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Russia Says Withdrawal From Ukraine's Kherson Completed

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An aerial view of the city of Kherson. **Andrey Borodulin / AFP**

Russia said Friday it had completed its withdrawal of forces from the southern city of Kherson, two days after Moscow said it had made the "difficult decision" to pull back amid Ukrainian advances.

"Today at 5 o'clock in the morning Moscow time, the transfer of Russian troops to the left bank of the Dnipro River was completed," the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement on Telegram.

"There was no loss of personnel, weapons and military equipment," the ministry said, adding civilians "were assisted in the evacuation."

Following the withdrawal, the Kremlin said that the city of Kherson was still part of Russia, as Moscow claimed to have annexed the Kherson region in September.

"This is a subject of the Russian Federation. There are no changes in this and there cannot be

changed," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

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Russia announced Wednesday it was withdrawing its forces from Kherson due to its inability to supply Russian forces there, abandoning the only Ukrainian regional capital it has captured in its nearly nine-month invasion.

The decision to pull back to the left bank of the Dnipro River came after months of intense fighting in the area, with Ukrainian troops making incremental gains against a large Russian force.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday that Kyiv's forces had recaptured over 40 towns and villages in southern Ukraine as Russia retreated.

Moscow declared its annexation of four partially occupied Ukrainian regions — Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk — after holding widely disputed referendums in each region.

The annexation was rejected by Kyiv and widely condemned by Western countries.

AFP contributed reporting.

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