The Moscow Times
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Russian Advance in Kursk Region ‘Stopped,’ Ukrainian Official Says

By AFP

September 18, 2024



People displaced from their homes in the Kursk region seen at a temporary shelter. **Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS**

Russia's counteroffensive to retake Ukrainian-held territory in the southwestern Kursk region has been "stopped," a spokesman from Ukraine's military administration in the region told AFP Wednesday.

Earlier, Russia's Defense Ministry said it had retaken several villages from Ukraine in the Kursk region. Kyiv has thus far held on to large swathes of Russian territory since launching its surprise incursion in early August.

"They tried to attack from the flanks, but they were stopped there," spokesman Oleksiy Dmytrashkivsky told AFP. "The situation was stabilized and today everything is under control, they were not successful."

However, Dmytrashkivsky admitted that Russian forces had seen "some minor success" with their counteroffensive. "The Russians entered one of the settlements. They started fighting for another settlement, but that was it."

He also said there were "several thousand" Russian civilians in areas occupied by Ukrainian troops. "In some settlements, there are more than 100 people, more than 200, more than 500."

In late August, Russian authorities said around 20,000 people remained in areas of the Kursk region held by Ukrainian forces. Overall, more than 150,000 people living in communities near the border have been forced to evacuate their homes

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Dmytrashkivsky also claimed that Russian strikes aimed at taking back its territory have killed "23 civilians" since the end of August, saying they are "dying with the Ukrainian military."

According to him, civilians are "not allowed to leave" because "the situation must be controlled." However, he said, they are allowed to "move around" the area and can "visit each other, eat, gather somewhere, dig potatoes, work in the garden."

Dmytrashkivsky said that civilians could be allowed to leave for Russian-controlled territory in the event that Ukraine and Russia "agree, through international organizations that deal with these issues, to open a green corridor under the supervision of observers."

Earlier this week, Kyiv asked the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to observe the situation in areas of Russia's Kursk its forces control.

Dmytrashkivsky said that food is brought into those areas from northeastern Ukraine's Sumy region. "The Sumy regional administration allocates funds for bread on a weekly basis. The armed forces provide water, the administration hands out food packages."

"Nothing works there, no shops, no pharmacy, nothing," he added.

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