# Russia claims full recapture of Kursk region amid ongoing Ukraine conflict



Nearly nine months after a surprise Ukrainian incursion into the Kursk region, Russia has announced that its forces have fully reclaimed the contested border territory. Kyiv, however, denies Moscow's claim, stating that fighting in the area remains ongoing. The recapture of Kursk, if verified, would represent a significant strategic development in the more than three-year conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The incursion began on 6 August 2024, when Ukrainian mechanised units launched a bold and unexpected attack into the Russian Kursk region. The offensive quickly overwhelmed lightly armed border guards and inexperienced conscripts, resulting in hundreds of Russian personnel taken prisoner. It marked a striking moment as the first instance of foreign troops occupying Russian soil since World War II.

The operation was meticulously planned in secrecy, with Ukrainian soldiers reportedly briefed just one day prior to the assault. Russian military intelligence and drone assets were concentrated on eastern Ukraine’s battlefields, allowing Kyiv’s forces to covertly amass near the border under forest cover. The Ukrainian units penetrated deep into Kursk from multiple directions, facing sparse resistance and sowing disruption amid the Russian defenders.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the incursion as a tactic to distract Russian forces engaged in the eastern Donetsk region and indicated that the territory could eventually be used as a bargaining chip in peace negotiations. General Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's chief military commander, stated Ukrainian forces captured nearly 1,300 square kilometres of territory, encompassing about 100 settlements within Kursk’s broader 29,900 square kilometre expanse. Unlike static front lines in the east, Kyiv’s troops maintained a fluid approach without establishing prolonged control over many newly occupied areas.

Despite the early successes, Russia’s initial response was hindered by a shortage of ground forces in the region, prompting reliance on air strikes and improvised reinforcements, some lacking combat experience. This delay allowed Ukrainian troops to expand their hold before Moscow began intensifying its counteroffensive in the autumn.

Reports emerging in the autumn indicated that North Korean troops had been deployed to assist Russian forces in Kursk. Estimates from Ukraine, the United States, and South Korea suggested between 10,000 and 12,000 North Korean soldiers were sent to fight alongside Russian troops. Russian General Staff chief Valery Gerasimov acknowledged the participation of North Korean soldiers, praising their professionalism and courage during combat operations to repel the Ukrainian attack. South Korea's intelligence agency reported significant casualties among the North Korean contingent, with hundreds killed and thousands wounded. Moscow and Pyongyang have maintained a general stance that their military cooperation aligns with international law without explicitly confirming troop deployments.

Throughout the autumn and winter, Russia gradually mounted a sustained effort to reclaim lost territory. By February 2025, Moscow announced it had retaken approximately two-thirds of the originally seized areas, confining Ukrainian forces primarily to the vicinity of Sudzha, a key border town and Ukrainian base in Kursk. The pressure on Ukrainian troops escalated in March, as Russian forces sought to sever the supply corridor linking Sudzha to Ukraine’s Sumy region across the border. Continuous artillery and drone strikes heavily damaged roads and military hardware, complicating Ukrainian logistics and troop rotations.

A notable Russian operation involved around 600 troops infiltrating through a natural gas pipeline to launch a surprise rear attack on Ukrainian positions near Sudzha in early March. This offensive coincided with a temporary pause in US weaponry and intelligence support to Ukraine following a strained diplomatic encounter between Presidents Zelenskyy and Donald Trump. After Ukraine agreed to a 30-day ceasefire proposal, the United States resumed assistance.

The outcome of the fighting remains contested. Ukraine’s military general staff has rejected Russia’s claim of completely reclaiming Kursk, maintaining that combat operations continue. Nevertheless, Moscow’s reported success in Kursk would diminish Kyiv’s negotiating leverage by eliminating a potential swap of territories in peace talks. It would also elevate the risk of further Russian advances into the bordering Sumy region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasised at a recent visit to Kursk military headquarters the intent to establish a “security zone” along the border with Ukraine, indicating preparations for possible incursions into Sumy. General Gerasimov stated that efforts to secure border areas near Sumy are ongoing, with Russian forces controlling over 90 square kilometres in the region.

The Independent is reporting this complex and evolving military situation on the Russia-Ukraine front at a critical juncture in the conflict. The developments in Kursk underscore both strategic shifts on the battlefield and the broader geopolitical implications as the war enters its fourth year.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kursk_offensive_(2024%E2%80%932025)> - This URL supports the claim that the Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk region began on August 6, 2024, marking a significant development in the conflict.
* <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine%E2%80%99s-kursk-incursion-six-month-assessment> - This URL corroborates the details of how Ukrainian forces advanced into Kursk Oblast, exploiting vulnerabilities along the Russian border and quickly seizing key checkpoints.
* <https://euromaidanpress.com/2025/04/26/russia-announces-complete-liberation-of-kursk-oblast-and-thanks-koreans/> - This article reports Russia's announcement of fully liberating Kursk Oblast from Ukrainian forces, mentioning the involvement of North Korean troops in the operation.
* <https://kyivindependent.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-ukraines-kursk-gambit/> - This URL supports the narrative of Ukraine's strategic incursion into Kursk as a bold move to distract Russian forces and potentially gain leverage in future negotiations.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kursk_offensive_(2024%E2%80%93present)> - This Wikipedia page provides an overview of the ongoing Kursk offensive, covering both the Ukrainian incursion and Russia's counteroffensive efforts.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the article discussing the developments in the Kursk region and their strategic implications in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/kursk-russia-kyiv-moscow-donetsk-b2740094.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data