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Kremlin Says Key Goal of Ukraine War to 'Protect' East Ukraine Rebels

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Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov attends the New Horizons Educational Marathon held by the Znanie [Knowledge] society on May 17, 2022. **Alexander Ryumin/TASS**

The Kremlin said Monday it sees the "protection" of eastern Ukraine's pro-Russian separatist Donetsk and Luhansk peoples' republics (DNR and LNR) as the key goal of its nearly 16-week military campaign.

"The republics' protection is the main goal of the special military operation in general," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, using the official Russian name for its invasion.

He spoke after DNR's leader requested "additional allied forces" in response to what he called heavy shelling of the breakaway region's towns and cities.

Peskov redirected that request to Russia's Defense Ministry.

President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 with the stated aim of stopping

what he called a “genocide” against Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine and “demilitarizing and denazifying” the country.

The latter goal is based on his false assertion that Kyiv’s government, led by Jewish President Volodymyr Zelensky, had been taken over by neo-Nazis.

Russia has since shifted its war aims to capture territories in southern and eastern Ukraine.

The Kremlin has repeatedly vowed to continue its offensive in Ukraine until “all its goals are met.”

Russia’s war in Ukraine has killed thousands and forcibly displaced millions, sparking the fastest and largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II.

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