

PUTIN DOESN'T COOK

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

When I saw the news Wednesday afternoon regarding a then-euphemistic plane crash outside Moscow, I couldn't help think of of a line from John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*:

"I bet you cook good, huh?" Darlene asked.
"Mother doesn't cook," Ignatius said dogmatically.
"She burns."

Putin may have had enough of his former chef Yevgeniy Prigozhin's cooking – enough that he didn't bother with tossing the object of his unhappiness out a window.

He may burned him by way of Russian air defense missiles.

It calls to mind another fried crisp event a few years back, when fossil fuel company Total S.A.'s chief executive Christophe de Margerie died in the bright white flames of his jet after a pretty and allegedly drunken snowplow driver hit the jet as it was preparing to take off.

Prigozhin's plane didn't even get a pretty object of attention for redirection as de Margerie did.

He got something more like that which eliminated Russian deputy attorney general Saak Albertovich Karapetyan in 2018 when his helicopter crashed northeast of Moscow in the Kostroma region. Karapetyan had been associated with high level international operations intended to obstruct foreign investigations including the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko, the death of Sergei Magnitsky, and with Natalia Veselnitskaya's Trump Tower meeting with Trump campaign team. Karapetyan had been blamed for information leaks to the west.

At first the helicopter crash was blamed on a

night-time run in with trees; later reports said the pilot had been shot and a helicopter blade had gun shot damage.

Prigozhin's plane had been traveling at an elevation of 28,000 feet making another run-in with trees unlikely.

Putin's disgraced chef had two months to the day from his mutinous protest this June to put his affairs in order before his plane was swatted out of the sky.

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Also of note:

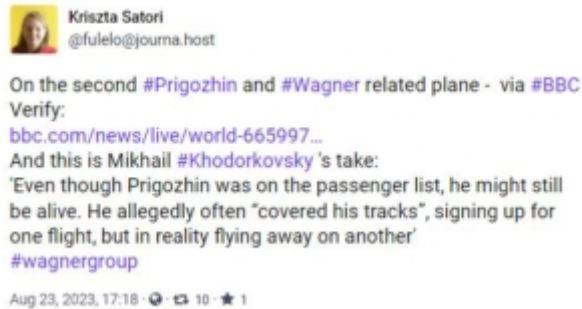
– Early morning August 23, Russian Commander-in-Chief of the Aerospace Forces Sergei Surovikin was reported to have been fired. Surovikin had been responsible for leading Russia's military assault on Ukraine from October 2022 until January 2023. He had also been linked to Prigozhin's June rebellion as a secret member of Wagner group. Surovikin had disappeared from public view after the rebellion; reports about his location varied widely, with some claiming Surovikin had been detained, his daughter claiming he had not, and yet more reporting he was "resting."

– Prigozhin had been seen on video earlier in the week at what appeared to be a location on the African continent. When and where exactly the video had been taken isn't clear, nor is the status of Wagner operations in Africa after the plane crash Wednesday.

– Initial reports about Prigozhin's plane crash attributed the cause to Russian air defense missiles while also claiming Prigozhin and nine others on board were killed. The Telegram social media channel associated with Wagner group, the Grey Zone, also said Prigozhin had been "killed as a result of actions by traitors of Russia." Grey Zone also reported Wagner co-founder Dmitry Utkin had been on the plane. But as coverage of the crash progressed, the reports shifted from assumptions Prigozhin was dead to reports that

Prigozhin's name was on the plane's passenger list.

– Reports changed from dead to listed not long after exiled Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky noted Prigozhin's personal security practices:



Oddly enough, BBC has now removed the quote from their coverage of the plane crash. Only this screenshot documents a journalist's observation of this quote.

– There had been two planes registered to Prigozhin in the air over Russia on August 23; the whereabouts of the second plane isn't known at this time though it had been recorded by FlightRadar24.

– Vladimir Putin spent part of Wednesday observing the 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Kursk. The largest tank battle in history began July 5, 1943 and ended seven weeks later on August 23 in southwest Russia.

– Putin had also been scheduled to speak at a BRICs summit early Wednesday as a virtual attendee; however his speech was not live but prerecorded. There have been a number of observations about Putin's voice which did not sound like his normal speech. China's President Xi Jinping didn't show up as scheduled at one of the BRIC summit events but this does not appear related to Putin's speech. In his absence, Xi's speech was instead delivered by Commerce Minister Wang Wentao.