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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukraine Claims Successes in 'Heavy Fighting' on Russian-Held Side of Dnipro

By AFP

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General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Ukraine said Friday it had carried out successful attacks on the Russian-occupied eastern bank of the Dnipro River, days after Moscow admitted Kyiv's forces had gained a foothold there.

A sustained Ukrainian breakthrough across the frontline waterway would mark a significant success for Kyiv, whose wider counteroffensive has so far failed to turn the tide of the 21-month war.

"The Defense Forces of Ukraine conducted a series of successful operations on the left bank of the Dnipro River, along the Kherson front," Ukraine's Marine Corps said in a statement on social media.

Kyiv said its forces had "managed to gain a foothold on several bridgeheads."

In a follow-up statement it added: "heavy fighting continues."

The rival armies have been entrenched on opposite sides of the Dnipro since Russia withdrew from the western part of Kherson region last November, in an embarrassing setback for the Kremlin.

That was the last major territorial change in the conflict, with both sides having since failed to make progress despite multiple offensives.

Russia's Defense Ministry later appeared to reject Kyiv's claims of a breakthrough.

"The enemy (is) on the right (western) bank of the Dnipro," the ministry said in a statement, adding that it had thwarted Ukrainian attempts to land on unspecified islands.

Both sides said they had inflicted heavy losses on the other — claims AFP could not verify.

Non-stop shelling

Since their withdrawal, Russian forces have continuously shelled Ukrainian towns and villages across the river, forcing civilian evacuations.

The governor of the Kherson region said early Friday that one person was killed in the latest Russian shelling, following at least three deaths the day before.

Earlier this week, the Russian-installed official responsible for occupied Kherson conceded for the first time that some Ukrainian units had crossed the Dnipro and established positions on the eastern bank.

He said Kyiv's troops were "blocked" in Krynky, a small village on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River, and were facing a "fiery hell" from Russian artillery, rockets and drones.

The official, Vladimir Saldo, said Ukraine had only been able to cross the river by "throwing meat" — a euphemism for military assaults that involve huge numbers of manpower and encounter heavy losses.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday posted photos on social media of what he said were Ukrainian soldiers on the Dnipro's eastern bank. They showed a handful of soldiers crossing a river in a small boat and disembarking.

Kyiv hopes the foothold will open up the possibility for a more sustained offensive in the south and towards the annexed Crimean peninsula.

But Russia's Saldo said boggy, swamp-like terrain, combined with Russia's superior manpower and supplies gave them a significant upper hand.

The battle comes two weeks after Ukraine's top commander said the war had ground to a "stalemate" — an assessment rejected by both Zelensky and the Kremlin.

Also on Friday, Russia's Defense Ministry said its troops fighting further to the east on the "southern Donetsk front" had "taken up more favorable positions" — language previously

used by Russia when announcing retreats and withdrawals. The ministry did not give further details however.

Zelensky's warning

Away from the frontlines, Ukraine is braced for increased Russian air strikes across the country as winter approaches.

Zelensky warned late Thursday that Moscow was likely stockpiling missiles to hit energy facilities over the coming months.

Last year, millions of Ukrainians suffered debilitating blackouts after relentless Russian strikes on power stations and the electrical grid.

"My estimation is that they are accumulating (missiles), but that they don't have many more missiles compared to what they previously had," Zelensky told reporters on Thursday, referring to last year's attacks.

Kyiv has urged its allies abroad to bolster its supply of air defense systems, and Zelensky said on Thursday Ukraine was in a better position now than last year.

He added that authorities had built more bomb shelters and increased aid points where civilians could keep warm and charge phones during power outages.

But he warned in separate comments that Ukraine did not have "100% protection" from Russian aerial attacks.

"Cities like Kharkiv, regions like Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia, need more (air defense) systems," he said in an evening address posted on social media.

He also told reporters that Western sanctions had slowed Moscow's production of missiles, but that its supply of attack drones was "more or less fine."

"Winter will be difficult, but not worse than the previous one," Zelensky said.

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