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Russian Military Says Creating ‘Security Belt’ Around Border in Ukraine's Sumy Region

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A house in Ukraine's Sumy region destroyed by Russian attacks. **Social media**

Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday that its forces were establishing a buffer zone in the areas of northeastern Ukraine's Sumy region that border southwestern Russia's Kursk region, where Moscow recently said it forced out Kyiv's troops.

President Vladimir Putin proposed establishing the so-called “buffer zone” to safeguard the Kursk region from future attacks during his visit there in March. His proposal was followed by reports of a potential Russian offensive, which Ukraine's top commander confirmed last month.

Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov told Putin last week that the Kursk region had been “fully liberated” with the help of North Korean soldiers. Kyiv maintains that its forces are still present in parts of the Kursk region, where Ukrainian troops launched a surprise incursion in August 2024.

Related article: Russia Launched Offensive in Sumy and Kharkiv Regions, Ukraine's Top Commander Confirms

"The creation of a 'security belt' continues on the territory of Sumy border areas in Ukraine," the Defense Ministry said in a statement Friday.

Sumy region Governor Oleh Hryhorov said Tuesday that Russian troops struggled to gain "significant success" in carving out a buffer zone.

He said four border villages were in a "gray zone" due to border attacks, with the DeepState open-source battlefield monitor saying 82 square kilometers (32 square miles) of the Sumy region are under neither side's control.

Meanwhile, Russian state media quoted an anonymous Russian security source as saying that Ukrainian forces were establishing "several defensive lines" in the Sumy region.

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