

Russia Claims 'Successful' Advances Near Ukraine's Bakhmut

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Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. **Sergei Savostyanov / TASS**

The Russian army is “successfully” advancing near the eastern Ukrainian towns of Bakhmut and Vuhledar, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu [said](#) Tuesday.

"Military operations are at the moment progressing with success in the areas around Vuhledar and Artemovsk," Shoigu told a defense meeting using the previous name for Bakhmut.

He listed seven settlements that Russia has recently "liberated," including the salt-mining town of Soledar that came under Russian control in January.

Shoigu then accused the U.S. and its allies in the West of "trying to drag out the conflict as long as possible," referring to the military aid promised to Kyiv by its American and European allies.

"Such steps draw NATO countries into the conflict and could see it escalate unpredictably," he

added.

According to Shoigu, Ukraine has lost more than 6,500 soldiers in the past month as well as 26 aircraft, seven helicopters and 341 tanks.

Russia's forces have been trying to seize control of Bakhmut in the eastern region of Donetsk for months in what has become the longest and bloodiest battle since Russia invaded Ukraine last February.

On Sunday, the head of Russia's notorious Wagner mercenary group Yevgeny Prigozhin [said](#) that heavy fighting was underway in the northern parts of Bakhmut.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday vowed to fight for Bakhmut "as long as we can."

Western officials reportedly estimate that Russia's casualties in its nearly year-long invasion are nearing 200,000 men killed or wounded, The New York Times [reported](#) this month.

AFP contributed reporting.

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