C'est un podcast originaire global.

Nous commençons avec les news russes, les médias russes maintenant confirmant que Wagner, le leader de la groupe mercenaire Yevgeny Prigoshin, a mort.

S'il y a des passagers, il s'agit d'Evgeny Prigoshin.

Yevgeny Prigoshin, le leader de la groupe vagna,

était sur la plage de l'aviation privée qui a crashé près de Moscou.

L'agence de l'aviation civile russe, c'est bien Evgeny Prigoshin,

alors on ne sait pas si évidemment le fondateur du groupe Wagner est mort.

On a essayé de overthrowir Vladimir Putin

mais il y a deux mois après ce que l'aviation fut faible,

le leader de la groupe vagna, Yevgeny Prigoshin, est mort.

C'était simultanément la plus astonissante partie des news

et pourtant pas.

C'était simultanément la plus prédictive partie des news

parce que si vous avez un coup de l'aviation faible

contre Vladimir Putin,

on va le faire.

Vous n'allez pas pouvoir ringer votre broker

et prendre l'insurance de vie facilement.

Juste deux mois plus tard, en juin,

il y avait beaucoup de parler, beaucoup de spéculation,

beaucoup d'anticipation même,

que Yevgeny Prigoshin,

le leader du groupe vagna de l'aviation privée,

allait faire un coup contre Vladimir Putin

au Kremlin.

Deux mois plus tard, il est mort.

Il a disparu avec certains de ses compatriotes

à travers le ciel de Russie.

Sur ce jour, on va vous parler de ce que nous savons,

pourquoi on pense que c'est passé,

ce que ça veut dire pour Putin et la guerre en Ukraine.

Bienvenue aux Agences News.

C'est John.

C'est Louis.

Et nous sommes aux Agences News HQ

en essayant de faire le sens de ce qui s'est passé

dans les dernières 24 heures

avec Yevgeny Prigoshin.

Si vous reprenez,

il y a une photo extraordinaire

où Vladimir Putin

est en train de manger ou dîner

avec George W. Bush,

le président de l'Université de l'Amérique. Et en travaillant dans le background, c'est un chef, un gars qui serve la nourriture. C'est Yevgeny Prigoshin. Et c'est un gars qui commence comme chef et qui devient un grand-mère. Et en ce moment, il accumule des milliers de soldats privés. Il a une armée privée, en train d'amener avec des équipements sérieux d'être capable d'amener la guerre en Afrique ou en Ukraine comme ils l'ont fait brutalement depuis l'invasion de ce pays. Et Prigoshin a été le chef de l'organisation. Et comme la guerre en Ukraine a été évoquée, et les forces militaires conventionnelles ont été évoquées dans le mud de la Donbass, à l'arrière d'Harkiv, et en Sud-Ukraine, n'ont pas fait les gains que Putin et tout le monde d'autre pensent. Putin et le Kremlin ont d'ailleurs vécu Prigoshin et son groupe Wagner qui ont été les plus bâtissants de la militaire russienne. Ils ont été évogués par quelques succèses en Ukraine, dans des places comme Mariupol, dans des places comme Bakhmut. Partly, comme résultat de l'expérience de la guerre et de l'expérience de la militaire, ils ont gagné et ont garni tous les sortes de bizarres, criminels,

et franchement, à la fois, des expéditions humaines qu'ils ont obtenues à travers l'Afrique et dans des places comme la République centrale où ils ont pillé, et plundi, et quitté avec abandon. Ils ont évoqué la guerre sans aucun regard aux conventions de Geneva. Ils ont également évoqué la guerre sans aucun regard au loss de la vie humaine, de la vie ukrainienne ou de leur propre vie. Et il y a été une machine de mince. Il a été grotesque. Les numéros de la casualties de Bakhmut sont étonnés, et c'est juste de l'eau. Et pourtant, bien sûr, Prugoshin était le personne qui était capable de délivrer pour Vladimir Putin dans un moyen que les Généraux ne pouvaient pas. Et cela signifie que Prugoshin regardait la militaire russienne, la département défense russienne comme inadéquate. Et il a fait ca clair, c'est ce qu'il pensait. Et il s'est rendu sur un cours de collision avec le chef de la Généraux et le ministère défense parce qu'il pensait qu'ils étaient absolument useless. Oui, et c'était l'origine ou le contexte background

