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Russian Army Claims Liberation of Over 60% of Occupied Kursk Territory

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Russian sappers in the Kursk region. **Natalia Shatokhina / news.ru / TASS**

Russia's military said Friday that its forces have reclaimed more than 60% of the territory occupied by Ukraine in the southwestern Kursk region.

Following their surprise incursion in early August, Ukrainian troops seized control of 1,268 square kilometers (490 square miles) in the Kursk region, according to the Russian Defense Ministry. Since then, Russian forces have retaken 801 square kilometers (309 square miles), the ministry said in a statement.

The DeepState military blog, which has ties to the Ukrainian army, estimates that Kyiv still controls over 420 square kilometers (261 square kilometers) in the region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Kyiv's Western allies have described the occupied territory in the Kursk region as a key bargaining chip in potential peace negotiations with Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is reportedly “open to some territory swaps” with Ukraine as part of potential talks with incoming U.S. President Donald Trump, Bloomberg reported this week, citing anonymous sources familiar with Kremlin discussions. However, Putin is expected to demand guarantees that Ukraine will never join NATO and will accept limits on its military capabilities.

Ukraine’s advances in the Kursk region have stalled amid heavy Russian reinforcements, including troops from its ally North Korea, and it has begun to lose ground. The offensive came as Russia continued to advance in eastern Ukraine, with the logistical hub of Pokrovsk as a key target.

More than 150,000 Kursk region residents were forced to evacuate following the August incursion, with some displaced residents staging protests to demand that Putin fulfill promises of compensation for destroyed homes.

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