



Russia

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Wagner chief accuses Moscow of lying to public about Ukraine

Yevgeny Prigozhin dismisses justification for war that Kyiv was planning 2022 attack on Donbas and Crimea

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The Wagner head, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has accused Moscow's leadership of lying to the public about the justifications for invading Ukraine, in the latest sign of conflict between Vladimir Putin's government and one of his most important allies.

In an explosive 30-minute video posted on his Telegram channel, Prigozhin dismissed Moscow's claims that Kyiv was planning to launch an offensive on the Russian-controlled territories in eastern [Ukraine](#) in February 2022.

"There was nothing extraordinary happening on the eve of February 24," Prigozhin said.

"The ministry of defence is trying to deceive the public and the president and spin the story that there was insane levels of aggression from the Ukrainian side and that they were going to attack us together with the whole Nato block," the Wagner head said.

Shortly after [Russia](#) attacked Ukraine, Putin claimed Moscow's invasion had thwarted Ukraine's own plans for "a massive attack on the Donbas, and then on the Crimea".

Prigozhin also said Russia's leadership could have avoided the war by negotiating with Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

"When Zelenskiy became president, he was ready for agreements. All that needed to be done was to get off Mount Olympus and negotiate with him," he said.

Prigozhin has been arguing with top military officials for months, blaming the minister of defence, Sergei Shoigu, for battlefield failures.

However, his latest tirade appeared to be a new escalation, as the warlord directly contradicted Putin's rationale for the invasion, implying it was based on lies in what amounts to the harshest criticism by any prominent Russian war figure of the decision to attack Ukraine.

"What was the war for? The war needed for Shoigu to receive a hero star ... The oligarchic clan that rules Russia needed the war," he said.

“The mentally ill scumbags decided: ‘It’s OK, we’ll throw in a few thousand more Russian men as cannon fodder. They’ll die under artillery fire, but we’ll get what we want,’” Prigozhin continued.

While the warlord was careful not to directly attack the Russian president, Prigozhin did question several decisions made by Putin, including the Kremlin’s decision to exchange more than 100 captured Azov fighters for [Viktor Medvedchuk](#), a close ally of Putin.

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And in one instance, Prigozhin appeared to criticise the Russian president for continuing to self-isolate.

“We still have self-isolation in our country, and therefore none of the decision-makers have yet met [with military generals and discussed how to win the war]. They all talked on the phone.”

Prigozhin, whose Wagner troops have pulled back from Bakhmut, also attacked Russia’s current war efforts in the face of Ukraine’s counteroffensive.

Directly contradicting Putin’s claims that Moscow has fended off Kyiv’s counterattack, Prigozhin also accused the Russian military leadership of lying to the public about the scale of its losses and setbacks in Ukraine.

“The Russian army is retreating in all directions and shedding a lot of blood ... What they tell us is the deepest deception.”

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