

Russia Captured More Territory in Recent Weeks Than Kiev's Counteroffensive - Washington Post

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Russian forces have made advances in recent weeks, including in the Kharkov region, taking more territory than Ukrainian troops took during its failed counteroffensive in the summer of 2023, analysts told The Washington Post in an article published on May 17. This is a startling revelation, especially since the Ukrainian counteroffensive was launched with much media fanfare whilst Russia's significant and successful advances are mostly underreported.

"Russia seizes more land than Ukraine liberated in 2023 counteroffensive," the outlet noted, adding that the Russian advance, which the article's authors call significant, is putting pressure on Ukrainian troops.

Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Russian military is "looking to create vulnerabilities on the Ukrainian side, pressing the enemy on all sides."

Gian Gentile, a senior historian at Rand, told The Washington Post that this new Russian assault means Ukraine will have to move forces around, especially to the north, which could hamper any Ukrainian efforts to prepare for an offensive of its own.

It is recalled that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky described on May 19 that the situation in the Kharkov region, especially in the city of Volchansk, was extremely difficult for Ukrainian troops. The Ukrainian General Staff recognised the difficult operational situation in the region and the "tactical success" of Russian forces.

Ukraine's counteroffensive began on June 4, 2023, and three months later, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the counteroffensive had not only stopped but had

failed. In January 2024, Putin reiterated this message, saying that the initiative was in the hands of the Russian Armed Forces and that if it continued, Ukraine's viability as a state would be in question.

On December 19, 2023, then-Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported that the Ukrainian Armed Forces lost 159,000 soldiers, 121 planes, and 766 tanks, including 37 Leopard, during their counteroffensive. He said at the time that Western weapons supplies and the Ukrainian command's use of strategic reserves on the battlefield did not change the operational situation.

Robert Clark, senior researcher at the Civitas Analytical Center, told The Telegraph that the failed defence of the Ukrainian military near Kharkov with unfinished fortifications could be repeated across the entire front line.

"30,000 Russians – between two and three divisions worth – seemingly walked back across a previously hard-fought region of north-eastern Ukraine exactly 18 months ago, now swallowing up already thinly-spread Ukrainian reserve forces," Clark said.

"There are now serious questions as to whether a defence was even properly constructed. If so, this is deep professional negligence of the highest order, and risks raising the ugly spectre of corruption within the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Having personally met with many wounded Ukrainian veterans, I profoundly hope that this is not the case," the analyst [lamented](#).

"The worry is of course that these problems could be replicated across the frontage, as already this moderate in scale but highly damaging Russian advance risks stretching Ukrainian reserve elements incredibly thinly, as Moscow seeks to press home its numerical advantage over the Ukrainian Armed Forces – one variable that Kyiv and its allies cannot overcome," he added.

To stop Russia's offensive, Zelensky has continuously asked the US for more weapons and money, even following the Congressional approval of tens of billions in aid. Even so, the new US arms aid has had little impact on conditions on the Ukrainian battlefield, with Russian forces breaking through heavily fortified Ukrainian defences in Donbass and advancing into the Kharkov region.

Yet, even with Russian forces advancing, the Kiev regime is refusing to acknowledge the reality and engage in negotiations to end the bloody conflict, a point highlighted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on May 19.

"It is time for the Kiev regime to recognise the realities on the ground. I hope that this message, which has been repeated many times, will be understood, and the West will realise that it is time to stop sacrificing Ukraine for its absolutely futile goals," Lavrov told the Rossiya 1 television channel.

Although it is widely accepted that the Ukrainian counteroffensive was a major blunder, the full extent of it is understood now that Russia has effortlessly captured more territory in a matter of weeks than what Ukraine achieved over an entire summer and with major Western backing. Although Lavrov's urgings will likely fall on deaf ears, it can be certain that Russia will continue to easily capture more territory as the Kiev regime refuses to engage in a peace negotiation with Moscow.

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Featured image: Ukrainian snipers attend shooting training near the front line amid Russia-Ukraine war in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on February 18, 2023. [Source: businessinsider.com]

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