



Coup, civil war or deception?

Unbelievable things have been happening in Russia since the early weekend - a brief analysis.

Peter Hanseler / René Zittlau / Denis Dobrin

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The events of Friday night

On Friday, Evgeny Prigozhin, the head of Russia's private military firm Wagner Group, claimed that senior Russian commanders were traitors and called for the prosecution of Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and General Valery Gerasimov, chairman of the General Staff.

Later in the day, Prigozhin claimed that the Russian military had attacked positions of the Wagner Reserve. Prigozhin announced that troops loyal to him were moving toward the city of Rostov-on-Don.

The Defense Ministry denied the claim. The Russian secret service (FSB) accused Prigozhin of staging an armed coup and called on Wagner fighters to arrest him.

The road connecting the city of Rostov-on-Don with the port of Taganrog on the Sea of Azov, 60 km to the west, was completely closed to traffic. The arterial roads from Moscow to the south have also been completely closed.

"Freedom of movement in Moscow is not restricted."

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin announced on Telegram that local authorities are implementing "anti-terrorist measures" to maximize public safety. He added that these measures could include additional road closures and temporary restrictions on public events. Freedom of movement in Moscow is not restricted.

Video message from General Surovikin



Saturday morning, General Surovikin addressed Prigozhin and the Wagner Group fighters in a video message. In it he appealed not to be carried away by any means to rash actions. He also reminded how the Wagner and Russian forces liberated Artyomovsk, that they had shed blood together and that any attempts to overthrow them would only benefit the enemy.

President Putin's address to the citizens of Russia

At 10 a.m. local time, President Putin addressed the country's citizens via televised address. He made the following four points:

The importance of unity

President Putin stated that "today Russia is fighting a grueling battle for its future" and is confronting the "neo-Nazis and their masters." He further stressed that "basically all the military, economic and informational power of the West" is directed against the country.

"This struggle, in which the fate of our people is decided," requires national unity and consolidation, Putin said in his address. The Russian head of state stressed that all actions that drive a wedge between Russians are nothing but "betrayal of our country and our people."

Bitter history lessons

Putin reminded Russians that a similar scenario played out in the country in 1917, when it was in the midst of the First World War. He recounted how "intrigue, bickering and political machinations behind the backs of the army and the people" led to the "collapse of the state" and the "tragedy of civil war."

"Russians killed Russians, brothers killed brothers, while various political adventurers and foreign powers capitalized on this," the president said.

Putin vowed to prevent this from happening and to defend Russia and its people, "even against internal mutiny."

Coup attempts are treason

The president called "any internal mutiny" a deadly threat to the Russian state and nation. The president promised to take "tough measures" against the mutineers, who "willingly took the path of treason" and prepared an "armed uprising."

Those responsible will be held accountable before the Russian people, the president assured the public.