de ce qui s'est passé

seulement 60 jours auparavant, en juin, où soudain il seemed as if le Kremlin et Putin's Kremlin et Putin's gouvernement qui avait été un fort imprégnable basé sur la force et la barrel des armes soudainement semblent vulnérables. Parce que, à l'heure de Prugoshin's angère avec les gens comme Sergei Shoryu, le secrétaire défense, et l'autre top brass de l'armes russiennes a été ce plus remarquable... Tout le monde m'a rappelé, quoi, 48, 72 heures, où, soudainement, avant que vous vouliez savoir où vous étiez, Prugoshin et cet énorme column de armes russiennes de Wagner n'étaient pas juste complétant sur ce qui s'est passé avec la leadership de l'armes russiennes. Ils étaient vraiment marchés en Mosco. Et il y avait toutes ces spéculations que Putin might be about to fall. Now, a lot of that sort of hope, weird hope, was misplaced in the sense it perhaps came from people who didn't really know Prugoshin. This was no great liberator. This was no great sort of defender. It's not going to herald the return

to liberal democracy in Russia. No, this was no doubty defender of democracy. This is effectively another blood soaked tyrant in waiting. But nonetheless, it did obviously appear like a moment of vulnerability. Now that march on Mosco stopped. It stopped before it could descend into civil war. That is what everyone was talking about and the potential dangers of a civil war ridden Russia once again for the second time in a century or so. But that hasn't happened. Sixty days later, Prugoshin is dead and Prugoshin is dead because if this reminds us of anything, Putin is a gangster. He leads a mafia state. And like any good gangster, like the godfather, when someone comes for you, you hit them back and you hit them hard. And now Prugoshin and his top band of mérimen, not so mérimen, are dead. And the strange thing is that last night when we all heard the news that this plane had crashed, I don't think a single person anywhere in the world thought,

oh,

I wonder whether it was mechanical failure.

Everyone thought

something bad had happened to him.

It was a hit.

It was on orders

and the order came

from the very top

from Vladimir Putin.

But what was amazing, right?

Is the interim

because

after that 72 hours,

Prugoshin

and Putin,

they come to like an accommodation,

right?

Basically,

there is an agreement

that Prugoshin

is going to go to Belarus

and he's going to

more or less stay in charge of Wagner,

but he's going to get out of Russia

because clearly

they were on a collision cause

and everyone is thinking

what are they going to do?

How is that going to

going to manage?

How is that calibration

really going to last?

And clearly as we've seen,

it hasn't,

but weirdly in the interim,

Prugoshin has been

flying back and forth

between

Nord Africa

and Wagner operations

there in Russia.

He went to see Putin

just a few weeks ago

in the Kremlin.

Can you imagine that meeting? And that is partly because it seems from what analysts are saying is that Putin has been getting his ducks in a row and he has been doing everything he can to try and keep as much of the Wagner assets in one piece and aligned with the Russian state and under his control as he can. Because as we've been saying, John, they have been an effective part, effective sort of quasi part of the Russian state and the Russian military that has been very effective and Putin has very quietly, clearly been deciding what to do or people around him have been deciding what to do anyway. And now that plan has been executed. And let's hear now from Alicia Kern. She's the chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in the House of Commons and a close Russia watcher ex Foreign Office herself. And Alicia, what do you make of it? Because you tweeted last night that you thought the plane had been shot down. Have you got knowledge on that? So if you look at the recordings online and if you look at and that's normal people but also on the Wagner telegram groups, you can see that there are two bangs.

So that's consistent

with a surface to air missile which is likely what would have taken down a plane. Now there was conversation online about could it have been a bomb but actually if you look at the way the plane falls and what happened that the two bangs make that less likely. Obviously, there are endless theories and the one thing that no one seems to be countenancing is the idea that there was a mechanical failure and the plane just happened to crash. I mean, nobody thinks that. Do you think that as the Foreign Affairs Committee chair that you are entering into speculation which may or may not be founded? No, I don't think I am because it was Russian. What I said in my tweet was that the Russian government has very quickly confirmed that the plane had been shot down. And it was interesting because it's Russian official media. We all know there's no such thing as the free media in Russia. It was Russian media titles that were saying the plane had been shot down or that it had been crashed. And actually some of those media were saying that it was Russian air force that had shot down the media. Now they don't speculate because for them when they speculate it often ends up of them falling out of a window.

