The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia’s Ukraine Offensive Aims to Defend from ‘Western Threat,’ Defense Minister Says

March 01, 2022



Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Russia’s main task in its “special military operation” in Ukraine is to protect itself from Western threats, the country's defense minister said.

The war entered its sixth day Tuesday, with Russians circling a number of Ukrainian cities including the capital Kyiv and fatalities reported on both sides. Numerous Western countries have pledged to send military aid and supplies to Ukraine in the days since the offensive began, but none have said they will send their own troops.

"The main thing for us is to protect the Russian Federation from the military threat posed by Western countries, who are trying to use the Ukrainian people in the fight against our country," Sergei Shoigu said, according to state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Related article: Russia Strikes Ukrainian Cities as Convoy Masses Near Capital

He added that Russia would continue its offensive "until set goals are achieved," vowing to "demilitarize and de-Nazify" Ukraine.

Shoigu's comments come nearly a week after President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian forces over the Ukrainian border in a "special military operation" to "de-Nazify and demilitarize" Ukraine and its pro-Western government. A widespread yet unfounded Russian propaganda trope alleges that Ukraine is controlled by "Neo-Nazis" and "fascists."

The Kremlin has also described the offensive as an effort to "liberate" the people of eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, whose separatist republics Russia formally recognized as independent on Feb. 21.

Russian troops invaded the country from Ukraine's east and south, as well as from the north through Belarus in what is viewed as a full-scale invasion.

Shoigu denied that Russia was occupying Ukraine and said the Russian military is undertaking special orders and ensuring it takes special measures to protect civilian lives.

He repeated Russia's claim that its forces are only targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure and that no missile, air or artillery strikes are being carried out on Ukrainian cities.

Numerous reports and videos have shown apparent Russian strikes on civilian areas in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities.

A UN report on Monday said at least 102 civilians have been killed in the conflict in Ukraine so far, with a further 304 injured.

"Most of these civilians were killed by explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery and multi-launch rocket systems, and air strikes. The real figures are, I fear, considerably higher," UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/03/01/russias-ukraine-offensive-aims-to-defend-from-western-threat-defense-minister-says-a76682