

Putin: Ukraine Risks 'Irreparable Blow' if Conflict Continues

By [AFP](#)

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Sergei Savostyanov, TASS / kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Moscow's forces had the upper hand in their almost two-year conflict with Ukraine, warning the rival state it risks an "irreparable" blow if it continued.

The frontlines in eastern and southern Ukraine have barely moved in more than a year as the conflict has ground to a stalemate.

Speaking hours after Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky called on the West to ensure Ukraine has the air superiority it needs to make progress on the battlefield, Putin insisted his forces have the upper hand.

"Not only has their counteroffensive failed, but the initiative is entirely in the hands of the Russian Armed Forces," Putin said Tuesday in televised remarks.

"If this continues, Ukraine's statehood could be dealt an irreparable, very serious blow," he added, without elaborating.

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Putin also said recent attacks on Russian civilians were "barbaric."

More than 20 people were killed in the Russian city of Belgorod, close to the border with Ukraine, on Dec. 30 in what Moscow said was a cross-border shelling attack launched by Ukrainian forces.

"They are trying to show that they can also do something. But instead of solving military tasks, they act in such a barbaric way. Attacks are being carried out on peaceful settlements with indiscriminate weapons," Putin said on Tuesday.

Russia launched its full-scale military campaign against Ukraine in February 2022, triggering the West to hit Moscow with an unprecedented package of sanctions and provide billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to Kyiv.

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