

Putin Says 'No Plans' to Take Kharkiv, Blames Ukraine for New Offensive

By [AFP](#)

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Vladimir Putin holds a press conference in Harbin. **Mikhail Metzel / AFP**

President Vladimir Putin said Friday that his country's armed forces launched their recent offensive against Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region to stop cross-border attacks against Russia's border regions, but added that Moscow has no plans to capture the city of Kharkiv.

Thousands of Russian troops poured over the border into Ukraine on May 10, unleashing artillery fire on several towns and villages and seizing over 200 square kilometers of land, making it Moscow's biggest battlefield advance in 18 months.

"As for what is happening on the Kharkiv front, this is their fault, because they have shelled and continue to shell residential neighborhoods in border areas, including Belgorod," Putin told reporters at a press conference in the Chinese city of Harbin, where he attended a trade expo earlier in the day.

"And I said publicly that, if this continues, we will be forced to create a security zone," he said.

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Western Russia's Belgorod region has been repeatedly targeted by deadly artillery and drone strikes since the start of the full-scale invasion, and Russian authorities have slammed Kyiv for what they call indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

When asked about whether Russia planned to capture the city of Kharkiv, which is Ukraine's second largest city after the capital Kyiv, Putin said that Moscow "has no such plans as of today."

The Russian leader also said that he discussed the war in Ukraine with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping during their informal meeting earlier, praising Beijing's efforts to bring a resolution to the conflict.

"We have repeatedly said that we believe that China is sincerely seeking to resolve this problem [and] offers various options, behaves very flexibly," Putin said.

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