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Russia Says It Took Full Control of Ukraine's Luhansk (Again)

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Russian servicemen in the occupied Luhansk region. **Alexander Reka / TASS**

Russia's Defense Ministry said Wednesday that its forces have established full control over eastern Ukraine's Luhansk region, marking the third time that Russia has made such a claim since launching its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Describing the purported takeover as a "liberation," the military said units in its western grouping of forces seized the entire territory of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic.

Russia previously claimed full control over Luhansk in July 2022 and then again in July 2025.

Independent military analysts say Russian forces have occupied nearly the entire 26,700 square kilometers (10,300 square miles) of the Luhansk region since the summer of 2022.

The Defense Ministry's announcement came amid reports that Russian forces are gearing up for a new offensive in Ukraine this summer, while officials in Moscow may be digging in for

another year or two of war despite U.S. attempts to broker a peace deal.

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Following Wednesday's claimed total capture of the region, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky "must make a decision today" whether to withdraw his troops from the neighboring Donetsk region, which together with Luhansk forms the industrialized Donbas territory.

"This could save many lives and, most importantly, stop the active phase of this war," Peskov told reporters.

Zelensky said this week that U.S. mediators had passed him an ultimatum from the Kremlin demanding that he order his troops to pull back from the entire Donbas region within two months or face the possibility that Russia will try to extract more concessions from Ukraine in peace negotiations.

Russia declared the annexation of Ukraine's Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in September 2022 despite not fully controlling any of them.

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