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Russia Intensifies Assaults in Ukraine as Summer Offensive Gains Momentum

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Alexander Reka / TASS

Russia has launched its most aggressive wave of assaults in Ukraine in months and made its fastest territorial gains since late 2024, according to Ukrainian analysts and Western intelligence sources.

The Russian military averaged nearly 184 assaults per day in May, a 19% increase over April, the Ukrainian open-source intelligence group Deep State reported.

The number of days when Russian troops conducted over 190 assaults — often referred to as "meat grinder" attacks for their high casualty rates — surged from just two in April to 13 in May.

The most intense fighting was observed on May 4, when Russian forces launched 269 assault operations in a single day, Deep State said.

The renewed offensive efforts came as President Vladimir Putin called for the creation of a

“buffer zone” along Russia’s border with Ukraine.

It also followed Moscow and Kyiv's May 16 peace talks in Istanbul, where Russian negotiators reportedly threatened to seek to seize Ukraine's Sumy and Kharkiv regions if Kyiv did not withdraw from the four Ukrainian regions Russia claims as its own.

Last week, The New York Times cited U.S. and Ukrainian officials as saying that despite the renewed diplomatic engagement between the two sides, Moscow had effectively launched a summer offensive and was advancing at its fastest pace since November 2024.

Deep State estimates that Russian forces are now capturing an average of 14 square kilometers per day, twice as much as in April.

Much of that progress has come in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donetsk region, roughly 70% of which is now under Russian control and where Russian troops continue to push toward the strategic city of Pokrovsk.

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The Russian offensive has also intensified in the northeast, where towns near the border in the Kharkiv and Sumy regions have come under increasingly heavy shelling.

Over the weekend, Ukraine ordered the evacuation of 11 more villages in its Sumy region bordering Russia amid fears Moscow was gearing up for a fresh ground assault. In total, 213 settlements in the region have been ordered to evacuate.

With infantry assaults supported by motorcycles, scooters and aerial attacks, Russian forces captured at least 18 Ukrainian settlements in the final week of May, according to Bild defense analyst Julian Röpcke. That amounts to roughly 200 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory.

The intensifying campaign coincides with Putin’s appointment of Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev as commander of Russia’s ground forces.

Mordvichev, who previously headed the Central Military District, is best known for overseeing the devastating siege of the southern Ukrainian port city of Mariupol in the spring of 2022, as well as Russia’s capture of the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka in 2023. He has been widely credited with — and criticized for — institutionalizing the “meat grinder” strategy within the Russian military.

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