

Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov vows to start his own Wagner-style army
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Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov on Sunday threatened to set up his own private army in the style of Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group of mercenaries. The 46-year-old is seen as preparing for civil war in Russia, or even for making Chechnya a breakaway state, in a move that may be linked to his fears that Vladimir Putin will be deposed over Russia's faltering invasion of Ukraine. The rise of Wagner and other mercenary forces outside the traditional Russian military command structures has raised concerns among Western diplomats that such groups could one day pose a threat to stability in Moscow.



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In a post on Telegram, Kadyrov (pictured center) said Prigozhin's Wagner — which has been fighting alongside Russian troops in Ukraine — had achieved 'impressive results' and that private military companies were a necessity.

'We can say confidently that Wagner has shown its mettle in military terms and drawn a line under discussions about whether or not such private military companies are needed,' said Kadyrov, who has led Chechnya since 2007.

'When my service to the state is completed, I seriously plan to compete with our dear brother Yevgeny Prigozhin and create a private military company. I think it will all work out,' he added.

Kadyrov and Prigozhin both lead forces in Ukraine largely autonomously of Russia's military command and are staunch allies of Putin, but they have also spoken out in public against the military leadership.



Photos in Gallery©Butterscotch warlord Ramzan Kadyrov vows to start his own Wagner-style army

At its peak, Wagner had at least 50,000 fighters. It also operates abroad, completing shadowy missions in the Kremlin's interest in Syria and Africa. The group has played an increasingly prominent role in Russia's war in Ukraine, spearheading a months-long assault on the Donetsk region town of Bakhmut.

Kadyrov, the son of former Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov who was assassinated in a 2004 bombing in Grozny, has formed a tacit alliance with Prigozhin, amplifying each other's criticism of Russia's military top brass and calling for more vigorous prosecution of the conflict.

Recently made a Colonel-General by Putin, Kadyrov already controls a large force of Russian national guards in the Chechen Republic, and has sent thousands of men to fight in Ukraine. But now he wants his own private army, too. Pictured: Service

members gather in a square during head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov's address.



Photos in Gallery©Yelena Afonina/TASS

Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov vows to start his own Wagner-style army 'This move is Kadyrov preparing for the period after Putin, when he intends to have his own large military force either to broker power in Russia — perhaps in a civil war — or even lead his own fiefdom out to a breakaway,' a Moscow-based expert said.

Kadyrov, a father of 13 with three current wives, has ruled Chechnya for 16 years.

Regional MPs voted recently to anoint him Father off the Nation. He expressed his loyalty to Putin's defense ministry at the weekend but there are doubts this would remain if the president fell as a result of a failure of the war.

Kadyrov has previously blamed Russian commanders for incompetence in Ukraine — particularly after successful Ukrainian counteroffensives — and made clear he remains critical of key figures entrusted with military leadership by Putin.

'Remember, friends — we are following orders, not discussing them. Any appointment by the Commander-in-Chief [President Vladimir Putin], any order, any task — each of these decisions is supported by us,' he said.



Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov (right) is seen with Yevgeny Prigozhin (left), the leader of the Wagner private military company. Photos in Gallery©Roman Kadyrov

'The combat officers of the Chechen Republic, myself included, have excellent, well-coordinated relations with the Russian Defense — and there are no disagreements.

This mechanism works like clockwork.' But he also noted: 'By having access to data on the progress of the special military operation [in Ukraine], to information about the potential of the Russian army, its capabilities, and much more, I can have my own opinion, which I, as Ramzan Kadyrov, also have the right to express. But I do not appoint people to command posts, and I do not dismiss them.'

Kadyrov has in particular lambasted Colonel-General Alexander Lapin, who was the commander from the Central Military District when Ukrainian forces liberated thousands of square miles of Russian-held territory, reaching as far east as the city of Lyman with their lightning counteroffensive in November last year.



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Despite his perceived failing, 59-year-old Lapin was assigned to the post of chief of staff of the Russian Ground Forces on January 10.

Speaking of Lapin, Kadyrov said: 'If I had my way I would have demoted Lapin to private, deprived him of his awards, and sent him to the front line to wash off his shame with the rifle in his hands. He should be stripped of his high rank and Hero of Russia honor,' demanded Kadyrov.

'He is being covered up by his superiors in the General Staff.'

Last week Putin appointed close Kadyrov ally Lieutenant-General Andrey Mordvichev, 47, to head Russia's huge central military district.

Wagner became increasingly involved in the conflict towards the end of 2022.

Prigozhin recruited thousands of Russian convicts to join the war, promising them their freedom should they survive and fight for six months. The PMC helped Russian achieve small gains, and claimed to capture the small settlements around the city of Bakhmut, including the salt mining town of Soledar.

However, reports from the front-lines suggested the convict soldiers were sent in human waves against Ukraine's defenders — resulting in massive casualties.



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Prigozhin (pictured), who spent the final decade of the Soviet Union in prison for robbery and fraud, was for years an associate of Putin.

His catering group swept up government contracts, earning him the nickname of 'Putin's Chef,' while he deployed Wagner mercenaries to fight alongside Russian servicemen in Syria and to conflicts across Africa to advance Russia's geopolitical interests. After years of denials, he last year admitted his links to Wagner and said he had interfered in U.S. elections.



Pictured: A Ukrainian tank rolls down a snow covered road as military mobility continues within the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas, Ukraine on February 18, 2023.
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Mounting evidence suggests the Kremlin has moved to curb what it sees as Prigozhin's excessive political clout, ordering him to halt his public criticism of the defense ministry while advising state media to stop mentioning him or Wagner by name. Kadyrov said such groups were 'both needed and necessary.'