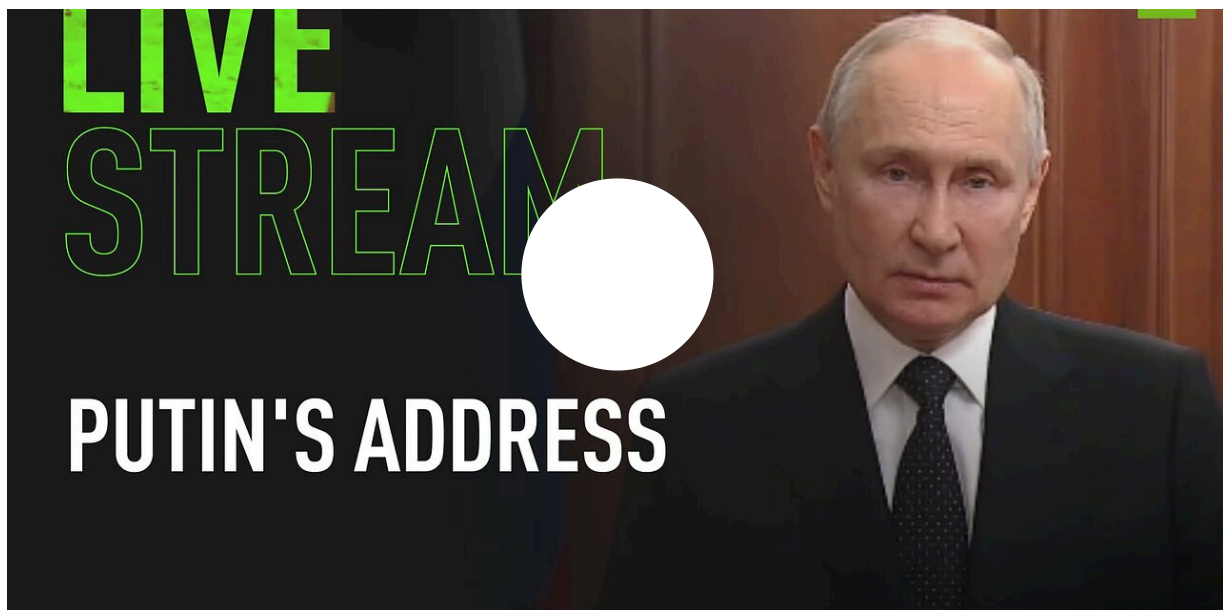
Measures taken

"All necessary orders have been issued to the armed forces and other authorities," Putin said. He added that a special anti-terrorist security protocol has been put into effect in Moscow, the Moscow region and some other localities.

The Russian president acknowledged that the situation in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don remains "difficult" as the work of local civilian and military authorities is "effectively blocked." However, the state will take "decisive measures to stabilize the situation in the city."

Concluding his address to the nation, President Putin promised to do everything possible to "defend the country and protect the constitutional order, life, security and freedom of citizens."

Putin delivers address on latest developments in Russia



So much for the events.

Analysis

A look back

Since January, the leader of the Wagner Group has severely criticized the Russian military leadership. In doing so, he did not shy away from personally attacking Defense Minister Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov, who is also the commander-in-chief of the troops in the special operation. In particular, he accused

them of inadequately supplying the Wagner Group with ammunition and thus massively impeding the progress of the fighting, causing the deaths of many Wagner fighters.

To the astonishment of many, Prigoshin was not publicly put in his place by President Putin, even when Prigoshin threatened to withdraw the Wagners from Bachmut (now Artyomovsk). Prigoshin seemed to have fool's liberty with President.

After the end of hostilities, the Wagners were withdrawn from Artyomovsk and replaced by regular Russian troops.

The situation seemed to calm down and it was expected that the Wagners would be sent back into action at the end of July.

Command authority of private armies to Shoigu

In early June, the Ministry of Defense submitted a contract to the private forces involved in the military operation. The aim of the contract is to subject the private forces to the command of the Ministry of Defense. This concerns not only Wagner, but also, for example, the Akhmat group led by Ramzan Kadyrov, which captured Mariupol last spring.

Kadyrov signed the treaty, but Prigoshin refused to relinquish power.

By this refusal, Prigoshin ran the risk that the Wagner group would no longer be used for important missions, which would have made Prigoshin a marginal figure in the war theater.

It should also not be disregarded here that Prigoshin had already announced several times that he wanted to run in the presidential elections in 2024.

Already in the last two weeks, Prigoshin's tone has become increasingly aggressive and demanding. Among other things, he accused Defense Minister Shoigu of corruption and General Gerasimov of wrong military decisions.

Prigozhin would have no chance in a presidential election. He is seen by the Russian people for what he is: a soldier of fortune, mercenary and former criminal who serves the Kremlin as an instrument of war and nothing more.

Prigoshin's call for mutiny is thus an attempt to overthrow him in order not to lose his power.

What's next?

Prigozhin's military chances

The "march of justice" of the Wagner group to Moscow announced by Prigozhin will probably not be successful. Prigozhin has an army of 25,000 men, which is currently in Rostov-on-Don - about 1,000 km from Moscow.

Such a march, reminiscent of Mussolini's march to Rome, can only be successful if he can convince the population and the army of his intention. We consider this to be wishful thinking.

President Putin is firmly in the saddle. The people trust him.

Danger of a bloodbath

Nevertheless, if the 25,000 Wagners stick with Prigozhin, it will be a huge problem for the Russian leadership. If these soldiers do not surrender, the Kremlin will use force. It should be noted that Rostov-on-Don has more than a million inhabitants and the Wagners are in the city. This could develop into a huge internal Russian tragedy.

Is the whole thing a Kremlin feint?

There are voices in Russia which assume that the whole thing could be a feint of the Kremlin and Prigozhin. In our opinion, there are no indications of this. Furthermore, the Russian people would not appreciate such perfidious games of the Kremlin.

In our opinion, President Putin's speech has put a stop to this speculation in its own way.

Impact on the war effort

By Saturday afternoon, the situation on the front has not yet changed. However, it is certain that President Zelensky wants to exploit this internal turmoil for himself. This incident will also be exploited politically by Ukraine. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba has already congratulated Prigozhin on the coup.

Conclusion

According to our information, Prigozhin's call for a mutiny has no support among the population or the armed forces.

Thus, although this attempted coup will not succeed, bloodshed cannot be ruled out.

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