

Kremlin Acknowledges Waging ‘Difficult’ Campaign in Ukraine

May 11, 2023



Russian servicemen near residential buildings in the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, March 2023.
Valentin Sprinchak / TASS

Russia is waging a “very difficult” military campaign in Ukraine, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#) in a rare concession of the Russian military's underwhelming performance over a year into its war on Kyiv.

“It’s a very, very difficult operation and of course certain goals have been achieved in a year,” Peskov told the Bosnian Serb broadcaster ATV in an interview published late Wednesday.

“We managed to shake up the Ukrainian war machine quite a bit,” he said, adding that Russian forces have been “able to destroy very many weapons factories, spare weapons and so on.”

Russia launched its invasion, which it calls a “special military operation,” of Ukraine in February 2022 with the expectation that its campaign would last a few days, if not hours.

Nearly 15 months later, Peskov said Western support for Kyiv and Russia's efforts to avoid civilian casualties have hindered Moscow's ability to achieve its main goals on the battlefield.

"Why has it been a year and there's still so much to do?... It was hard to imagine that NATO members, the United States, European countries, would first indirectly and then directly intervene in the conflict," Peskov added.

Airing a frequent Kremlin talking point, Peskov claimed that "NATO is now an actual participant in this conflict on the side of Ukraine."

He went on to claim that Russia is making slow progress "because Russians don't wage war. We're trying to preserve infrastructure and human lives."

Russian forces have killed and wounded more than 23,000 civilians since invading Ukraine, according to UN estimates. Western officials estimate that more than 200,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in the conflict.

A joint assessment by the Ukrainian government, the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations in March [placed](#) the estimated cost of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction at \$411 billion.

President Vladimir Putin's press secretary expressed "no doubt" that Russia would capture the eastern city of Bakhmut, which has been nearly completely destroyed by several months of bloody fighting.

Peskov accused NATO of forcing Putin to attack Ukraine by expanding eastward and "refusing to talk when he proposed to start negotiations on security guarantees."

"Russia is too big a country to be treated like this, and Russia is too strong a country to surrender," he said.

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