The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukrainian Army Says Retreated to Outskirts of Town Claimed by Moscow

By AFP

December 26, 2023



The town of Maryinka has been all but destroyed during Russia's invasion. **Zvezda TV / Screenshot**

Ukraine's commander-in-chief said on Tuesday his forces had pulled back to the outskirts of the town of Maryinka, a day after Moscow claimed full control of the key town.

"We have now moved to the outskirts of Maryinka, and in some places already beyond the boundaries of the settlement," Valerii Zaluzhnyi told reporters in Kyiv.

Maryinka is close to the key Russian-held city of Donetsk in east Ukraine.

"We protect every piece of our land but the lives of our soldiers are more important to us," Zaluzhnyi said, adding that in any case the town "no longer exists" after being destroyed "street by street" by the Russians.

Of the troop move, he said: "There is nothing in this that can cause a public outcry."

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Monday had said Russian forces had "completely" captured Maryinka, speaking at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin shown on state television.

Embed:

> Today Putin was briefed that Marinka near Donetsk had been "liberated" from Ukraine
>
> These pictures from Russian Defence Ministry-owned Zvezda TV give some idea of the unspeakable destruction wrought upon the place pic.twitter.com/WZuJZB746d
>
> — Francis Scarr (@francis_scarr) December 25, 2023

Piles of rubble and gutted apartment buildings over a wide area could be seen in drone images shown on Russian television that were said to be of Maryinka.

"I want to congratulate you," Putin told Shoigu.

"This is a success" which gives Russian troops "the opportunity to move into a wider operational area," the president said.

Shoigu said that control of Maryinka would enable his soldiers to "move further in this direction" and "make it possible to protect Donetsk more effectively from strikes" from Ukrainian forces.

But Oleksandr Shtupun, a spokesman for Ukraine's army, said on Monday it was "incorrect" to claim that Maryinka was fully controlled by Russian forces.

"The fighting for Maryinka continues," he said, adding that there were still Ukrainian soldiers within the borders of the district of Maryinka.

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