The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Russia Claims Gains in East Ukraine as 2-Year Mark Approaches

By AFP

February 22, 2024



**Pavlo Kyrylenko / Facebook**

Russia claimed on Thursday its forces had advanced further in east Ukraine, piling pressure on Kyiv days before the two-year anniversary of the conflict.

Ukraine has faced intense pressure on its eastern front in recent months as it grapples with ammunition shortages and hold-ups to much-needed Western military aid.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Thursday it captured Pobeda ("victory" in Russian), a small frontline village about five kilometers west of Donetsk city.

"On the Donetsk front, units of the 'Southern' group of troops liberated the village of Pobeda and improved their position along the front line," it said.

The capture, if confirmed, would mark another step westwards for Moscow, which last week

seized the former Ukrainian stronghold of Avdiivka after months of battle.

Ukraine said in a briefing later Thursday that it was "holding back enemy forces" in Pobeda, but did not explicitly refute Moscow's claim.

**Related article**: Avdiivka, a Symbolic Trophy for Putin's Russia

"Russians are concentrating their main activity on the Donetsk region," Ukraine's senior commander in the area Oleksandr Tarnavsky acknowledged, without elaborating.

The capture of Avdiivka last week, after the nearby town of Maryinka fell to Russian forces in December, marks a turning point for Moscow after over a year of deadlocked fighting.

Russia has for months been ramping up arms production and driving massive human resources into its offensive, at what Kyiv says is an enormous human toll.

## Kherson bridgehead

As Russia claimed advances in the east, Ukraine said its forces had struck a Russian training ground in the south, on the Moscow-controlled eastern bank of the Dnipro River.

Kyiv has managed to hold a thin bridgehead on the eastern bank of the river in the southern Kherson region since last year, but its forces have not made further progress inland.

The strike, which took place Wednesday, targeted a range where Russian storm troops were training, military spokeswoman Nataliya Gumenyuk said.

Around 60 Russian troops were "killed or seriously wounded" when three strikes hit the training ground near the village of Podo-Kalynivka, she told AFP.

Russia claimed to have taken back the Dnipro River bridgehead earlier this week, but Ukraine has repeatedly rejected this.

"Our marines are firmly holding the bridgehead," Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday, calling Russia's claims "disinformation."

Ukraine carried out a separate strike on a training ground near the Russian-controlled town of Volnovakha in the eastern Donetsk region on Tuesday, resulting in numerous casualties.

Russia did not officially acknowledge that strike, but authorities in one region said they were looking into reports of casualties among the 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade.

"We will bring full and reliable information about the fate of the soldiers directly to each family," Zabaikalsky region Governor Alexander Osipov said Wednesday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/22/russia-claims-gains-in-east-ukraine-as-two-year-mark-approaches-a84207