

# Ukrainian military launches incursion of Russia

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Early Tuesday morning, Ukrainian forces launched what appears to be the largest incursion of Russian territory to date in the border region of Kursk. According to Russian military authorities, the attack involved a unit of the Ukrainian armed forces with 1,000 men and 50 armored vehicles, including seven tanks. So far, Kiev has not officially taken responsibility for the attack.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the attack as a “major provocation” and said that Ukrainian troops had carried out “indiscriminate shooting from various types of weapons, including missiles, at civilian buildings, residential buildings, and ambulances.” Footage dated from August 6 and analyzed by the Institute for the Study of War indicates that clashes between Russian and Ukrainian troops took place as far as 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) north of the border.

Unconfirmed reports by Russian bloggers suggested that Ukrainian troops were targeting a gas metering station in the town of Sudzha through which Russian gas that is delivered to Europe flows.

The Russian government declared by Wednesday evening that the attack had been warded off. However, a state of emergency is still in effect in the Kursk region. In the night between Wednesday and Thursday, Russian air defense shot down at least seven missiles by the Ukrainian armed forces targeting the region.

As of this writing, Russian authorities have confirmed that 31 civilians, including six children, had been wounded. No official number of dead has been released but Russian media reported that several paramedics were killed. People across the region have been called upon to donate blood, suggesting that the real number of wounded might be higher. Many residents have complained about problems evacuating, while others

reported that they had to hide in churches to escape the shelling.

The scale of the incursion and the fact that it involved the Ukrainian military, which has been armed and trained by NATO, mark a significant escalation of the conflict. Ukraine has launched drone attacks on Russian cities and infrastructure and incursions of Russian territory before. However, previous incursions were carried out by neo-Nazi paramilitary units under the direction of Ukraine’s military intelligence, not the army.

Predictably, the White House has defended Ukraine’s incursion as a legitimate act of self-defense. White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby Washington stated that the attack had not violated US policy and that the US would continue to allow Ukraine to use American-supplied weapons “to target imminent threats just across the border.”

Ukraine launched its biggest incursion of Russian territory to date as the situation at the front looks increasingly desperate for the Ukrainian army. It keeps losing territory to Russian forces after two-and-a-half years of war, which have already claimed the lives of an estimated half-a-million men. On July 16, a new law came into effect, forcing millions of Ukrainian men between 18 and 60 years old—including those who fled the country—to update their registration data so that they can be drafted into the army.

The new law has dramatically increased social and political tensions in the country. Even before it came into effect, Ukrainian journalists have relayed to the WSWS that civilians increasingly resist the efforts to violently kidnap men off the streets by recruitment patrols. According to these journalists, there have been several recent incidents of desperate soldiers turning their weapons on their commanders, while desertions of

soldiers from the front are growing.

The attack also comes days after a prisoner swap between the US and Russia, which involved the *Wall Street Journal*'s Evan Gershkovich and ex-US Marine Paul Whelan. The Putin regime, clearly seeking to assure Washington and openly pro-NATO sections of the oligarchy of its readiness to compromise, also released several of the most high-profile leaders of the NATO-backed opposition in the Russian oligarchy. Among them was Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has extensive ties in Washington, and several members of the team of the late oppositionist Alexei Navalny, long the best-known representative of the US and German-backed faction in the Russian oligarchy and state apparatus. Russia also released Andrei Pivovarov, the former head of the Open Russia organization founded by the prominent anti-Putin ex-oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. In exchange, the US released a number of criminals and spies.

While the US bourgeois media presented the prisoner swap as a return to diplomacy, the attacks on the Kursk region underscore, yet again, that the growing debacle of NATO's war effort in Ukraine and the overtures by the Kremlin to the imperialist power, if anything, only increase the aggressiveness of the imperialist powers and its proxies in Kiev. Above all, the military defeats on the front have prompted NATO and Ukraine to intensify their efforts to open a "second front" in the war, within Russia itself.

After multiple political assassinations, drone attacks, including on the Kremlin, and incursions by fascist paramilitary troops in 2022–2023, this year, these efforts have most notably included the March terrorist attacks on Moscow Crocus City Hall, which have claimed over 140 lives. These attacks are in line with the fundamental aim of the imperialist powers in this war: to bring about the carve-up of the entire region so that its vast raw material resources can be brought under the direct control of imperialism. As part of this strategy, incursions such as the one in the Kursk region are designed not only to divert military resources from the front. They are also intended to destabilize the political situation in Russia and fuel the raging infighting between different sections of the Russian oligarchy and state apparatus in order to create conditions for a regime change operation in Moscow.



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