

Russia Says Ukraine Forces 'Regrouping' After Offensive Losses

By [AFP](#)

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Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

Russia said Thursday that Ukrainian forces in eastern and southern Ukraine were temporarily limiting their efforts to reclaim Moscow-held territory, after Kyiv launched its highly anticipated counteroffensive.

"After conducting active hostilities over the past 16 days and having suffered significant losses, the enemy has reduced its activity and is currently regrouping," Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said, in comments carried by Russian news agencies.

Also on Thursday, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal warned that his country's counteroffensive against invading Russian forces "will take time" but said he was "optimistic" about its success.

"We will do very smart, offensive operations. And because of this, it (the counteroffensive)

will take time," Shmygal said on the sidelines of a Ukraine reconstruction conference in London.

"But we have the intention to move and go ahead. We are going to go ahead... and I'm absolutely optimistic for the liberation of all our lands occupied by Russians," he added.

He said the counter-offensive "is a number of military operations. Sometimes it's offensive. Sometimes it's defensive."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has argued several times within the last week that the Ukrainian counteroffensive is a failure.

But during a meeting Thursday with his Security Council, he conceded that Kyiv's forces had "an offensive potential."

"It must be assumed that this offensive potential of the adversary is not exhausted. A series of strategic reserves are not employed, and I ask that this reality be taken into account," he said during the televised meeting.

Shoigu added during the meeting that Ukrainian forces were suffering heavy losses, while declining to give details of Russian casualties.

He also said that Western military aid for Ukraine was not seriously impacting outcomes on the battlefield, even though the Kremlin routinely says the deliveries prolong the conflict and escalate fighting.

"Today we understand that the quantities (of Western arms) that are going and have been delivered in 2023 do not have a significant influence on the course of military operations," he said.

"We don't see a threat there, especially since we are actively forming reserves," he added.

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