

Russian Press Names Wagner Mercenary as Likely Perpetrator in Gruesome Syria Beheading

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Novaya Gazeta said it has appealed to Russian law enforcement authorities to investigate the torture. novayagazeta.ru

This article contains graphic content that may be disturbing to some readers.

One of the men filmed beheading, dismembering and setting fire to the body of a Syrian man in 2017 is a former police officer from southern Russia, the investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper has [said](#) six months after it first reported on the torture in Syria.

The paper initially [named](#) the alleged torturer as Stanislav D., believed to be a reconnaissance gunner with the Kremlin-linked Wagner mercenary group, in its November 2019 report. The Kremlin had [said](#) at the time that the reported execution, footage of which appeared on social media last fall, "has nothing to do with the Russian military operation in Syria."

Related article: [Russian Mercenaries Linked to Gruesome Syrian Torture and Beheading Video](#)

“There was a chance of error and Novaya Gazeta did not mention his last name,” the outlet wrote Tuesday.

“Now that we have received new data, there’s practically no doubt. We think it’s obvious that the video shows Stanislav Yevgenyevich Dychko, born in 1990,” it said.

Dychko — reportedly one of between five and seven men shown in the gruesome videos — allegedly joined Wagner in February 2016 shortly after his discharge from the Russian Interior Ministry.

“As far as we know, Mr. Dychko is alive and well today. He’s not hiding from anyone and is not wanted by anyone,” Novaya Gazeta wrote.

The Wagner Group is believed to be owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a catering magnate often referred to as “Putin’s Chef” due to his close links to President Vladimir Putin. Russia does not officially recognize the role of private contractors like Wagner, which has been reported to be fighting in hotspots around the world.

Syrian and British outlets have [identified](#) the victim as a deserter in Syria’s civil war who was [arrested](#) and forcibly conscripted into President Bashar al-Assad’s army. There was likely a second victim of the torture, Novaya reported, referring to another severed head seen in footage it obtained.

Open-source intelligence used geolocation to place the torture site at the al-Shaer oil fields in central Syria. The Associated Press [named](#) al-Shaer in a report about a profit-sharing deal between a Syrian state oil company and Russian military contractor Evro Polis. Evro Polis has been linked to Prigozhin and is said to be a front for Wagner’s operations in Syria.

Novaya Gazeta said it has appealed to Russian law enforcement authorities to investigate the torture.

“If the previously published footage did not impress the Russian Investigative Committee’s staffers and the investigators didn’t see any signs of a crime, then we suggest that you watch more,” it wrote before attaching two new videos.

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