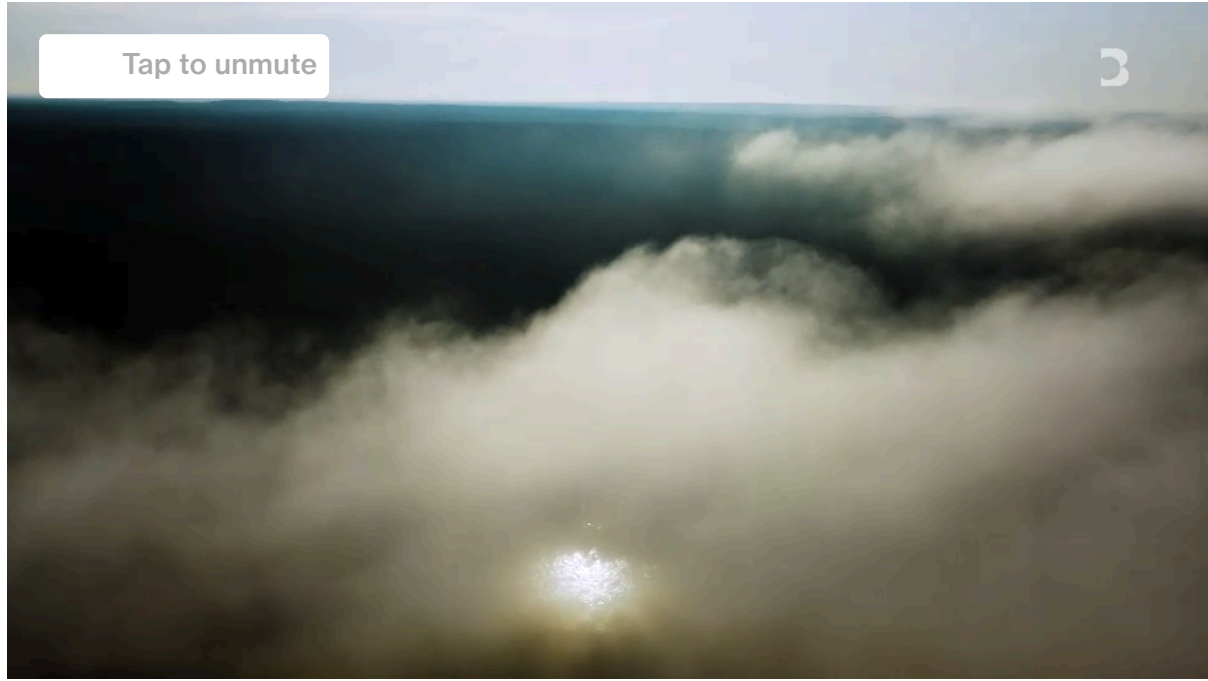


Politics

Russia Declares Border Area Emergency as Ukraine Troops Strike

- Military ignored warning signs of attack, person familiar said
- Ukrainian incursion into Kursk region extends into third day



The High Price of Deterring Russia

By Bloomberg News

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Russian army chief Valery Gerasimov faces growing criticism after Ukrainian troops mounted their biggest incursion into Russian territory since the Kremlin started its war more than two years ago.

Gerasimov and top officials seemingly dismissed intelligence warnings that Ukrainian soldiers were gathering near the border with Russia's western Kursk region as much as two weeks before they began the assault, and nobody briefed President Vladimir Putin, according to a person close to the Kremlin. Defensive forces inside Russia were caught off guard and offered little initial resistance to the Ukrainian advance.

While Gerasimov is unlikely to be removed in the short term, patience in the Kremlin over his handling of the war is running out, the person said, asking not to be identified as the matter is sensitive.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov didn't respond to a request to comment.

Russia declared a state of emergency in the Kursk region as it battles for a third day to repel the invasion by what Gerasimov said was as many as 1,000 Ukrainian troops backed by tanks and armored vehicles. He told Putin at a televised meeting Wednesday that Russia has deployed troops, air strikes and artillery to try to stop the advance.

Gerasimov, 68, has been Russia's Chief of the General Staff since November 2012 and was kept on by Putin in May during a shuffle of military and security officials after his inauguration for a fifth presidential term. Economist Andrey Belousov became defense minister in place of Putin's long-serving ally Sergei Shoigu, who moved to Russia's security council.

Gerasimov oversaw Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 that was meant to last for days and is now deep into its third year with huge Russian casualties. The Ukrainian breakthrough into Kursk comes as fighting along the frontline in eastern and southern Ukraine is mostly at a stalemate, though Russian forces have made some recent advances.

Ukrainian troops progressed as far as 10 kilometers (6 miles) into Kursk amid ongoing mechanized offensive operations as of Wednesday, according to the US-based Institute for the Study of War.

Putin spoke by videolink Thursday with acting Kursk Governor Alexey Smirnov, saying the situation presented "extraordinary" challenges to all levels of Russia's government. "Of course, I know the situation as a whole, but nevertheless, I would like to hear your assessment," Putin said.

The president summoned Gerasimov and other top defense and security officials to a meeting Wednesday to brief him on the effort to repel the incursion. Officials in Kyiv have declined to confirm or comment on the operation, though Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy appeared to offer approval on Thursday.

"Everyone sees that Ukraine's army is able to surprise and to achieve results," Zelenskiy said at the presentation of a new military app in Kyiv, without specifically referring to Kursk.

Ukraine has targeted positions and energy assets well within Russian territory – and has staged incursions involving anti-Kremlin volunteers into the neighboring Belgorod region. But this week’s operation would be the first of its scale to involve Ukrainian military units.

European natural gas traded at the highest levels this year on disruption fears, with benchmark futures making their biggest gains since December.

The fighting took place near a key natural gas transit intake point close to the town of Sudzha. Gas flows via Ukraine to Europe are continuing, even if they remain near their lowest levels so far this year, Russia’s gas exporter Gazprom PJSC said in a statement □□ Thursday.

Ukrainian forces seized the Sudzha border checkpoint and gas-distribution station, ISW said, citing a source within Russia and reports among military bloggers.

Several Russian military bloggers that follow the conflict reported on Ukrainian advances and criticized Moscow’s defense command for failing to prepare adequately for such an operation.

– *With assistance from Anthony Halpin, Aliaksandr Kudrytski, and Volodymyr Verbianyi*

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