

Valery Gerasimov Appointed Commander of Russian Forces in Ukraine

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Valery Gerasimov. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

Russia has once again replaced its top commander in Ukraine, putting army Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov in charge of its forces in the conflict, the Defense Ministry announced on Wednesday.

"Army General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, has been appointed Commander of the Joint Grouping of Troops," the ministry said.

Sergei Surovikin, the commander of Russia's forces in Ukraine for the past three months, will become Gerasimov's deputy.

Surovikin will work alongside two other generals, Oleg Salyukov and Alexei Kim, according to the statement.

"The increase in the level of leadership of the special operation is linked to the expansion of the scale of the tasks at hand and the need to organize closer interaction between troops," the ministry said.

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Surovikin, an army veteran with a reputation for ruthlessness appointed to the role in October, was tasked with turning the tide in Ukraine as the Russian army faced a series of battlefield defeats.

Two days after Surovikin's nomination, the Russian army signaled a strategic change by unleashing a wave of drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure targets, causing electricity blackouts and water outages in several cities.

One month after his appointment, Russia retreated from the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, the only regional capital Russian forces had held in the conflict to date. Since then, the frontline has remained relatively static.

Moscow's forces are also leading a long and bloody battle in the east around Bakhmut and Soledar, where the situation was unclear on Wednesday evening.

Russian mercenary group Wagner claimed to control the gateway town of Soledar, while the Kremlin cautioned against a premature declaration of victory, noting that fighting was still ongoing.

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