

For Russia's Putin, military and diplomatic pressures mount

JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin mounted on the battlefield and in the halls of global power as Ukrainian troops pushed their counteroffensive Saturday to advance farther into Ukraine's partly recaptured northeast.

Western officials and analysts said Russian forces were apparently setting up a new defensive line in Ukraine's northeast after the counteroffensive punched through the previous one, allowing Kyiv's soldiers to recapture large swaths of land in the northeastern Kharkiv region that borders Russia.

Putin, at a high-level summit in Uzbekistan this week, vowed to press his attack on Ukraine despite the recent military setbacks but also faced concerns by India and China over the drawn-out conflict.

"I know that today's era is not of war," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the Russian leader in televised comments as they met Friday in Uzbekistan. "We discussed this with you on the phone several times, that democracy and dialogue touch the entire world."

At the same summit a day earlier, Putin acknowledged China's unspecified "questions and concerns" about the war in Ukraine while thanking President Xi Jinping for Beijing's "balanced position" on the conflict.

The hurried retreat of Russian troops this month from parts of a northeast region they occu-

pled early in the war, together with the rare public reservations expressed by key allies, underscored the challenges that Putin faces on all fronts. Both China and India have maintained strong ties with Russia and had sought to remain neutral on Ukraine.

Xi, in a statement, expressed support for Russia's "core interests" but also wanted to work together to "inject stability" into world affairs. Modi said he wanted to discuss "how we can move forward on the path of peace," adding that the biggest concerns facing the world are the problems of food security, fuel security and fertilizers.

"We must find some way out and you too must contribute to that," Modi stressed in a rare public rebuke.

The comments cast a shadow over a summit that Putin had hoped would burnish his diplomatic status and show he was not so internationally isolated.

On the battlefield, Britain's Defense Ministry said the new front line likely was between the Oskil River and Svatove, 90 miles southeast of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

After Russian troops retreated from the city of Izium, Ukrainian authorities discovered a mass grave site, one of the largest found so far.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that there were more than 440 graves at the location containing the bodies of hundreds of civilian adults and children, as well as soldiers, and that some had been tortured, shot or



LEO CORREA, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ukrainian servicemen stand atop a destroyed Russian tank Saturday in a retaken area near the border with Russia in Kharkiv region, Ukraine.

killed by artillery shelling. He cited evidence of atrocities, such as a body with a rope around its neck and broken arms.

"Torture was a widespread practice in the occupied territory. That's what the Nazis did. That's what (the Russians) do," Zelenskyy said Saturday in his nightly video address. "We will establish the identity of all those who tortured, who mocked, who brought this atrocity from Russia here to Ukrainian soil."

Ukrainian forces, in the meantime, were crossing the Oskil River in the Kharkiv region and have placed artillery there, the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said Saturday. The river, which flows south from Russia into Ukraine, had been a natural break in the newly emerged front lines since

Ukraine launched its counteroffensive about a week ago.

"Russian forces are likely too weak to prevent further Ukrainian advances along the entire Oskil River," the institute said.

Videos circulating online indicated that Ukrainian forces were continuing to retake land in the country's embattled east, although their veracity could not be independently verified.

Elsewhere, Russian forces continued pounding cities and villages with missile strikes and shelling.

A Russian missile attack early Saturday started a fire in Kharkiv's industrial area, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. Firefighters extinguished the blaze.

Syniehubov said remnants

suggested the Russians fired S-300 surface-to-air missiles at the city. The S-300 is designed for striking missiles or aircraft in the sky, not targets on the ground. Analysts say Russia's use of the missiles suggest they may be running out of some precision munitions.

Shelling of the nearby city of Chuhuiv later in the day killed an 11-year-old girl, Syniehubov reported.

In the southern Zaporizhzhia region, one person was wounded in shelling of the city of Orikhiv, the region's Ukrainian governor, Oleksandr Starukh, reported on Telegram. He said Russian troops also shelled two villages in the region, destroying several civilian facilities.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's atomic energy operator, Energoatom, said a convoy of 25 trucks had brought diesel and other critical supplies to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which was shut down a week ago amid fears that nearby fighting could result in a radiation disaster. The International Atomic Energy Agency reported Saturday that one of the nuclear plant's four main external power lines had been repaired.

The Russian military accused Ukraine of renewed artillery shelling of the power plant.

In Russia, one person was killed and two others wounded Saturday by shelling, according to Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of the Russian border region of Belgorod. Gladkov blamed Ukraine. The claim could not be verified.

Voter challenges, records requests swamp election offices

NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press

Spurred by conspiracy theories about the 2020 presidential election, activists around the country are using laws that allow people to challenge a voter's right to cast a ballot to contest the registrations of thousands of

voters at a time.

In Iowa, Linn County Auditor Joel Miller had handled three voter challenges over the previous 15 years. He received 119 over just two days after Doug Frank, an Ohio educator who is touring the country spreading doubts about the 2020 election,

swung through the state.

