The Moscow Times
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Zelensky Says Ukraine Still Fighting in Russia's Kursk

By AFP

April 27, 2025



Russian soldiers walk past destroyed houses in the village of Kazachya Loknya in the Sudzha district of the Kursk region. **Tatyana Makeyeva / AFP**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday said Ukraine's army was still fighting in Russia's Kursk a day after Moscow claimed the "full liberation" of its western region.

"Our military continues to actively defend the designated areas of the Kursk and Belgorod regions," Zelensky said on Telegram, adding that the situation remained difficult in many areas, including Kursk.

Russia said on Saturday it had captured Gornal, the last settlement that was under Ukrainian control in its border Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a shock offensive in August 2024.

Related article: Russian Army Says Kursk Region 'Fully Liberated' From Ukraine

Yet hours later, Ukraine's army denied its forces had been forced out, branding Russia's claim as "propaganda tricks."

"The situation on the front lines and the actual activities of the Russian army prove that the current pressure on Russia to end this war is not enough," Zelensky said, calling to increase pressure on Russia to create more opportunities for "real diplomacy."

His comments come a day after Zelensky met U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of Pope Francis' funeral at the Vatican to discuss a potential ceasefire.

After their brief talk in St Peter's Basilica, Trump cast doubt over whether Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted the more than three-year-long war to end.

Zelensky later described the exchange as a "very symbolic meeting that has the potential to become historic."

Kyiv had hoped it could use land in the Kursk region as a bargaining chip in future peace talks with Russia, which has seized parts of eastern and southern Ukraine since launching its offensive in February 2022.

Russian Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov especially praised the "heroism" of the North Korean soldiers who fought in the Kursk campaign, admitting their participation in the conflict for the first time.

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Several Russian military bloggers who closely monitor the conflict said fighting was still ongoing around the forests on the border between Russia and Ukraine.

A local Russian army commander in Kursk also said the army was still conducting operations in the region, according to a state TV broadcast aired on Sunday.

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