For very few of them

have private jets be shot down.

But ultimately

it is incredibly unlikely

given that Progression

was always going to likely end this way.

And given the Russian media themselves

which is what my comment was

was saying that it had been shot down.

I think that tells us a lot.

You've alluded to it there.

The idea that perhaps this was inevitable.

I mean Putin has done this

because fundamentally he needed to

or likely done this

or someone around Putin has done this

because they needed to reassert their authority

in the wake of what Progression and Bargda did.

Absolutely that.

And look, Putin has one thing historically

that you can always say

which is that he hunts down

those that he believes has betrayed him.

We know in our shawls

whether it's the Screepers

whether it's Litvienko

he hunts down anyone

that he feels has betrayed him.

Yes, he offered a safety guarantee to Progression.

Progression accepted that

but we know that Putin

doesn't stand by his agreements.

Some people are surprised

that Progression hadn't been taken out sooner.

I'm slightly surprised

that actually it's happened so soon

because the key thing for Putin

is making sure that he doesn't lose the Bargda network.

That for him is the absolute key

because it brings so much wealth into the Kremlin.

But if you look at what happened

with the South Africa-Russia summit a few weeks ago

it was quite clear that the general

who's the kind of head of covert operations to the GRU

was being introduced to a lot of the African world leaders

which suggests that Putin's ready for him to take over running that instead of Progression.

That raises a really interesting question

about the sort of...

Is there a geopolitical aspect

to the death of Progression

in the sense that you've got his forces

the Wagner mercenary group

fighting in all sorts of places in Africa.

Apparently they're in Belarus

in their thousands at the moment

after the sort of failed coup attempt.

Is there a period of instability now

where you've got a whole lot of heavily armed people

thousands of them without leadership?

So I'm not sure if we will see that

but honestly I can't predict.

So what was interesting yesterday

was the amount of Wagner mercenaries

saying on telegram

the shooting down the plane was an act of traitors

there will be repercussions.

There were videos of Wagner soldiers

saying we're going to march on Moscow again.

But what Putin has been doing over the last few months

even before the march on Moscow

was trying to force Wagner mercenaries

to become Russian standard members of the armed forces.

He had already started that process

of moving them into his system of influence.

And what we've seen clearly with this GRU general

and also the amount of footprints

of other Russian generals in Africa

over the last few weeks

clearly Putin has been putting in place

everything he needs for that transition.

But of course there may be some actors

who are so furious, so loyal to Prugosian

that they seek to cause trouble.

I don't think it's likely to be significant

but I may be wrong.

It's so hard obviously to get into the minds

and psychology of these people.

But do you think that Prugosian

really bought the idea that the guarantees that he secured with Putin in the wake of the initial march on Moscow were worth anything? Because obviously in the intervening two months he's been flying back and forth between Africa and Russia. He's been flying internally within Russia. He met with Putin in the Kremlin what a few weeks ago. So he must have known that this was a possibility and yet he was still acting in that way. I agree he must have known but I think if I'm honest if you operate in those circles if you're part of the Kremlin's in a network you know that at any point you could fall out of the window. But Prugosian didn't sign that agreement with Putin from position of strength. He signed it from position of weakness. What other options did he have? He had pushed too far although the march on Moscow was less about Putin and more about Shoeigu and Durasimov. Ultimately he didn't have anywhere else to turn. So I think when he signed that agreement it was probably the best thing for him to do. But ultimately look at Putin's history. He does not allow people to betray him. Alicia, it's always been my understanding that there has always been pretty good human intelligence about Moscow.

what's happening in the Kremlin,

that the intelligence services have got

good sources of information.

Do we know what is happening

inside the Kremlin now?

