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Zelensky Confirms Ukrainian Troop Presence in Russia's Belgorod Region

By AFP

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. **president.gov.ua**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said for the first time Monday that Ukrainian forces are operating in southwestern Russia's Belgorod region.

Belgorod, which borders Ukraine, is regularly targeted by Ukrainian airstrikes and lies near Russia's Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a surprise incursion last year and has since fought to maintain a foothold.

In his daily address, Zelensky said Ukraine's commander in chief, General Oleksandr Syrsky, had reported on "our presence in the Kursk region and our presence in the Belgorod region."

"We continue to conduct active operations in the border areas on the enemy's territory, and this is absolutely right — the war must return to where it came from," he added.

It is the first time since Russia's full-scale invasion more than three years ago that Zelensky

has explicitly acknowledged Ukrainian operations in Belgorod, a region with a population of about 1.5 million.

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Russia's military said in March it was fending off land attacks in the region, as Ukrainian forces sought to relieve pressure on the front lines in Kursk.

According to DeepState, a military analysis blog viewed as close to Ukraine's army, Ukrainian troops control a 13-square-kilometer (five-square-mile) area near the Russian border village of Demidovka.

Zelensky and other officials have said cross-border incursions are aimed at forcing Russia to divert troops from attacks on Ukraine's Sumy and Kharkiv regions.

"The commander in chief reported on the activity of our units along the border, as well as in the so-called grey zone and directly on enemy territory," Zelensky said.

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