

Wagner Fighters Training Territorial Defense Forces in Belarus – Ministry

By [AFP](#)

July 14, 2023



Belarusian Defense Ministry

Minsk said Friday that members of the Russian mercenary force Wagner were acting as military instructors for Belarusian territorial defense forces, three weeks after the group's aborted mutiny in Russia.

"Near Asipovichy, units of territorial defense troops are undergoing training," the Belarusian defense ministry said.

The ministry said the forces were learning skills including tactical shooting, moving on the battlefield, engineering and tactical medicine.

"Fighters of the Wagner private military company are acting as instructors in a number of military disciplines," the ministry said.

Wagner, which played a key role in the Ukraine offensive, sought to topple Russia's military

leadership during its brief rebellion, before backing down.

The whereabouts of its founder Yevgeny Prigozhin have remained largely unknown in the wake of an agreement with the Kremlin, under which the Wagner leader was expected to move to neighboring Belarus.

The Belarusian Hayun investigative project said that Prigozhin might have spent the night this week near Asipovichy, where the drills were taking place, after an image arose purporting to show him at the camp.

In a video [released](#) by the Belarusian defense ministry, masked Wagner fighters were shown training local forces.

"No doubt it is a very useful experience for our Belarusian army," a serviceman said during an interview.

"We have not taken part in combat since the end of the war in Afghanistan," he said, referring to the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979.

"They can teach us a lot," another serviceman said.

Targeted by sanctions from Washington and Brussels, Prigozhin had for years operated in the shadows but has catapulted into the limelight since Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

He was allowed to recruit fighters from prisons and released numerous profanity-laced diatribes, accusing the Russian military's top brass of incompetence on the battlefield.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/14/wagner-fighters-training-territorial-defense-forces-in-belarus-ministry-a81852>