

Russia's Wagner Group Claims to Hold 'Eastern Part' of Bakhmut

By [AFP](#)

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Ukrainian servicemen fire a 105mm Howitzer towards Russian positions, near the city of Bakhmut, on March 4, 2023. **Aris Messinis / AFP**

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said Wednesday that his forces had taken "all the eastern part" of Bakhmut, the east Ukrainian town where fierce fighting has raged for months.

"Wagner units have taken all the eastern part of Bakhmut, all that's east of the Bakhmutka river" that bisects the town, Wagner chief and Kremlin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin said in an audio [message](#) released by his press service.

Pressure has been mounting on Ukrainian troops trying to hold the city against Russian soldiers hoping to capture it no matter the cost.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said Ukrainian forces were intent on defending

Bakhmut but warned the Russian army would have an "open road" into eastern Ukraine if it captured the town.

The battle for Bakhmut, a salt-mining town with a population of 80,000 before the fighting began, has been the longest and bloodiest in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has devastated swathes of the country and displaced millions over the past year.

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