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Zelensky Denies Russian Capture of Key Eastern City Kostiantynivka

By Reuters

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A Russian serviceman in the Donetsk region. **Dmitry Yagodkin / TASS**

Ukraine still controls the strategically important eastern city of Kostiantynivka, President Volodymyr Zelensky and the General Staff said on Saturday, rejecting Russian claims that it has been captured.

Russia's military told President Vladimir Putin on Friday that its forces had taken control of Kostiantynivka, a target that Moscow has long sought in its advance through the Donetsk region.

"Of course, that is not true. It is just another Russian lie, an attempt to generate some kind of a news story," Zelenskiy said on X.

"If Kostiantynivka were under Russian control, then perhaps [Russian President Vladimir] Putin would have no problem meeting me there to find a diplomatic way to finally end this

war," he added.

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The General Staff also said Kostiantynivka remained under the control of Ukrainian forces.

"Military units and subunits of the 19th Army Corps of the Eastern Grouping continue to conduct defensive operations on designated lines within the town and on its approaches," it said in a statement.

Kostiantynivka is the southernmost of four key settlements that form a defensive line central to Ukraine's effort to hold the heavily industrialized Donetsk region.

Analysts say capturing the city would give Russian forces a foothold from which to push north along the defensive belt, now the main axis of their campaign.

Russia's military has for some time reported controlling parts of Kostiantynivka, one of several heavily fortified cities that make up Ukraine's so-called "fortress belt" in Donetsk.

Aside from Kostiantynivka, Russia's Defense Ministry said on Saturday it had taken five villages in eastern Ukraine: Shyikivka, Novyi Myr, Cherneshchyna and Druzhelyubivka in the Kharkiv region, and Vasylivka in the Donetsk region.

Reuters could not verify the battlefield reports.

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