The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Authorities in Crimea to Strengthen Defenses Amid Ukrainian Gains

November 18, 2022



Exercises of mobilized citizens in Crimea. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

Russian authorities in annexed Crimea are fortifying the peninsula's defensive positions, its governor said Friday in a signal of Moscow's growing concerns over Ukrainian forces' push to reclaim captured territories in the south.

Attacks on the Black Sea peninsula have increased in recent weeks as Kyiv presses on with a counteroffensive to retake territory in southern Ukraine.

"Fortification works aimed at guaranteeing Crimeans' security are being conducted under my supervision," said Crimea's Russian Governor Sergei Aksyonov.

He argued that "main measures for Crimea's security should be taken in the Kherson region," which Russian forces control east of the Dnipro river.

Aksyonov made the announcement at a briefing one week after Ukrainian forces reclaimed the

city of Kherson.

The Kherson region forms part of a crucial land bridge to Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 and connected to the Russian mainland with a bridge over the Kerch Strait four years later.

Analysts say Ukraine's current positions in Kherson make northern Crimea and Russia's supply lines in the south vulnerable to attack.

Still, Aksyonov sought to reassure Crimeans that existing measures are "enough" to protect them from a potential Ukrainian assault.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed Thursday there would be no peace until Crimea and the eastern separatist-controlled territory known as the Donbas are returned to Kyiv.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Russian units have built new trenches near the Crimean border and other sections in eastern Ukraine.

"Some of these locations are up to 60 kilometers behind the current front line, suggesting that Russian planners are making preparations in case of further major Ukrainian breakthroughs," it said in Friday's assessment.

Russian forces are "partially vulnerable" to Ukrainian attacks on their communication and supply lines, the Institute for the Study of War think tank said earlier Friday.

A top U.S. general, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, played down the likelihood of Crimea's return and a wider Ukrainian military victory in the short term this week. But he acknowledged that a "political solution" could lead to Russia's withdrawal from occupied territories, including Crimea.

"The Russian military is really hurting bad," Milley said Wednesday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/11/18/russian-authorities-in-crimea-to-strengthen-defenses-amid-ukrainian-gains-a79423