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Russian Forces Enter Key Ukraine Town Then Pushed Back – Mayor

By AFP

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Avdiivka following a Russian shelling attack. **Artemco (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian forces entered the war-battered town of Avdiivka for the first time but were pushed back, its mayor told AFP Wednesday, following months of fierce fighting for the industrial hub in east Ukraine.

Moscow in October launched a costly bid to wrest control of the town which has been on the front line of fighting between Ukraine and Russian-backed forces since 2014.

Kyiv has said its forces are holding out against Russia's efforts to encircle the town that had an estimated pre-war population of some 32,000 people.

"Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups entered the southern part of the city of Avdiivka, but they were dislodged," Avdiivka Mayor Vitalii Barabash said.

He declined to say when Russian forces entered Avdiivka or how long they had been in the

town.

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His comments come as local officials said a Russian rocket strike on the town of Hirnyk, 30 kilometers to the west of Avdiivka, killed at least two people and wounded eight.

"The Russians attacked the town today around 4:00 p.m. (14:00 GMT), hitting a residential area," Vadym Filashkin, the Ukrainian head of the Donetsk region said in a social media post.

Towns and villages along the sprawling frontline are subject to daily artillery and rocket attacks.

In Avdiivka, Barabash said "the situation is under the control of the armed forces. The situation is difficult but controlled."

He said there were just under 1,100 civilians remaining in the town but no children.

The eastern Donetsk region has seen some of the worst fighting of Russia's nearly two-year invasion.

Russia claimed to have annexed the territory alongside three other frontline Ukrainian regions late in 2022.

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