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Putin Involved in Tactical Decision Making in East Ukraine – Reports

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin is seen during a signing session at a summit meeting of the leaders of CSTO member states in the Kremlin on May 16, 2022. **Anton Novoderezhkin/TASS**

President Vladimir Putin is involved in Russia's push to capture eastern Ukraine on a tactical level, British media reported Monday, citing unnamed western military sources.

Russian forces are currently attempting to encircle cities under Kyiv's control in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions after abandoning their initial plan to seize the Ukrainian capital in late February.

The Russian president's micromanagement of the war, down to determining the movement of forces, is believed to be contributing to the military's failure to capture cities in the Donbas, according to the Guardian newspaper.

"If Putin is doing the job of a brigade commander... he could be delving into a force that could be as small as 700 to 1,000 soldiers," British newspaper The Times quoted a source as saying.

Both publications reported that Putin is working closely with top general Valery Gerasimov, contrary to earlier reports of him being sidelined due to military blunders.

"We think Putin and Gerasimov are involved in tactical decision making at a level we would normally expect to be taken by a colonel or a brigadier," a source was quoted as saying by the Guardian.

The western assessment follows an independent Russian media report that Putin received faulty intelligence on Ukraine from the Federal Security Service (FSB) before the invasion.

The FSB's informants included fugitive Ukrainian officials who fled to Russia after Ukraine's pro-Moscow leader was toppled in 2014, according to the iStories investigative outlet.

"They were air sellers," an unnamed former FSB officer was quoted as saying.

"They were making things up, misinterpreting and sometimes fantasizing — and the leadership was happy to believe it," a second former FSB officers said.

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