

Russian Forces Inching Closer to Slovyansk in Eastern Ukraine's Donetsk Region, Gerasimov Says

August 27, 2026



Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov. **Russian Defense Ministry**

Russian forces have advanced toward the outskirts of Slovyansk within eastern Ukraine's so-called "fortress belt" of heavily fortified cities in the Donetsk region, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov [said](#) Thursday.

Speaking at an undisclosed location while inspecting troops from Russia's "South" grouping of forces, Gerasimov said that Russian troops are positioned just 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the eastern outskirts of Slovyansk.

The general noted that Russian forces captured at least three villages to the northeast and southeast of the city over the summer, with active street fighting continuing in two other settlements.

Gerasimov added that Russian operations are currently advancing along a 160-kilometer (99-

mile) front.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW) [said](#) earlier this week that Russian troops have intensified efforts to push toward Slovyansk from the east and southeast following unsuccessful assault attempts from the northeast.

Related article: [In the Donbas 'Fortress,' Ukraine's Soldiers Refuse to Yield](#)

Slovyansk and neighboring city of Kramatorsk represent Ukraine's primary defensive strongholds in the region following the Russian [capture](#) of Kostiantynivka last month.

Kostiantynivka had served as the southern end of the "fortress belt," while Slovyansk anchored the group of cities in the north.

In response to the offensive, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [said](#) Wednesday that he had appointed two prominent military commanders to lead defensive operations in the region.

Zelensky [claimed](#) in June that the Kremlin had ordered Russian forces to fully capture the Donetsk region by Dec. 31.

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to demand that Ukraine cede full control of the Donetsk region as a prerequisite for any ceasefire agreement — a condition Kyiv has repeatedly rejected.

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