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Parts of Ukraine's Avdiivka 'Critical,' Official Says

By AFP

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Ukrainian town of Avdiivka. **National Police of Ukraine**

Some parts of the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka are in a "critical" condition as they fight off Russian shelling and incursions, a local official said on Tuesday.

Russia launched a renewed push to capture Avdiivka in October, with troops on three sides of the town pounding it with relentless artillery strikes in a bid to force a Ukrainian withdrawal.

"While for several weeks we were saying the situation was very difficult but under control, now the situation is very difficult and in some places critical," said Vitaliy Barabash, head of the town's military administration.

"This does not mean that everything is lost, that everything is very bad. But the enemy is directing [a] very large amount of forces at our city," he told a Ukrainian television channel.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said last Wednesday his troops held ground on the outskirts

of the town and had broken through Ukraine's defenses in some places.

"There are no street fights in the city per se," said Barabash.

"Certainly, there are solitary sabotage and reconnaissance groups which are trying to break into the city, to walk through the streets," he continued.

Russian forces control territory to the north, east and south of Avdiivka, which lies some five kilometers (three miles) from the outskirts of the Russian-controlled stronghold of Donetsk.

Capturing the town would provide a rare victory for Russia as the second anniversary of its offensive approaches. Russia will hold a presidential election in March.

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