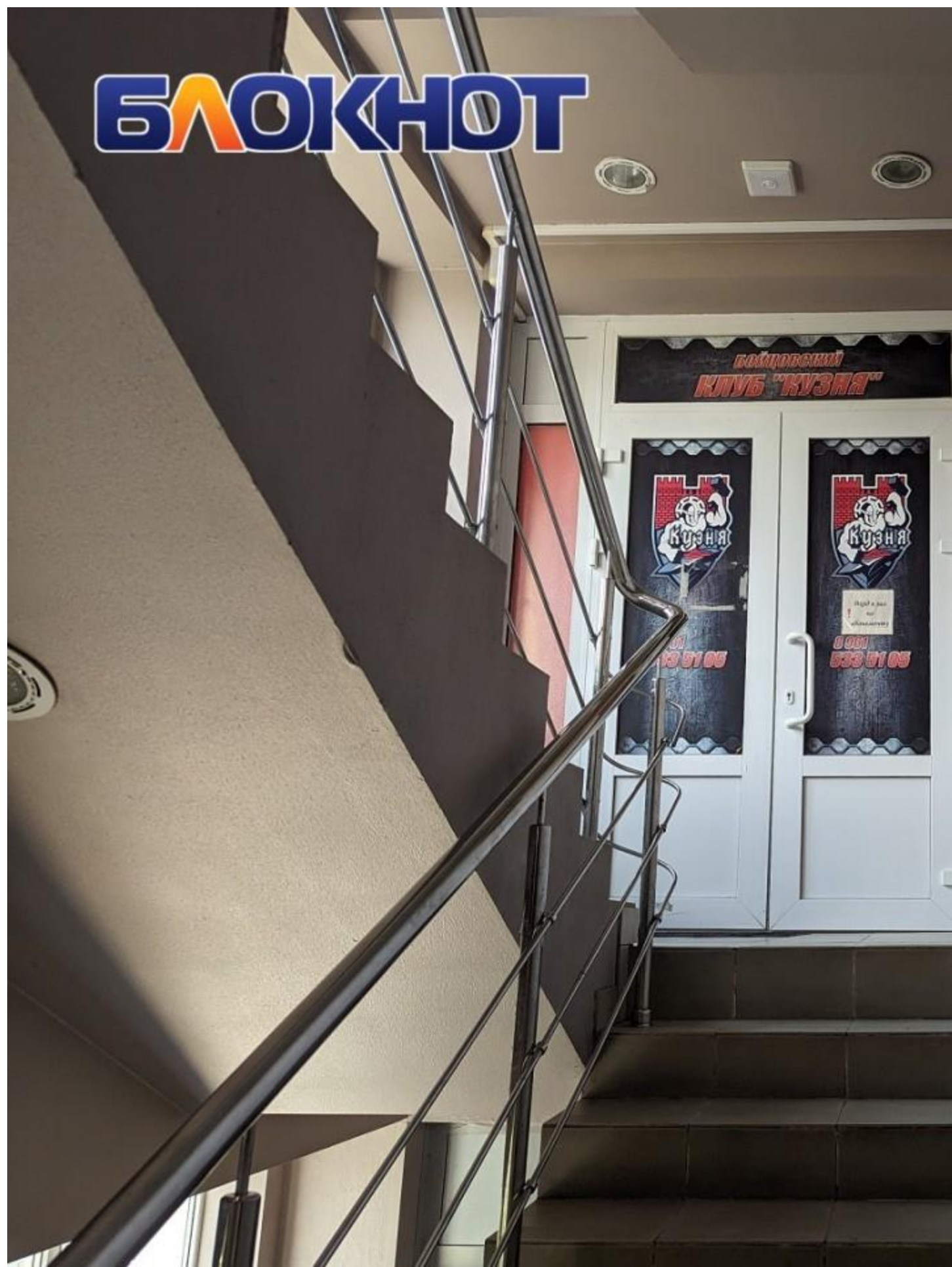




Geolocation of Al-Kharouba air base (source: english.iswnews.com)