So I think it is really difficult

to genuinely know what people are thinking

inside the Kremlin

and you're right, we have exceptional

human intelligence capabilities within Russia. But I question whether we have something that's called a state of mind assessment. So that's where we look at, for example, a principal in a country, so like President Putin. And we look at whether we know what's motivating him, what he's thinking, what's frustrating him in his life. Essentially, what is his state of mind at that point in time? Given how impossible Putin has made it for anyone to get close to him over the last two years, I wonder whether we really have that state of mind assessment that we would need to determine what he is thinking because we know he sets the agenda of the Kremlin. Thank you so much. Cheers, Alicia. And coming up in a moment, Tim Marshall. author, foreign affairs, correspondent. Friend of the show. Friend of the show. Talking about what this is going to mean for the Wagner group itself, for Putin himself, and most importantly of all, the future of the war in Ukraine. This is The News Agents. Welcome back. So we are joined now, as we said by Tim Marshall, journalist, reporter. He follows these things extremely closely. Author of bestselling book,

I believe.

Prisoners of Geography.

Tim,

we were saying before

that this was once

an incredibly shocking piece of news,

and yet not at all surprising piece of news.

What do you think

they will be thinking

in the Kremlin right now?

Because neither Putin,

nor virtually any bit of the Russian state

other than the Russian Aviation Authority

has said anything about it.

They are probably quite content

to let people draw their own conclusions,

and those conclusions,

most of them,

let's face it,

are pretty obvious.

What is it?

Ralph Waldo Emerson?

Never strike a king unless you're sure

you're going to kill him.

That's one lesson

that the public,

and anyone who wants to challenge Putin

will be aware of,

and another one is,

you cross Putin,

you die.

And I think the Kremlin will probably be guite satisfied

at just sitting back

and letting that sink in,

to be honest with you.

We've talked about the Wagner Group before,

Tim.

Where do you think this leaves

Wagner now?

Because Putin was obviously keen

to try and keep as much of the infrastructure

and assimilate it

into the Russian Army more generally.

Where does it leave them?

I think that process will continue.

But I also think it's possible that the old question about why now is that the Kremlin has spent the last eight weeks slowly. methodically taking Wagner apart, exiling it into Belarus, cut off some of the sources of funding. Crucially, they have been building other PMCs, private military companies, to rival Wagner. Now, if I'm some horrible thug that's got out of prison on the promise that, you know, do a year and you might get pardoned if you join Wagner. And I'm paid \$50 a day. And a new PMC says, well, actually, we'll give you \$75 a day. Probably funded by the Kremlin. What is this horrible thug going to do? There are those with loyalty to Bregosian, but there's also lovalty to the dollar. So I think it's probably finished. Now, there may be some minor incidents, reactions to this by loyalists. There are two schools of thought. One is that this will fuel an uprising against Putin. And the other is that he is clamping down even more on any potential for dissent. And I take that latter camp. And when you say an uprising, an uprising by the loyalists to Bregosian, or are there others as well who the Wagner group could rely on? Ah, rely on. Good phrase theology there, John. Perhaps they thought they could rely on them, but if you were a supporter of Bregosian and you were in the senior echelons of the military, or if you were in the GRU,

military intelligence, and there are links betw

and there are links between Wagner and the GRU,

at this point,

are you thinking right?

I'm going to take revenge.

Are you going to think right?

I'm going to keep my head down again.

I think it would be the latter.

So if there are to be some incidents,

it would be loyalists.

Theoretically, yes,

they could march on Moscow again,

but it's a very long way from Belarus.

The head of the snake has been cut off.

It looks like the top three in Wagner

were all on that plane,

if the passenger list is correct.

So I don't see why the small pockets

in the top brass

would possibly try to join Wagner at the moment,

seeing that there's what has just happened.

And I'll give you some examples

of the messaging of the Kremlin,

and this goes to your question.

It's about silence.

Yes, they're silent in Safara's words,

but a number of things.

Yesterday was the 23rd of August.

When did the march on Moscow happen?

23rd of June.

Coincidence?

Exactly to the day.

Maybe.

Yesterday was the day that the Kremlin

announced that General Sergei Serovkin

was officially, let's say, retired.

I mean, you may end up on trial.

