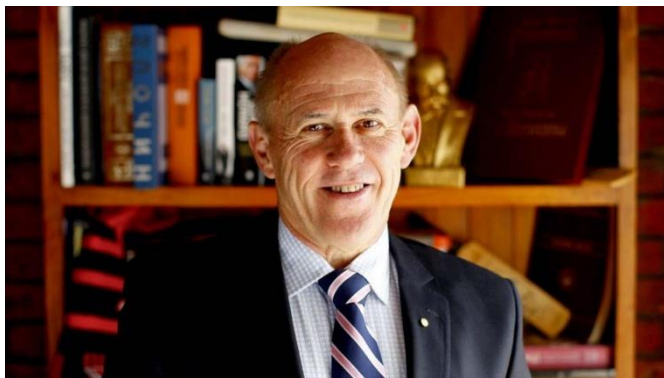


Push for Canberra to label the Wagner Group a terrorist organisation



[RHIANNON DOWN](#), [SARAH ISON](#), THE AUSTRALIAN, September 7, 2023

Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations co-chair Stefan Romaniw is calling on the federal government to declare the Russia-backed Wagner Group a terrorist organisation.

Mr Romaniw, who is also Ukrainian World Congress vice-president, said the Kremlin-funded mercenary group had committed war crimes and killed innocent people as part of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, adding that "actions spoke louder than words".

The push follows an announcement by Britain's Home Office that it will introduce draft measures to have the Wagner Group listed as a "proscribed" organisation under anti-terror laws this week, which will make it a crime to be a member of or support the military group.

"The Wagner Group are mercenaries, they have been killing people for money," Mr Romaniw told The Australian. "The sooner Australia follows others, the better it is for us – it is very important that what it has done is recognised."

As well as playing a violent role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Wagner Group has involved itself in the internal politics of several African nations including Mali, Burkina Faso and Sudan.

Ukraine ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko also backed calls for Australia to label the military group a terrorist organisation.

"The government should (do that) because of the war crimes they have committed in African countries as well as in Ukraine," he said.

"These accounts are well documented and confirmed by a number of human rights organisations, so this would be a welcome step."

The group's place under Vladimir Putin's regime remains uncertain after the company's former leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, led a failed coup attempt against Moscow earlier this year.

Prigozhin was killed in a plane crash in August, prompting speculation the Kremlin had a hand in his sudden death.

A spokesman for Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil would not confirm whether the government planned to list the Wagner group as a terrorist organisation.

“The government is deeply concerned about the Wagner Group’s operations in Ukraine and elsewhere,” he said.

“The Foreign Minister has imposed targeted financial sanctions on the group and its leaders. As per longstanding practice, the government does not comment on whether it is considering listing any organisation.”

Opposition home affairs spokesman James Paterson said it was time for the Albanese government to “catch up to our allies” and list the mercenary group as a terrorist organisation.