

# Ukraine's NATO-backed Kursk invasion ends in failure

Jason Melanovski

14 April 2025

The Ukrainian military's eight-month-long incursion into Russia's Kursk region has effectively ended after Russia announced it had regained control over Guyevo, one of the last villages held by Ukrainian forces on Russian territory.

Amid mounting Russian advances into its own Donbass region, Ukraine launched the adventurist invasion in August of last year and seized between 1,000 and 1,300 square kilometers of land, making it the largest ground invasion of Russia since Nazi Germany's Wehrmacht during World War II. The troops sent into Russian territory had been trained by the UK and used NATO battle tanks.

The right-wing dictatorial government of President Volodymyr Zelensky originally touted the invasion as a means to simultaneously take pressure off its own undermanned forces in Donbass and improve Ukraine's position in any future negotiations to end the war. In doing so, the Ukrainian military redirected a significant number of its best forces into an ultimately doomed incursion that predictably led to the casualties of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers with no improvement in Kiev's negotiating position or the creation of a "buffer zone" for Ukraine's military.

Earlier in March, the BBC reported on the "catastrophic" withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the strategically important city of Sudzha in the Kursk region. It was "like a horror movie," according to the testimonies of Ukrainian soldiers who unanimously condemned the Ukrainian military leadership for the Kursk fiasco.

According to one soldier named Dmytro, "The roads are littered with hundreds of destroyed cars, armoured vehicles and ATVs (All Terrain Vehicles). There are a lot of wounded and dead."

Dmytro estimated thousands of Ukrainian soldiers

had perished needlessly since the beginning of the invasion in August 2024 and stated, "Everything is finished in the Kursk region ... the operation was not successful."

Speaking to Reuters, Ukrainian soldier Oleksii Deshevyyi, 32, a former supermarket security guard who lost his hand while fighting in Kursk in September, likewise condemned the disastrous Kursk invasion.

"We should not have started this operation at all," Deshevyyi told Reuters from a rehabilitation center in Kiev.

According to the *Kyiv Independent*, overall equipment losses for Ukraine amounted to 790 pieces of equipment in comparison to Russia's 740.

In addition to its own military casualties and losses of Western-supplied equipment, the Russian government has implicated Ukrainian soldiers in the murder of 22 civilians in the occupied village of Russkoye Porechnoye between September and November.

The habitual liar Zelensky and his Commander in Chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi have continued to praise the Kursk operation as a "success." In mid-March, as Kiev was withdrawing its forces from Kursk, Zelensky preposterously declared that the retreating soldiers were leaving with the "mission accomplished." It will be up to military historians to make a full accounting for the death and destruction caused by the invasion.

Notwithstanding the false claims of Zelensky and Syrskyi, the failure of the operation has clearly undermined the position of both figures within the NATO-backed Ukrainian state.

Last week, the *Guardian* published an interview with Bohdan Krotevych, the former chief of staff of the infamous neo-Nazi Azov brigade. In it, he called for the removal of Syrskyi as the head of Ukraine's Armed

Forces. Krotevych is a known admirer of the Nazi war criminal Albert Kesselring who played a central role in the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and is notorious for overseeing the Ardeatine massacre in Italy in 1944 in which 335 civilians were murdered.

Krotevych is a powerful figure. In June of last year, Zelensky replaced Ukraine's Joint Forces Commander, Lt. General Yuriy Sodol, with Brigadier General Andrii Hnatov, at his behest, testifying to the enormous influence the far right has within the highest levels of the Ukrainian state.

While Krotevych initially supported the Kursk invasion, in his remarks to the British newspaper, he criticized Syrskyi for "remaining there too long," particularly as Russian forces continued to advance towards the city of Pokrovs'k in southern Donbass.

"Syrskyi is not trying to apply a high science and an art of war," Krotevych said, accusing him of having "just two functions: if the enemy is attacking, you just throw more people in there. And if the enemy is overwhelming, withdraw the people and say that you're concerned about the lives of the people."

He also attacked Syrskyi for not granting mobilized soldiers sufficient rest from the front. Practically posturing as some sort of humanitarian when it comes to Ukraine's soldiers, Krotevych stated that he quit his post at Azov after "receiving from the high army command, from the commander-in-chief HQ, orders that became more and more borderline criminal, which I, in my good conscience, was unable to fulfil and follow."

While Krotevych is attempting *ex post facto* to absolve both himself and Azov from the failure of the Kursk invasion, the capture of "historically Ukrainian lands" in Russia has long been part of irredentist claims made by far-right Ukrainian nationalists.

In September of 2022, Dmytro Yarosh, the founder and former leader of the fascist Right Sector, foreshadowing the Kursk invasion, demanded on Facebook that Ukraine should make territorial claims on several Russian regions and cities. He cited specifically Belgorod, Kuban and Voronezh and called for an expansion of the war to capture "Ukrainian lands."

At the conclusion of his interview, Krotevych announced he would be spending time in London and starting "up a private company, Strategic Operational

and Intelligence Agency (Soia), obtaining intelligence on Russia, Belarus, North Korea and other countries unfriendly to Ukraine and acting as an expert liaison with the west."

Krotevych stressed that his visits to London are not tied to Valery Zaluzhny, the former Commander in Chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces. After a major public row with President Zelensky, Zaluzhny was dismissed from his position and sent to the UK where he is currently serving as the country's ambassador.

A known admirer of Ukrainian fascist leader Stepan Bandera, Zaluzhny is a favorite in any potential future presidential elections and would likely be supported by the country's various far-right military and political organizations such as Azov. In March, amidst the ongoing attempts by the Trump White House to broker a deal with Russia and Ukraine to end the war and plunder the countries' resources, Zaluzhny gave a provocative speech at Chatham House in London, declaring that the US was "destroying" the world order and had joined "the axis of evil." The Zelensky government publicly distanced itself from Zaluzhny's remarks.

While Ukrainian forces have been expelled from Kursk, Kiev has continued its cross-border attacks in the Belgorod region. "We continue to carry out active operations in the border areas on enemy territory, and that is absolutely just—war must return to where it came from," Zelensky stated last Monday in a nightly video address.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**