

# Putin praises Russian troops for putting down mutiny

President Vladimir Putin praised members of Russia's military and security forces in a ceremony on Tuesday as he sought to reassert his authority following an aborted mutiny by mercenaries led by Wagner Group chief Yevgeny Prigozhin.

A jet linked to Prigozhin arrived in Belarus from Russia, believed to be carrying the mercenary boss into exile, three days after he abruptly called off his mutiny with his fighters bearing down on the capital, Reuters reported.

Authorities dropped a criminal case against Wagner, state news agency RIA reported, apparently fulfilling one condition of a deal agreed late on Saturday that defused the crisis, Reuters reported.

Putin told some 2,500 security personnel mustered on a square in the Kremlin complex that the people and the armed forces had

stood together in opposition to the rebel mercenaries.

He was joined by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, whose dismissal had been one of the mutineers' main demands.

Putin also requested a minute of silence to honour Russian military pilots killed in the revolt. The fighters had shot down several aircraft during their run towards Moscow, although they faced no resistance on the ground.

Prigozhin, a former Putin ally and ex-convict whose mercenaries have fought the bloodiest battles of the Ukraine war and taken heavy casualties, had said he would go to neighbouring Belarus at the invitation of its president, close Putin ally Alexander Lukashenko.

Putin said in a televised address on Monday night that the mutiny leaders had betrayed their moth-

erland, although he did not mention Prigozhin by name. Wagner fighters would be permitted to establish themselves in Belarus, join the Russian military or go home, he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a news briefing on Tuesday the deal ending the mutiny was being implemented, and he had no information on where Prigozhin was. He also said he did not know how many Wagner fighters would sign contracts with the Defence Ministry.

He dismissed the idea that Putin's grip on power had been shaken by the mutiny, calling such thoughts "hysteria".

Prigozhin, 62, said he launched the mutiny to save his group after being ordered to place it under command of the Defence Ministry.

His fighters had halted



● SPUTNIK/SERGEI GUNEEV/POOL via REUTERS

their campaign on Saturday to avert bloodshed after nearly reaching Moscow, and regretted being forced to shoot down aircraft on the way, he said.

"We went as a demonstration of protest, not to overthrow the government of the country," Prigozhin said in an audio message on Monday.

## Hamas slams Israeli plan to build new settlements

### US 'deeply troubled' by approval of settler permits



An aerial view shows the illegal Israeli settlement Kedar in the occupied West Bank on June 25, 2023. ● ILAN ROSENBERG/REUTERS

#### International Desk

The Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has strongly condemned the Israeli regime's decision to construct thousands of new settler units in the occupied West Bank as "open aggression" on Palestinians despite international outcry.

The United States on Monday objected to the decision by Israel's nationalist-religious cabinet to approve the construction of around 5,700 additional housing units for Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank.

The United States was "deeply troubled" by the move, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters, adding that U.S. officials had made clear publicly and privately to Israel their opposition to moves that advance settlements, Reuters reported.

Most countries deem the settlements, built on land captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, as illegal. Their presence is one of the fundamental issues in the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. "We believe that settlements are an impediment to a negotiated two-state solution," said Miller.

#### 'Open aggression'

Also, Hamas, in a statement released on Monday, criticized the plan as "a new crime that amounts to open-ended aggression against the Palestinian nation," Press TV reported.

"The Israeli decision adds up to the list of crimes that the occupying Tel Aviv regime is perpetrating across the West Bank," it added.

"Such crimes push Palestinians to stand united in the face of Israeli crimes." Hamas further called on the Arab and Muslim nations, as well as freedom-loving people worldwide, to mobilize efforts to

support the steadfastness of Palestinians until they fulfill their aspirations to return and establish an independent sovereign state. The statement came hours after Israeli authorities approved the construction of 5,623 new illegal settler units in the West Bank, in continuation of its illegal settlement expansion and land grab activities in the occupied territories.

According to a report by the official Palestinian Wafa news agency, the approval of the construction of new illegal settler units includes depositing plans for the construction of 4,291 new colonial settler units, which constitutes an advanced stage of planning and construction by the occupation authorities. The approval also includes

1,332 building plans which are submitted and will be approved after a session for hearing objections, before final approval and preparation of tenders, it added. Israeli media outlets said 1,000 new settler units, more than what Israel's far-right administration approved last week, will be built in Eli settlement, south of the northern occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

The approval came after an agreement between Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, minister for military affairs Yoav Gallant, and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, the reports added.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Al-Quds.

## Trump heard discussing secret documents on tape

Former US president Donald Trump can be heard discussing secret documents he had apparently held on to after leaving the White House and acknowledging they had not been declassified, in an audio recording aired by US media.

The two-minute clip, played by CNN late Monday and later obtained by ABC and CBS, comes from an interview Trump gave at his Bedminster, New Jersey golf club in July 2021 for people working on a memoir by his former chief of staff Mark Mead-

ows, AFP reported. Parts of the recording's transcript were cited as evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's 49-page indictment of Trump on charges he had mishandled classified documents after leaving office.

The audio file includes a moment when Trump seems to indicate he is holding a secret Pentagon document with plans to attack Iran.

"These are the papers," Trump says in the recording, a quote that was not included in the indictment. He also refers to some-

thing as "highly confidential" and "this is secret information" as he seems to be showing something to the others in the room.

"This was done by the military and given to me," Trump continues, before noting that one would need to "declassify it" for it to be used in the book. "You see, as president I could have declassified it. Now I can't, you know," he says.

"Now we have a problem," one of other people responds. "Isn't that interesting? It's so cool," Trump says,

just before the recording ends with him calling for someone to bring in some Cokes.

Trump earlier this month denied 37 counts of willfully mishandling US government secrets and conspiring to prevent their return, becoming the first US president to face federal criminal charges.

After the recording was released, Trump lashed out on his Truth Social website, calling Smith "deranged" and baselessly accusing the prosecutor of conspiring with the Justice Department and



● AMR ALFIKY/REUTERS

FBI to "illegally" leak and mischaracterize the tape. He claimed the audio was "actually an exoneration, rather than what they would have you believe." The government accuses 77-year-old Trump - who is vying to win back the

White House next year - of willfully hoarding dozens of classified documents he took unlawfully to his beachfront mansion in Florida, refusing to return them and conspiring to obstruct investigators seeking their recovery.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### UN peacekeeping mission in Mali to end on June 30



REUTERS - The United Nations plans to end its decade-long peacekeeping mission in Mali on June 30 and will withdraw all personnel within six months, according to a draft Security Council resolution proposed by France and seen by Reuters. The withdrawal of the 13,000-strong mission, known as MINUSMA, would come after years of tensions between the UN and Mali's military junta came to a head this month when Mali Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop asked the force to leave "without delay".

#### EU, UNESCO to help developing countries shape AI rules

AFP - The European Union will help fund a UNESCO scheme supporting developing countries as they create laws regulating artificial intelligence, the UN cultural body said Tuesday. Four million euros (\$4.4 million) from Brussels will go towards organising events and advising governments.

#### Over 1m may flee Sudan conflict: UN



REUTERS - The UN refugee agency warned on Tuesday that an earlier projection that conflict in Sudan would prompt 1 million people to flee across its borders is likely to be surpassed.

So far, the conflict between warring military factions that began in mid-April has caused nearly 600,000 people to escape into neighbouring countries including Egypt, Chad, South Sudan and Central African Republic.

"Unfortunately, looking at the trends, looking at the situation in Darfur, we're likely to go beyond 1 million," Raouf Mazou, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, said in response to a question about its estimate in April for the coming six months.