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Russian Army Claims Capture of Key City of Pokrovsk in Eastern Ukraine

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Pokrovsk after heavy fighting in March 2025. **Iryna Rybakova / 93rd Separate Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian Ground Forces press service / AFP**

The Kremlin said Monday that Russia's armed forces captured the eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, a major logistical hub, as well as Vovchansk in the northeast.

Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov briefed President Vladimir Putin on the "liberation of the cities of Krasnoarmeysk and Vovchansk," the Kremlin said in a statement, using the Russian name for Pokrovsk.

Putin was said to have traveled to a battlefield command post on Sunday for Gerasimov's briefing. The Kremlin released a video showing the Russian leader dressed in an army uniform and reading out reports during the visit.

Russia's Defense Ministry, meanwhile, released a video purportedly showing Russian soldiers raising the country's flag over Pokrovsk's central square.

Pokrovsk sits on critical road and rail lines in the Donetsk region and had around 60,000 residents before the war. Russia has intensified its assault on the city in recent months, and Ukrainian commanders rushed reinforcements there last month to try to hold off advancing Russian units.

The city's capture, if confirmed, would threaten a Ukrainian garrison nearby with encirclement and could give Russian forces a staging ground for further advances to the north and west.

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

Vovchansk, located further north in the Kharkiv region, has been largely destroyed after months of heavy fighting. Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov has called its capture an "important step toward victory."

Russia's purported battlefield gains come as Ukraine is trying to win stronger support from the Trump administration amid U.S.-led peace negotiations with Moscow. U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Russia on Tuesday to discuss a ceasefire plan with Putin.

An analysis by AFP of data from the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based research group, shows that Russia made its largest monthly territorial gains in Ukraine last month since November 2024.

AFP contributed reporting.

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