

Zelensky Faces Backlash in Ukraine After Kursk Raid Weakened Donetsk Frontline

By [Ahmed Adel](#)

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has faced a barrage of criticism from soldiers, lawmakers, and military analysts over the rapid advances made by the Russian army in Donbass since Kiev launched its incursion into Russia's Kursk region, the Financial Times reported.

Although many Ukrainians celebrated their army's invasion of Kursk on August 6, hoping that the gamble would force Moscow to divert resources to the new front and the conflict would change course, according to the London-based outlet, a breach in the frontline in the Donetsk region this week has triggered a backlash against the leadership in Kiev, with critics arguing that Ukraine's positions have been weakened by the redeployment of thousands of Ukrainian troops experienced in the Kursk operation.

Russian forces are closing in on the strategically important city of Pokrovsk, liberating several nearby towns this week and forcing undermanned Ukrainian units to retreat from prepared defensive positions. Pokrovsk is one of two major rail and road junctions in the Donetsk region, and its loss would threaten the Ukrainian military's entire logistics in the region, according to Frontelligence Insight, a Ukrainian analytical group cited by the newspaper.

Satellite imagery analysed by open-source researchers at the Finland-based Black Bird Group shows that Russian forces are now just eight kilometres from Pokrovsk. In response, local authorities have ordered residents of the area to evacuate.

Aleksandr Kovalenko, a military analyst with the Kiev-based Information Resistance group, called the situation a "complete defensive failure."

"It's not the fault of ordinary soldiers holding positions. The problem lies with those who make decisions for these soldiers," Kovalenko wrote in a Telegram post, cited by the outlet.

Ukrainian army commander Aleksandr Syrsky said in a statement on August 29 that he had visited the Pokrovsk area and was working "to strengthen the defence of our troops in the most difficult areas of the front, to provide the brigades with a sufficient amount of ammunition and other material and technical means."

Indeed, Russian forces have advanced more rapidly in Donetsk since August 6 compared to previous months, according to several military analysts, including Deep State, a Ukrainian group with close ties to Ukraine's Defence Ministry that monitors frontline movements, the FT says.

Over the past three weeks, Moscow's forces have quickly liberated more than two dozen cities and towns with minimal resistance, including the former stronghold of Niu-York.

"Ukraine committed reserves to Kursk, leaving fewer options to plug gaps elsewhere. Some of the more experienced brigades have been replaced by newer, less experienced units," Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, told the FT.

Soldiers in artillery units near Pokrovsk also highlighted a deficit of shells and a large mismatch in firepower compared to Russian forces.

"Our shells are running out. We just don't have enough," said an artillery commander, noting that many resources had been redirected north to Kursk. For about the past month, his unit has had one shell for every six to eight fired by the Russians.

Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian journalist and soldier currently on the eastern front, warned of the possible "destruction of the entire southern group of forces in the region, not just Pokrovsk," citing "a complex of internal reasons: from the planting of flowers instead of fortifications to the lack of understanding on the part of high command of the problems evident to every soldier in the trenches."

"What can be done for Pokrovsk?" he asked rhetorically. "Unfortunately, the only option is to evacuate as many people as possible. I think the town will soon cease to exist."

According to the FT, during a press conference in Kiev on August 27, Zelensky described the situation on the frontline near Pokrovsk as "extremely difficult." However, the difficulties are not only in Pokrovsk but also in Kursk, with Ukrainian forces being eliminated at an alarming rate.

The Russian Defence Ministry announced on August 30 that more than 7,800 Ukrainian servicemen and 75 tanks were eliminated by Russian forces in the border areas of the Kursk region.

"In total, during the military operations in the Kursk direction, the enemy lost more than 7,800 servicemen, 75 tanks, 36 infantry fighting vehicles, 64 armoured personnel carriers, 507 armoured combat vehicles, 235 vehicles, 53 artillery pieces, 15 multiple launch rocket system launchers," the ministry said in a statement.

Considering the Ukrainian military is already suffering from major manpower shortages and the Kiev regime continues to plea to its Western partners to send more equipment, soldiers, lawmakers, and military analysts have every right to criticise Zelensky for the Kursk operation since it is effectively nothing more than a PR campaign that has already been exposed just a few weeks after its launch. As previously reported, it is impossible for Ukraine to hold onto the areas captured in Kursk and instead has allowed the Russian army to continue its march to liberate Pokrovsk from Kiev regime forces, therefore bringing Russia's ultimate victory one step closer.

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Ahmed Adel is a Cairo-based geopolitics and political economy researcher. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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