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Zelensky Denies Russian Foothold in Ukraine's Sumy Region

By AFP

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Sumy region, Ukraine. **Mkip.gov.ua**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday denied Russian troops had captured a village in the northeastern Sumy region, where the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov previously claimed Moscow's forces had advanced.

Kadyrov said on Sunday that Russian forces had seized the border village of Ryzhivka. There was no immediate comment from Russia's Defense Ministry and a local Ukrainian official denied the claim.

Zelensky said Ukrainian forces were "in full control" in the Sumy region and that Russian sabotage groups operating there had been "destroyed."

"As for the village of Ryzhivka, the occupier tried to implement a propaganda operation there," he said on social media. "As of this morning, the Russian flag in the village was

destroyed, and there is no occupant presence."

Zelensky said fighting in the industrial Donetsk region was "the most difficult" and that Ukrainian forces were doing everything to stabilize their positions there.

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Kadyrov had said that fighters from his Akhmat battalion "together with servicemen from other Russian units carried out tactical operations and liberated another settlement from the enemy" in the Sumy region.

"As a result of large-scale planned offensive actions, the Ukrainian side suffered significant losses and was forced to retreat," he added.

Yuriy Zarko, the Ukrainian head of the local municipality, denied Ryzhivka had been captured and told state broadcaster Suspilne there were no Russian troops in the village.

Zelensky warned last month that Russia was amassing troops along the northern border ahead of what might be a new offensive.

Authorities began evacuating residents living in some border towns and villages in the Sumy region last month, citing the risk of increased Russian attacks.

On May 10, Russia began a major ground operation in the neighboring Kharkiv region, capturing several towns and villages as Kyiv's forces struggled with manpower and ammunition shortages.

Ukraine has since rushed reinforcements to the area but lost ground to Russia elsewhere on the front, with Zelensky warning on Sunday of difficult battles in the eastern Donetsk region.

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