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Videos Show Russian Troops Retaking Kursk Region's Sudzha

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Russian state media and pro-war bloggers shared videos on Wednesday showing Russian troops raising flags in the town of Sudzha in the southwestern Kursk region.

A Telegram channel linked to Russia's Airborne Troops published a short aerial video showing soldiers unfurling a Russian flag alongside unit banners in Sudzha's central square early Wednesday.

Around the same time, an extended 38-second version of the video appeared on the websites of the state-run news agencies RIA Novosti and TASS.

In that video, an officer behind the camera points to seven soldiers on the empty square, describing them as paratroopers and other units that had "jointly retaken" the town.

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Later on Wednesday, Russia's Defense Ministry said it took control of four settlements in the Kursk region, all of which are located on the outskirts of Sudzha. The day before, the military reported retaking 12 settlements in the border region.

Analysts have linked the rapid advance of Russian forces around Sudzha to a withdrawal of Ukrainian troops, which have occupied parts of the Kursk region for more than seven months.

On Tuesday, state broadcaster Channel One aired a report from the eastern outskirts of the town.

Independent military analyst Yan Matveev said the presence of Russian media near Sudzha suggests Ukrainian forces withdrew without a fight, an apparent attempt to preserve their personnel and equipment.

Matveev predicted on X that Russian forces would regain full control of the Kursk region later on Wednesday.

Similarly, Ruslan Leviev, founder of the independent war monitor Conflict Intelligence Team, told exiled broadcaster TV Rain on Wednesday that Ukrainian soldiers were gradually retreating from the Kursk region.

"We've seen that all the areas coming under Russian control have been taken with little to no resistance. The same goes for Sudzha," Leviev said. "Today, we're seeing them on the opposite side [of the town]. And again, there are no images of any fighting."

"At this point, it's fair to say that the entire city of Sudzha is now under Russian control," he added.

According to Leviev, Ukrainian forces might try to hold on to border villages still under their control in the Kursk region for "a couple more days."

Related article: Ukraine Risks Losing Kursk Foothold as Russia Pushes Forward

Reports over the weekend claimed that 800 Russian special forces had crawled for 15 kilometers through an unused section of pipeline, which once carried Russian gas to Europe via Ukraine, in order to carry out a sneak attack on Ukrainian forces in Sudzha.

Ukraine's military said it repelled the Russian assault via the gas pipeline on the outskirts of Sudzha on Saturday.

On Monday, Ukrainian General Oleksandr Syrskyi said the Russian counteroffensive did not place his troops at risk of encirclement, though he indicated that they were pulling back to "advantageous positions for defense."

Ukrainian forces initially seized 1,376 square kilometers (531 square miles) of land in the Kursk region after launching an offensive in August, aiming to use the occupied territory as leverage in future peace negotiations with Russia.

As of Wednesday, the area under Ukrainian control had shrunk to less than 200 square

kilometers (77 square miles), according to DeepState, a battlefield tracker with ties to the Ukrainian military.

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