This is a guy that was suspected,

actually knew about the march on Moscow

on the 23rd of June.

What a coincidence that they announced it the same day?

Another one.

Where was Putin on television live

at the time the plane was falling out of the sky?

While he was out awarding hero Russian medals.

Who did he award a hero of Russian medals to previously?

That would be Boroskin.

Yeah, I think they are speaking.

They're just not saying anything.

Does it mean that Putin's position is now secure in Russia?

Because we speculated, oh, are there forces now

that could rise up against him?

Is he a weakened enfeebled man following the coup attempt?

Again, this would explain the timing.

At the time, I couldn't quite make my mind up.

Is he going to let him live?

Because in the past, people that have crossed him,

he's just sent to them, go away, be very, very quiet,

and I'll let you count most of your money.

And it's held with most of them.

Other people, he's just killed.

So I wasn't sure it was going to be that,

or there is just going to kill him

when he feels the time is right.

Because there was a lot of people in Russia

who may not be Putin fans,

but they don't like people marching on Moscow

and shooting down Russian helicopters.

So there was a lot of people that thought,

hang on a minute, why has he got away with it?

It seems likely now, given it's been eight weeks,

and given that he has systematically been taking Wagner apart,

to the extent probably now feels,

if I move now, I don't think they can do anything.

So is he more secure?

In the short term, yes, I think he is,

because that massive blow to his prestige

and his standing as the man who does things,

and then this guy got away with it.

Well, that, we're now back to,

nobody gets away with it.

Everybody must be frightened.

So when you talk about the Slovaki,

this is the Russian term for the security tapped,

the higher echelons that surround him,

that have backed him, who are all in it together,

I think they stand together

and they will bat away challenges.

In the longer term, well, there's been a lot of talk about Goto Ramadung, the Wagner opera, and actually the number two, who was probably on the plane, he named the group Wagner after Hitler's favorite composer.

This is the guy, I don't know if you've seen his photos,

the number two, this is the guy who has the SS symbol tattooed each side of his neck.

Such nice guys.

Just to finish the point about Goto Ramadung,

if you've ever seen it, the opera,

at the end, everything goes down in flames.

So long term, Russia is an unstable place.

Short term, I think Putin still has a grip.

Where do you think this leaves

the thing that really matters, which is the war?

I mean, obviously, we've now had the counteroffensive

which has been going on from the Ukrainians for some time.

It's perhaps not been as successful as some had hoped.

Not all the resources committed yet,

but not as successful as some had hoped.

We're 18 months in now.

Where do you think Putin is clearly dug in?

He still seems secure,

despite the general catastrophe it's been in many ways for Russia.

Where does this leave the war?

I wouldn't say stalemate,

but in that terrible war of attrition

which Putin thinks he can win

and certainly thinks he can hold on for another year

and then hopes that Trump gets back into the White House

because Trump will pull the rug from underneath the Ukrainians.

The past is more than eight weeks now,

the much heralded counteroffensive.

The Ukrainians get extremely annoyed

if you say it's faltering or stuttering.

They have made some gains,

but we're talking about sometimes a few thousand meters.

They have,

and I will come back to the question about Wagner,

they have punched through the first line

of the three lines of defences in a few places,

only by a few, sometimes hundreds of yards and in very narrow.

So when you punch through a front line narrowly,

you're always risking being cut off.

So what they're trying to do in the various areas

they've punched through is widen them

and then create a much bigger gap and then pour through it.

It's not happening, but they're trying.

Now, as for Wagner,

well, these three lines of defences,

which by the way were dug by General Sorovkin,

who's now out,

they have held and they've held without,

mostly held, they've held without Wagner

because Wagner disappeared.

So I don't think that it fundamentally now changes

the course of the war.

The course of the war will play out the way it will play out.

Wagner were removed from the front lines weeks ago.

And what about in Africa,

which we've also spoken about with you before,

where Wagner group has been playing such a crucial role

in exercising and furthering Moscow's ambitions?

I remember only half joking months ago with you saying,

you know, you can't rule out one day,

Progosian and Wagner marching on Moscow,

but I will admit I was guite surprised when it actually happened.

