

Kyrgyz Mercenary Who Fought With Russia in Ukraine Jailed

By [AFP](#)

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A Kyrgyz national flag flutters over downtown Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. **EPA / TASS**

A Kyrgyz court has handed a 10-year sentence to a man who fought for Russia in Ukraine, at a time when Moscow is trying to boost recruitment of people from ex-Soviet Central Asian countries.

Dozens of nationals of Central Asian countries have been killed in Ukraine in recent months, local media say, most of them after joining the ranks of the Russian army or Wagner, a private military group.

A court in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, said it found a 32-year-old man guilty of mercenarism and sentenced him to 10 years in prison, in a decision announced late Tuesday.

The court established that the man, who denied taking part in hostilities, had been in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region between June and November last year, for which he was paid

180,000 rubles (\$2,250) per month plus an assurance of a Russian passport.

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The accused, previously unemployed and from the Jalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan, was in Moscow when he joined the forces of the self-proclaimed and Moscow-led "Luhansk People's Republic," a Russian-backed separatist region in east Ukraine.

Gulshayr Abdirasulova, head of the human rights organization Kylym Shams, told AFP on Wednesday that it was the first conviction of a Kyrgyz citizen for mercenarism in Ukraine.

Russia remains a major destination for migrants from Central Asia who, being economically deprived, far from their country of origin and generally Russian-speaking, have become priority targets for the Russian army and the Wagner group.

Central Asian governments, traditionally allies of Russia, have repeatedly urged their citizens not to take part in the Ukraine conflict.

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