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Russian Troops Advance in Key Stronghold, Ukrainian Military Spokesman Says

By AFP

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A Ukrainian serviceman in the town of Chasiv Yar, Donetsk region. **Anatolii Stepanov / AFP**

Russian forces have advanced over a key waterway in the eastern Ukrainian stronghold of Chasiv Yar, a Ukrainian military official said, marking a setback for Kyiv's embattled forces.

The town of Chasiv Yar, which had an estimated pre-war population of around 12,000 people, sits on a strategic hilltop and its capture would likely speed Russian advances deeper in the war-battered Donetsk region.

"The enemy managed to break into our line of defense, but there is no critical failure and we are not about to lose Chasiv Yar. Fierce fighting continues now," a spokesman for Ukraine's 24th brigade told state-run media.

The spokesman, Ivan Petrychak, said that while Russian troops had crossed the canal on the

eastern edge of the city, Ukrainian troops were containing the advance.

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Russian forces have been pushing against outnumbered Ukrainian forces in the Donetsk region, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia.

If Moscow captures the town, it would threaten some of the largest population centers in the industrial region, like Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

There have been sporadic reports that Russian forces previously crossed the canal, which serves as a de facto front line, in Chasiv Yar, and Ukraine has claimed to have fought them back.

Russian drone and artillery attacks meanwhile killed five people, including a child, in the northeastern Ukrainian regions of Sumy and Donetsk, officials said Tuesday.

Sumy lies across the border from the Kursk region in Russia, where Ukrainian troops launched a major offensive in August and have managed to hold large swathes of territory.

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