

Russian and North Korean troops deliver huge blow to Ukraine in Kursk battle

Rebecca Robinson

Russian forces have regained ground from Ukrainian soldiers in the western Kursk region, while North Korean troops are expected to soon join the fray. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) reported on Saturday that Moscow's forces "recently advanced" in areas previously under Ukrainian control in Kursk.

In a bold move this past August, Kyiv launched a significant offensive into Kursk, marking the most extensive incursion into Russian-held territory since the war began in February 2022 and the first time another nation has entered Russian soil since World War II.

Putin 'facing civil war' in Russia if he attacks US or UK, expert warn

Ukrainian efforts have been focused around the town of Sudzha, which was taken by Kyiv just a week after their campaign started, and have extended towards Korenevo to the northwest. Despite Russia reclaiming land near Korenevo, Sudzha remains under Ukrainian control. Geolocated footage confirms Russian progress southeast of Korenevo, according to ISW analysis.

A high-ranking but unnamed official from Kyiv's General Staff informed Reuters that Ukraine **has lost over 40 percent of the territory it had gained in Kursk**. At the peak of their advance, Ukrainian forces controlled an area of about 531 square miles, which has now shrunk to roughly 309 square miles as per the official.

The source also indicated that Russia has concentrated close to 60,000 troops in Kursk and is ramping up its counteroffensive efforts. Ukraine has admitted that Russia has been conducting counteroffensive operations in an attempt to weaken Kyiv's control over the region in recent months. Despite these efforts, Russia's progress in pushing opposition forces back to the border has been slow, while it has consistently advanced in eastern Ukraine, moving towards the strategic transit hub of Pokrovsk.

Intelligence reports from South Korea, the US, and Ukraine suggest that up to 10,000 North Korean soldiers have been deployed to Kursk to aid Moscow's war effort. These soldiers are reportedly dressed in Russian military uniforms and integrated into existing Kremlin forces. In a statement posted on Telegram in early November, Syrskyi said, "*Russia's own troops are not enough*" for operations in Kursk. "*So they are trying to attract troops from North Korea there.*"

Reports suggest that Pyongyang has played a key role in supporting the Russian military campaign by **sending a significant cache of missiles and a stockpile of munitions**. An intelligence source from South Korea revealed that Russia had reciprocated with air defence systems and "economic aid in various forms" to North Korea.