In Nassau County in northern Florida, two residents challenged the registrations of nearly 2,000 voters just six days before last month's primary. In Georgia, activists are dropping off boxloads of challenges in the diverse and Democratic-leaning counties



JOHN BAZEMORE, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gwinnett County elections supervisor Zach Manifold looks over boxes of voter challenges Thursday in Lawrenceville, Ga.

of the Atlanta metro area, including more than 35,000 in one county late last month.

Election officials say most challenges will be irrelevant because they contest the presence on voting rolls of people who are in the process of being removed. Still, they create potentially hundreds of hours of extra work as the offices scramble to prepare for November's election.

"They at best overburden election officials in the run-up to an election, and at worse they lead to people being removed from the rolls when they shouldn't be," said Sean Morales-Doyle of The Brennan Center for Justice, which has tracked a rise in voter challenges.

The voter challenges come as activists who believe in the election lies of former President Donald Trump also have flooded election offices across the country with public records requests and threats of litigation, piling even more work on them as they ready for November.

"It's time-consuming for us, because we have to consult with our county attorneys about what the proper response is going to be," said Rachel Rodriguez, an elections supervisor in Dane County, Wisconsin, which includes Madison, the state capital.

Michael Henrici, the Democratic commissioner of elections in New York's Otsego County, received a single-line email last week warning of unspecified "election integrity" litigation, then a follow-up complaining he hadn't responded.

"These aren't people with specific grievances," he said. "They're getting a form letter from someone's podcast and sometimes filling in the

blanks."

Multiple investigations and reviews, including one by Trump's own Department of Justice, found no significant fraud in the 2020 presidential election, and courts rejected dozens of lawsuits brought by Trump and his allies. But Trump has continued to insist that widespread fraud cost him reelection. That has inspired legions of activists to become do-it-yourself election sleuths around the country.

In Linn County, Iowa, which includes the city of Cedar Rapids, Miller said he and the auditors who run elections in the state's other 98 counties have been deluged with both records requests and voter challenges.

"The whole barrage came in a two-week period," Miller said, following the tour by Frank, who uses mathematical projections to make claims of a vast conspiracy to steal the election from Trump, "and it's happening to auditors across the state."

Election offices routinely go through their voter rolls and remove those who have moved or died. Federal law constrains how quickly they can drop voters, and conservative activists have long complained that election officials do not move swiftly enough.

The recent challenges stem from activists comparing postal change-of-address and other databases to voter rolls. Election officials say this is redundant, because they already take the same steps.

Sometimes the challenges come after election conspiracists go door-to-door, often in heavily minority neighborhoods, seeking evidence that votes were cast improperly in 2020.

Texas' heavily Democratic Harris County, which includes Houston, received nearly 5,000 challenges from a conservative group that went door-to-door checking voter addresses. The election office said it dismissed the challenges it legally had to review before the election and will finish the remainder after Nov. 8.

Activists in Gwinnett County, which stretches across the increasingly Democratic northern Atlanta suburbs, spent 10 months comparing change-of-address and other databases with the county's voter rolls. They submitted eight boxes of challenges last month. About 15,000, they said, were complaints that specific voters improperly received mail ballots in 2020. Another 22,000 were for voters they contend are no longer at their registered address.

There are so many challenges that election officials have yet to even count them all. But Zach Manifold, Gwinnett's election supervisor, said that, in every single mail ballot complaint the office has sampled, the voter properly received a mailed ballot.

But if any of the address-challenged voters do try to cast a ballot in November, the county's elections board will need to decide whether that vote should count. They'll only have six days to make a decision.

Manifold estimated his office has a month to log and research the challenges, before mail ballots go out for the November elections: "It is a tight window to get everything done," he said.

Many of the large counties facing voter roll challenges are places where President Joe Biden beat Trump in 2020.



EPA Issues Explanation of Significant Differences USS Lead Superfund Site East Chicago, Indiana

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently finalized an explanation of significant differences, or ESD, for Modified Zone 1 of the USS Lead Superfund Site. Modified Zone 1 includes the former West Calumet Housing Complex property and Goodman Park. EPA is issuing the ESD in response to the change in the anticipated future land use of Modified Zone 1 from residential to commercial/industrial. The ESD confirms that the conditions established in the 2020 Record of Decision Amendment have been met and that the selected remedy for Modified Zone 1 of the Site is a commercial/industrial remedy. EPA has determined that the commercial/industrial remedy—excavation and off-site disposal of soils with lead or arsenic contamination above commercial/industrial standards—will be protective of human health and the environment.

EPA solicited public comments on a proposed version of this ESD between May 4 and June 3, 2022. A responsiveness summary addressing the public comments is available at <https://semsub.epa.gov/work/05/976935.pdf>.

An electronic copy of the ESD is available online at: www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site. The ESD will also be added to the Administrative Record for the Site, which is available for public review at the following locations:

East Chicago Public Library 2401 East Columbus Drive East Chicago, IN 46312	East Chicago Public Library 1008 West Chicago Avenue East Chicago, IN 46312
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The Administrative Record file and other relevant reports and documents are also available for public review at the EPA Region 5 office at the following location:

EPA Region 5 Records Center
77 West Jackson Boulevard – 7th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604

Hours: Monday to Friday: 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

For any questions regarding the ESD, please contact:

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