Although it was expected that after the crackdown of Putin's regime authorities on Wagner and its regional offices the recruitment effort of Wagner will cease, it seems that this was not the case, at least until the 30th of June. Media based in Krasnodar, which is a hotbed of Wagner activity as numerous recruitment centers and the Molkino training center are located there, reported that the recruitment procedure as of the 30th of June was still ongoing. This information was also reported by international media outlets which contacted Wagner's recruitment centers via phone. ["The most difficult selection is underway": the Wagner PMC center in Krasnodar showed \(bloknot-krasnodar.ru\)](#)

**БЛОКНОТ**



Wagner's recruiting center Krasnodar, located in Academician Pavlova str., 64, 3rd-floor at "Fight Club Kuznya"

However, in a recent development, on the 2nd of July Wagner affiliated Telegram channels reported that as Wagner is no longer involved in battles in Ukraine and their units are relocated to Belarus the recruitment stops for a period of one month beginning with the 2nd of July 2023. ([https://t.me/wagner\\_topwar](https://t.me/wagner_topwar))





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The announcement on several Wagner-affiliated Telegram Channels that recruitment will stop

One of the options given to Wagner's mercenaries by Putin was to relocate to Belarus. Information coming from a usually reliable open source which is also supported by satellite pictures, suggests that already a camp is being built in the area of former military unit No. 61732, which is located in Tsel village, Asipovichy district, Mahiliou region, Belarusia. The facilities there, according to estimations based on analysis of the satellite images, could accommodate at least 8000 people for an extended period of time. However, so far there is no confirmation that Wagner's units started to relocate to the said camp. Moreover, according to unconfirmed reports, more camps are possible to appear in Hrodna, Minsk, and Vitsiebsk regions. What kind of mission Wagner's mercenary will undertake in Belarus is also a mystery. Lukashenko hinted that they might be used for the training of the Belarusian Army but this sounds more like a pretext to justify their presence there. [Main page — MotolkoHelp](#)





Satellite image of the facilities built in Tsel village, Asipovichy district, Mahiliou region, Belarus

Putin's regime will keep stripping Wagner from tangible and intangible assets in an effort to reduce its influence and assume control of its operations in Russia and abroad. However, due to the level of public support that Wagner enjoys in some parts of Russia, this process will take time and will be implemented gradually.



It is highly likely that the facilities prepared in Belarus will host a number of Wagner paramilitaries that in turn could be used to promote Russian strategic interests outside of Russia. As Belarus enjoys partnerships with several African Nations this could be a pretext so that the camps that will host Wagner's operatives will serve as staging points and support hubs for Wagner's operations abroad.

The possibility of using Wagner units relocated to Belarus in order to attack Ukraine from this direction without the assorted heavy weapons and military hardware is not considered as likely. However, the presence of a large force of seasoned fighters will create additional tactical and operational headaches for Ukrainian military planners.

A part of Wagner's manpower will be integrated into regular Russian army units in an effort to bolster their ranks with seasoned fighters thus replenishing losses suffered so far in the campaign. Russian regime will keep nominally supporting Wagner units until decisions are made for their fate, as without state logistical support they will not be able to operate and pay the salaries to its personnel which in turn might lead to the resurrection of tensions and friction with Putin's regime.

The weakening of Wagner's units might have a number of on-ground implications which can be exploited by various actors in order to promote their interests or increase their influence. ISIS terrorists who are active in Eastern Syria might step up their attacks against Syrian government forces. Moreover, a potential vacuum in Syria could be exploited by Iran by sending more of its militias into the area thus increasing its influence.

In the short to medium term, Wagner will undergo an extended reorganization but it will keep operating under the same name. However, in the long term, the possibility that it would be absorbed by other private military companies which will rise in prominence cannot be excluded.