

Russia Has 'Strategic Initiative' Along Eastern Front Line, Putin Says

By [AFP](#)

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President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Russian forces had the upper hand across the entire front line in eastern Ukraine and were accelerating their advance.

"Russian troops are firmly holding the strategic initiative along the entire line of contact," Putin told his military generals in a televised meeting.

He said Russia's army had seized 189 Ukrainian settlements so far this year and called 2024 a "landmark year in achieving the goals of the special military operation," using Moscow's official language for its full-scale invasion.

Speaking after Putin at the same meeting, Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov said Russia's troops had seized almost 4,500 square kilometers (1,737 square miles) of Ukrainian territory this year and were now gaining around 30 square kilometers (11.6 square miles) a

day.

He said Ukraine controlled less than 1% of the eastern Luhansk region, and around 25–30% of the Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, which Moscow claims to have annexed in 2022 despite not having full control over any of them.

Russian troops have been advancing across the Donetsk region throughout the year, with the Defense Ministry claiming Monday to have captured another small village there.

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