Wagner, even if they say they dismantle it,

they'll just take down one boilerplate

and print out another one and stick it up

and just call it something else

because they can't actually do without the PMCs in Africa

because they need the gold that they get out of the countries

in and around the Sahelian region,

which makes its way back to Moscow

to partially pay for the war effort.

The African countries such as Mali

and most recently Niger,

well, they'd be quite happy with another PMC

that Moscow can provide.

So I don't think it fundamentally alters Russia's strategy

in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region

because Wagner is the household name

for a number of reasons.

One, it's got these colorful characters.

B, Progosian, actually, after being in the shadows for so long, sort of made himself a core celebrity. So we all know the name Wagner, Progosian, but there are other versions of him and of it quite happily prepared to take on the role but perhaps keep a bit guieter and not cross Putin. Tim, it's absolutely fascinating as always. Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Just listening to Tim and thinking about all the so many conversations we've had since the start of the war about given the fact that Russia is involved in this, this quagmire, I mean, this is, this catastrophe. I mean, it's Russia's Vietnam and what it means to him and when he starts to run out of road. We thought we were talking about it again when Progosian took Rostov and marched on Moscow. The thing that really strikes me about all this stuff is the extent to which, let's be honest. the Russian state is Putin. He's been there since 2000. There basically is no real line anymore between Putin and the Russian state. And there is just nothing that he has weathered and can weather this constant series of disasters at this point now because there is no difference between the Kremlin and him at this point. And the brutal force he is prepared to unleash to maintain his position is also absolutely formidable. And that is why westerners dare not think of this post-Putin future because you've got to get from A to B and it's very hard to see how that happens. Before we go to the break, I just want to update you

on a story we covered extensively on the news agency and it's about Andrew Malkinson who spent 17 years in prison for a rape that he never committed. We've just heard that there is going to be an independent inquiry into that and he was fascinating when Lewis and I spoke to him on the podcast. I do recommend you going back to listen to that episode of the dignity that he shows over what happened. His concern for the original victim of that rape and the sense of festering injustice over the way the criminal justice system treated him. This is the news agents. Welcome back and before we go a word or two about news agents USA because it was a big night in Milwaukee, Wisconsin last night and it's going to be a big day today at the Fulton County Jailhouse where Donald Trump is due to have his photo taken a mugshot will be coming. But last night's debate it was all about one man, Donald Trump but if it was about another man it was about a guy called Vivek Ramaswamy. Hold on, hold on. Listen, listen, listen. No, wait, hold on, hold on. I've had enough already tonight of a guy who sounds like chat GBT standing up here and the last person in one of these debates Brett who stood in the middle of the stage and said what's a skinny guy with an odd last name doing up here was Barack Obama

and I'm afraid we're dealing with the same type of amateur standing stage tonight.

I mean look, Joe Biden has weakened this country at home and abroad.

Now is not the time for on-the-job training.

We don't need to bring in a rookie.

We don't need to bring in people without experience.

Listen, now that everybody's gotten their memorized

pre-prepared slogans out of the way

we can actually have a real discussion now.

The reality and the fact of the matter is...

Is that one of yours?

Not really, Mike, actually.

We're just gonna have some fun tonight.

Of course the debate was high, clearly.

Well, in a way it was higher

than it might have been in 2016

when the insults were flying around

about little Marco and lying Ted and low energy Jeb.

So it moved on from that.

But of course, it was the shadow of Donald Trump,

the elephant in the room that wasn't in the room.

No, because he was talking to Tucker Carlson on X,

formerly known as Twitter,

which apparently has already had...

They were saying he's had what, more than 100 million views.

So the Twitter slash X-bods are saying.

Yes, which is not entirely true.

It will shock you to learn.

And there was another subplot of last night as well, of course,

which was Tucker Carlson, X of Fox News,

talking to Donald Trump, who used to love Fox News,

about how Fox News is going down the toilet.

And how they might be trying to kill him.

That was another conspiracy theory

that was also entertained last night.

It was guite a night in American Republican politics.

Well, he's seen what happens progression, of course.

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And newsagents everywhere else will be back tomorrow.

We will. See you then. Bye-bye.

This has been a Global Player original podcast

and a Persephoneka production.