Russia's Former Top Commander in Ukraine Dies

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General Gennady Zhidko. **Russian Defense Ministry**

A senior general who was briefly placed in charge of Russia's armed forces in Ukraine last year has died from an undisclosed illness, authorities said late Wednesday.

Colonel General Gennady Zhidko died in Moscow "after a long illness," reported Mikhail Degtyarev, the governor of Russia's Far East Khabarovsk region, who knew Zhidko as the head of Russia's Eastern Military District.

Zhidko's death at age 57 does not appear suspicious as he had been suffering from cancer, said the independent journalist Dmitry Kolezev, citing an anonymous source.

The United States and the European Union placed sanctions on Zhidko earlier this year as a key member of the Russian Armed Forces.

Zhidko "oversaw the implementation of an order to deploy Russian minors to the Ukrainian war theater," said the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs in April.

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The general was placed in charge of Russia's forces in Ukraine in late May 2022, [according](#) to the independent investigative organization Conflict Intelligence Team.

He was quietly replaced as early as July 2022 "for failures during military operations," [according](#) to the BBC's Russian service. Months later, Russian forces were driven out of the Kharkiv region in northeastern Ukraine and the Kherson region in the south of the country.

Prior to his brief leadership post in the Ukraine war, Zhidko oversaw Russian troops in Syria in 2016–18 and ideological loyalty as deputy defense minister 2021–22. He received a Hero of Russia title — the country's highest distinction — from President Vladimir Putin in 2017.

Russian military authorities have not commented on Zhidko's death.

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