Putin Didn't Expect US Attack on His Mercenaries in Syria and Now Faces a Challenge from the Right, Oreshkin Says

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That is already costing him support not only among many Russian enthusiasts for the use of force such as Igor Girkin (Strelkov) the former head of the DNR, who is accusing Putin of &Idquo;weakness and cowardice" but also among a broader strata of the population who know Russians have been killed and aren't comfortable with the lack of a response.

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": Staunton, February 12 – Vladimir Putin did not expect American forces to attack Russian mercenaries in Syria, killing at least a 100 and wounding even more, Dmitry Oreshkin says, because he views the West as fundamentally "cowardly" and afraid to respond to Russian actions both open and "hybrid." Consequently, for the Russian leader, this American action represents "a paradigm shift," and what is worse, it is something he cannot easily respond to because he insists the mercenaries are not Russian forces (apostrophe.ua/article/world/middle-east/2018-02-12/putin-poluchil-udar-i-popal-v-neznakomuyu-situa

tsiyu-chto-znachit-razgrom-naemnikov-rf-v-sirii/16924). That is already costing him support not only among many Russian enthusiasts for the use of force such as Igor Girkin (Strelkov) the former head of the DNR, who is accusing Putin of "weakness and cowardice" but also among a broader strata of the population who know Russians have been killed and aren't comfortable with the lack of a response. That could create the basis of a challenge to Putin from "patriotic" Russians in general and the *siloviki* in particular, Oreshkin argues; and consequently, the Kremlin leader is likely going to try to have a find a way to look stronger lest the possibility of such a threat grow into a reality. What is almost certainly unlikely is that the Kremlin leader will conclude that he has been playing an overly dangerous game with mercenaries, despite their apparent deniability as far as most people are concerned, and decide to pull back before this situation grows into something more serious both at home and abroad. & https://

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