

DAILY KOS

So, where does the chaos in Russia leave Putin's Republican allies AKA useful idiots/Putin fans?

Xaxnar

June 24, 2023

UPDATE 6/25/23 11:00 am Digby has collected some examples of Republicans supporting Putin and blaming the U.S. See the poll at the bottom of this post. “All of the above” should definitely have been a choice.

Update 6/24/23: News Corpse has some actual responses from the Right Wing. He goes back to show how they’ve been his fans bigly for some time.

Among all the other things taking up Vlad the Invader’s time over Prigozhin’s tantrum is where this puts his Republican useful idiots. Way down on the list I imagine, but still there somewhere.

Criminal defendant Trump facing possible prison time over, well the list keeps growing, means Putin could be losing the services of one of his key assets in the U.S. I would guess he’s really been counting on Trump and the GOP to bail him out. Could this be another example of ETTD? Everything Trump Touches Dies. Fingers crossed.

It's not looking so great for Team Red elsewhere either.

Consider John Durham’s testimony to Congress the other day, where he got shredded on his inability to ‘prove’ the FBI should never have investigated the Trump — Russia connections despite 5 years of trying. It was not pretty. The “Russia Hoax” is still the GOP party line, but when even the Cato Institute feels compelled to admit there’s real substance to the matter, you might think Republicans would back away. Nope, not when it’s still one of Trump’s big talking points.

Remember when Ted Cruz tweeted his admiration for the macho Russian military, and suggested the U.S. military was too ‘woke’ to stand up to them?

It didn't age well, and it looks like the tweet that horrified Cancun Cruz has been deleted?

The surrender caucus has been having a bad day too. Their insistence that the U.S. has no business supporting Ukraine against the might of Russia, that it’s a local issue, is a little harder to sustain in light of how Russia is now tearing itself apart over their failed invasion — and all of their neighbors NATO or otherwise are worried about what happens next. They claim NATO

expansion was the destabilizing factor that led to the invasion among other things — yet it's Putin's hubris that is now coming home to roost.

By supporting Ukraine, the effort by America and its allies has revealed the fundamental flaws in the Russian military and government which are now failing under stress. Allowing Russia to invade Ukraine without pushing back would have further encouraged Russian bad behavior and allowed the regime to continue its serial aggression. It's been hell on Ukraine to be the battleground on which this is being fought, but the consequences for Putin might just provide a cautionary warning to others who would pursue the same course.

And so much for his contempt for democracy as a failed decadent system.

I wonder how soon the tankies will seize on the chaos in Russia as even more reason for Ukraine to negotiate 'peace' — for the sake of the Russian people. Tom Sullivan linked to a tweet with an animation depicting how the demands on Ukraine to negotiate actually work in practice.

Of course, Republicans have another reason for the U.S. to distance itself from Ukraine — aside from the fact that they wouldn't play ball with Trump's attempt to blackmail them into fabricating dirt on Biden. It's because the country is full of Nazis — according to Putin. Republicans/conservatives hate Nazis — except when they don't. White Supremacists and White Christian Nationalists have to stick together after all. Their mutual hatred of LGBTQ people is another reason to bond.

And let's not even get into a discussion of GOP tolerance for Russian war crimes that are standard operating procedure — because it's not an issue for the Republican Party, with few exceptions. The important thing is that Putin is a 'strong leader' — until he isn't.

Rooting for Prigozhin is not necessarily a great idea either. As Digby reminds us, he's not America's friend. There's those war crimes also.

So where does this leave the Republican Party?

The same place they've been for quite a long time: on the wrong side of history, democracy, and simple human decency.

Meanwhile, from Neil MacFarquhar at **The NY Times** at 1:00 pm EST:

To enter Moscow, Wagner fighters will have to face a 'coup-proof' defense system, analysts say.

Dating back to Soviet times, the defense of Moscow was designed partly with the idea of preventing an armed insurrection from toppling the government.

Overlapping security services play a role, and one task of every branch has been to keep an eye on all the others.

“This has been built to be as coup-proof a system as possible,” Mark Galeotti, an expert on Russia's security services, said recently on his podcast, “In Moscow's Shadows.” Lots of security officials are paid to be “professionally paranoid,” tasked with looking for signs of any threat from within the security establishment, he noted.

First among equals is the Federal Protection Service, or F.S.O., which is roughly equivalent to the U.S. Secret Service. It serves as a kind of Praetorian guard, bearing the main responsibility for protecting the president.

After that, the main Federal Security Service, the F.S.B., has a large military counterintelligence department. Although it tries to ferret out foreign spies in the armed forces, its main task is watching the military, Mr. Galeotti said.

In terms of military units, there are two central ones assigned the task of guarding Moscow. They are the 4th Guard “Kantemirovskaya” Tank Division, nicknamed after one of their most famous battles, and the 2nd Guards Motor Division. Although both divisions have had units rotate through Ukraine, there is at least one regiment each, or 3,000 men apiece, left in Moscow at all times, Mr. Galeotti said.

Beyond that, there are various units of the Spetsnaz special forces; the National Guard and specialized riot police. And the Interior Ministry has a large police force. While not exactly military units, their members are all armed and could be called upon to shoot at the Wagner mercenaries.

On the other side, the Wagner group is estimated to have some 25,000 men, although accounts vary as to how many are deployed along the Russia-Ukraine front and how many are in far-flung assignments in the Middle East and Africa.

Whatever the number, Mr. Galeotti noted, it is likely insufficient to take on all the government forces mustered in Moscow, especially because Wagner fighters are limited in terms of their own air power, transportation and other logistics issues.

The scattered videos of Russian troops advancing from the southwestern city of Rostov-on-Don, where the rebellion started, to Moscow show mostly men in trucks or on armored personnel carriers, and very little in the way of artillery or tanks, Mr. Galeotti noted. So it is not clear how they expect to go on the offensive, he said.

“We need to appreciate how much the odds are stacked against them,” he said.

Of course, those multiple overlapping defenses depend on the willingness of the human beings in them to act as expected... It may be too soon to cue up Swan Lake, but you’d better believe they’re keeping it handy in Moscow.

UPDATE: As of just after 2:00 EST, The NY Times is reporting Prigozhin is turning his forces around and is not going to Moscow after all. Check your BINGO cards.

UPATE: [Digby links to an article](#) which explains how Putin created the monster that is Prigozhin, and how neither of them is exactly the nicest person to have in charge of a country with nuclear weapons.

Update: As of 6:00 EST, looks like it’s over. Prigozhin leaves Russia and Putin looks like a loser by agreeing to let him go. Presumably he doesn’t get to take the Wagner Group with him — but who knows?