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Ukraine Army Says Withdrawing From Eastern Stronghold of Vuhledar

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Vuhledar, Ukraine. **National Police of Ukraine**

Ukraine's army said Wednesday it was withdrawing from the eastern town of Vuhledar, facing intense Russian attacks and the risk of being encircled.

"The High Command gave permission for a maneuver to withdraw units from Vuhledar in order to save personnel and military equipment and take up a position for further operations," the Khortytsia group of troops, which operates in the area, said in a Telegram post.

The unit claimed it had inflicted heavy losses on Russian forces but that relentless attacks meant "there was a threat of encirclement."

Analysts from the Ukrainian crowd-sourced tracking site DeepState had earlier reported that Russian troops had taken control of the town.

Soldiers from Ukraine's 72nd Mechanized Brigade, which has been defending Vuhledar, also

confirmed their withdrawal from the city to the BBC, noting that they were forced to escape by foot and likely sustained major personnel losses.

Moscow has not yet commented on the reported capture.

The capture of Vuhledar, which has been known as a "fortress city" due to its well-fortified surroundings and upland position, would mark a major success for Moscow after months of grinding advances across the east.

Related article: How Close is Russia to Capturing Ukraine's Key Stronghold of Vuhledar?

Russian troops have made multiple attempts to capture the strategic former coal-mining city throughout its two-and-a-half-year invasion — an effort that has cost Moscow thousands of troops, hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles, according to an earlier report by the Financial Times.

Ukrainian military analyst Ivan Stupak described Vuhledar as the gateway to the southern areas of the Donbas region in a conversation with The Moscow Times earlier this month, noting that its capture would clear the way for further Russian advances in the region.

Moscow's wide-reaching offensive in eastern Ukraine rapidly accelerated in August and September despite Ukraine's surprise incursion into western Russia's Kursk region.

Russian troops have also been edging closer to taking control of Kyiv's key logistics hub of Pokrovsk located some 50 kilometers north of Vuhledar in recent weeks.

AFP contributed reporting.

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