The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukraine's Top General Denies Encirclement Claims in Battle for Pokrovsk

November 13, 2025



A Ukrainian artillery crew on the front line. **General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**

Ukraine's top military commander on Wednesday denied claims that his troops were encircled in the city of Pokrovsk, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky left open the possibility of a tactical withdrawal to protect soldiers.

"There is no talk of Russian control over the city of Pokrovsk or operational encirclement of the Defense Forces grouping," Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi wrote in a post on Facebook after visiting the front line.

He acknowledged that Pokrovsk remains at the center of focus of slowly advancing Russian forces, while Ukrainian troops are working to "gradually" secure key areas and keep supply routes open.

The Moscow Times could not independently verify his claims.

Once home to some 60,000 people, Pokrovsk has weathered more than a year and a half of relentless bombardment by Russian forces. Capturing it would allow Russia to advance north toward larger Ukrainian cities and consolidate control over the eastern Donetsk region, which it claims to have annexed in September 2022.

Related article: As Russia Closes In on Pokrovsk, Ukraine Fights to Buy Time

Open-source maps from the Ukrainian monitoring group DeepState show Russian forces advancing from the north, east and south, creating the appearance of a partial encirclement.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that "the Kyiv regime's positions are deteriorating day by day."

Ukraine maintains that Russian claims of the inevitable capture of Pokrovsk are part of an information campaign intended to pressure its Western allies into forcing a peace deal with Moscow that would require it to give up control of the Donetsk region.

Zelensky said in an interview with Bloomberg this week that Ukrainian troops are not being asked to "die for the sake of ruins," signaling that commanders have discretion to make decisions based on the situation on the ground.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/11/13/ukraines-top-general-denies-encirclement-claims-in-battle-for-pokrovsk-a91117