



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

All Ukraine benefits from the Wagner Group rebellion



It took something really significant, like the rebellion of Yevgeny Prigozhin and his Wagner Group, for the news from the Ukrainian front to fall to second place.

While dramatic reports of Prigozhin's private army marching on Moscow came from Russia, the war in Ukraine did not stop. According to reports, the Russian army fired about 50 missiles at the positions of Ukrainian troops by Saturday morning.

The inertia of war is strong, so the dramatic events in Russia during the weekend could not immediately affect the situation on the front in eastern Ukraine.

But each subsequent day of the Russian-Ukrainian fight will be observed through the prism of the Wagner Group rebellion, and the effects it left on a Russian conquest and its commanders.

The leadership of the Russian state and military suffered significant damage from Prigozhin's rebellion. It showed weakness and vulnerability, so regardless of the quick end to the rebellion, a major crack remains in the system that governs the aggression.

Ukraine is an undeniable beneficiary of the drama that took place in Russia the moment it launched a long-announced counter-offensive against the Russian army, aiming to liberate the occupied areas in the east of the country.

Even though there are still not enough indications from the closed structure of the Kremlin about the extent of the internal damage, some important implications regarding further developments on the Ukrainian front are definite.

The end of the war for the Wagner Group

The first direct consequence is the end of the Wagner Group's participation in Russian operations in Ukraine. This is a blow to Russian military plans, where Yevgeny Prigozhin's army had an important place in future operations.

Prigozhin, as its leader and owner, was sent into exile by Vladimir Putin's decision and was previously called a "traitor". Wagner members would be offered a transfer to regular military units unless they participated in the weekend mutiny.

The dissolution of the Wagner Group will not be easy or quick, and the security services of the Russian army will have their hands full to prevent a possible infiltration of Prigozhin's faithful followers into their regular army units, like a malignant tissue.

The Kremlin's attempt to transfer Wagner members under the command of the Ministry of Defence by July 1 was one of the reasons for their rebellion.

The Kremlin succeeded in this intention, but it will be a very difficult and expensive process, because it will have to deal with the consequences for a long time, exposing itself to the risk of new micro-rebellions, now in the ranks of the regular army.

The Kremlin will also have to deal with the debts owed to the Wagner fighters, which was also one of the motives for the rebellion.

Their monthly salary was about \$2,800, and the families of the dead were paid about \$60,000. These are astronomical costs for the Russian military budget.

An unknown part of these amounts remained unpaid to the fighters and families of the fallen members of the Wagner Group, which, combined with the recent rebellion, leaves a ticking time bomb in the ranks of the Russian army.

Considering Prigozhin's statement that Wagner Group lost 20,000 fighters in the battles for the city of Bakhmut, Russia would have to pay a colossal \$1.2 billion to the families of the dead.

Is there any enthusiasm left in the Russian army?

This is only part of the problems for the Kremlin and the Russian military after Prigozhin's march on Moscow, which will directly hamper their war efforts in Ukraine.

The biggest problem is the huge rift in the motivation of Russian fighters to continue operations in Ukraine, and the rift in the chain of command that will inevitably appear as a result of the weakness demonstrated in handling the crisis with the Wagner Group rebellion.

"I imagine a lot of those soldiers currently deployed in Ukraine will be thinking long and hard about how enthusiastic they should be fighting against Ukrainians in a situation that must look increasingly clear to them...is for a losing cause", said retired General Ben Hodges, former commander of US forces in Europe.

The crisis in Russia has disrupted the balance of power in the government structures, which for years, Putin managed to preserve with great difficulty. This became even more difficult since he launched the aggression

against Ukraine.

Power struggles within the military, political and business clans within the Kremlin, with Putin's personal authority severely damaged, must be transmitted to the lower levels of power, all the way to the frontline fighters, as a destructive spiral.

Immediate war success or disaster

Putin is now forced quickly to achieve a major war success to amortise part of the damage he suffered during the Wagner Group rebellion.

This will also represent a huge risk because it demands an urgent war trophy from a demoralised army, under an unreliable command system and against an emboldened enemy, which was on the rise even before the crisis in Russia.

In a situation where his army is already under attack from the Ukrainian counter-offensive and forced to defend itself, such forced changes of plans could easily lead to a new war disaster.

Putin's weakness in solving the crisis with the Wagner Group is a possible signal for Kyiv's more ambitious military plans.

"Those who have argued that Ukraine must not attack Crimea for fear of triggering escalation must now re-evaluate that hypothesis", Michael McFaul, professor at Stanford University and former US ambassador to Russia, wrote on Twitter.

The largest capital advantage that Ukraine secured following Prigozhin's rebellion is the confirmation that Putin is not aggressive when he finds himself cornered, but on the contrary, is inclined to negotiate and make concessions.

All the warnings, many in the past 16 months from some Western leaders - not to put the Russian leader in a hopeless situation because he may resort to retaliation - have proven pointless.

The experience with Prigozhin's rebellion and Putin's behaviour during that crisis will be invaluable to Ukraine in the further planning of military operations and its cooperation with the coalition that supports its defence.

In this regard, the upcoming NATO summit in Lithuania will be the first opportunity to correct previous strategies for supporting Ukraine in its defence.

"Things are moving in the right direction", said Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's defence minister.