Address to the citizens of Russia

President Vladimir Putin • 26 June 2023

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Initiative]

Friends,

Today, I am addressing the citizens of Russia once again. Thank you for your restraint, cohesion and patriotism. This civic solidarity shows that any blackmail, any attempt to stage domestic turmoil is doomed to fail.

I will repeat – society and the executive and legislative branches of government at all levels displayed high consolidation. Public organisations, religious denominations, the leading political parties and actually all of Russian society held a firm line, taking an explicit position of supporting constitutional order. The main thing – responsibility for the destiny of the Fatherland – has united everyone, brought our people together.

I will emphasise that all necessary decisions to neutralise the emerged threat and protect the constitutional system, the life and security of our citizens were made instantly, from the very beginning of the events.

An armed mutiny would have been suppressed in any event. Mutiny plotters, despite the loss of adequacy, were bound to realise that. They understood everything, including the fact that their actions were criminal in nature, aimed at polarising people and weakening the country, which is currently countering an enormous external threat and unprecedented pressure from the outside. They did this at a time when our comrades are dying on the frontline with the words “Not a step back!”

However, having betrayed their country and their people, the leaders of this mutiny also betrayed those whom they drew into their crime. They lied to them, pushed them to their death, putting them under attack, forcing them to shoot their people.

It was exactly this outcome, fratricide, that the enemies of Russia – the neo-Nazis in Kiev, their Western patrons and other national traitors – wanted to see. They wanted Russian soldiers to kill each other; they wanted the military and civilians to die; they wanted Russia to lose eventually, and our society to break up and perish in a bloody feud.

They were rubbing their hands together and dreaming of revenge for their failures at the frontline and in the course of the so-called counteroffensive, but they miscalculated.

I want to thank all our servicemen, law enforcement and special services officers who stood in the mutineers’ way, remaining faithful to their duty, their oath and their people.

Courage and self-sacrifice of the fallen hero pilots have saved Russia from tragic and devastating consequences.

At the same time, we knew before and know now that the majority of Wagner Group soldiers and commanders are also Russian patriots, loyal to their people and their state. Their courage on the battlefield when liberating Donbass and Novorossiya proves this. An attempt was made to use them without their knowledge against their comrades-in-arms with whom they were fighting shoulder to shoulder for their country and its future.

That is why, as soon as these events started to unfold, in keeping with my direct instructions, steps were taken to avoid spilling blood. It required time, among other things, as those who made a mistake had to be given a chance to change their minds, to realise that their actions would be strongly rejected by society, to understand what tragic and devastating consequences for Russia, for our country the reckless attempt they had been drawn into, was leading to.

I express my gratitude to those Wagner Group soldiers and commanders who had taken the right decision, the only one possible – they chose not to engage in fratricidal bloodshed and stopped before reaching the point of no return.

Today, you have the opportunity to continue your service to Russia by signing a contract with the Defence Ministry or other law enforcement or security agency or return home. Those who want to are free to go to Belarus. I will keep my promise. Again, everyone is free to decide on their own, but I believe their choice will be that of Russian soldiers who realise they have made a tragic mistake.

I am grateful to President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko for his efforts and contribution to the peaceful settlement of the situation.

I would like to repeat that the patriotic sentiments of our people and the consolidation of Russian society played a decisive role during these days. This support has allowed us to pull through the toughest challenges and trials for our Motherland together.

Thank you for this.