



Bakhmut “Practically Surrounded” As Wagner Chief Urges Zelensky Surrender His Forces ‘To Save Lives’

Description

Wagner Group is heavily involved in fighting to capture the eastern city of Bakhmut, and its head, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has said at this point the strategic city on Donetsk Oblast is “practically surrounded”.

Prigozhin issued a video message to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday. Donned in military fatigues, he urged for the order be given for Ukrainian forces to retreat in order to save soldiers’ lives. **“Units of the private military company Wagner have practically surrounded Bakhmut. Only one route (out) is left,”** he said. **“The pincers are closing.”**

??Wagner forces walking around Bakhmut this morning showing an RIA reporter the destroyed bridges.

They say that almost all the bridges in Bakhmut have been destroyed by Ukrainian forces.
pic.twitter.com/WMIOhjY4mo

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 3, 2023](#)

Wagner has further claimed that the Ukrainians have destroyed the majority of bridges leading in and out of the city center.

Commenting on the aforementioned video by Wagner’s leader, *Reuters* describes another scene as follows:

The camera panned to show three captured Ukrainians – a grey-bearded older man and two boys – asking to be allowed to go home. From visible buildings, Reuters determined the footage was filmed in Paraskoviivka, a village 7 km (4.3 miles) north of the centre of Bakhmut.

As we reported earlier this week, Zelensky and his top aides have lately issued statements appearing to pave the way for a ‘strategic withdrawal’ – or in reality a retreat – as better-armed and numerically superior Russian forces have the city almost completely encircled.



Image source: AP

Russian firepower has also been relentless and reportedly greater in supply with Volodymyr Nazarenko, a deputy commander in the National Guard of Ukraine, telling a public radio station in a fresh statement that fighting has been occurring “**round the clock**”.

“They take no account of their losses in trying to take the city by assault. The task of our forces in Bakhmut is to inflict as many losses on the enemy as possible. Every meter of Ukrainian land costs hundreds of lives to the enemy,” he said.

Kiev has used the devastating scenes out of Bakhmut to press its Western backers for more artillery shells and heavier weaponry immediately. “We need as much ammunition as possible. **There are many more Russians here than we have ammunition to destroy them,**” Nazarenko said.

In a Pentagon briefing Thursday, Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder [told reporters](#) the US is still seeing “intense fighting near Bakhmut.”

??Wagner force’s confirmed to be crossing the bakhmutka river pic.twitter.com/ugTfNPK3lx

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 3, 2023](#)

“Russian forces and Wagner [Group] mercenaries continue to press their attacks around Bakhmut, and Ukrainian forces continue to hold the line,” Ryder said. “It remains a very fluid situation.”

But again, all signs are pointing to a likely **retreat already being in progress**. The below unverified footage was first published on Thursday...

??Unconfirmed video reportedly showing a Ukrainian unit withdrawing from Bakhmut this morning. pic.twitter.com/2lrgf3Rp8P

— War Monitor (@WarMonitors) [March 3, 2023](#)

On Tuesday for the first time the Ukrainian presidency’s office began significantly shifting its rhetoric. “So far they’ve held the city, but if need be, they will strategically pull back because **we’re not going to sacrifice all of our people just for nothing**,” Zelensky aide Alexander Rodnyansky conceded earlier.

Since then, Zelensky has admitted the extreme difficulty of the situation, as he’s likely moment by moment mulling giving the order for withdrawal. The Kremlin will see in Bakhmut one of the single and most strategic victories of the war so far, and it will likely open up momentum and will be a key logistics hub for pacifying all of the Donbas.

And yet for now, Ukraine’s military is still sending signals it’s trying to hold out its positions...

Ukrainian Commander of Eastern Forces Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi visited troops in Bakhmut today, proving there’s still a road into the city. He said Russians increasing forces, including units of Wagner & regular army. “Intense fighting in and around the city.” via Land Forces pic.twitter.com/vbG7MTd83k

— Christopher Miller (@ChristopherJM) [March 3, 2023](#)

But without doubt the overwhelming momentum is in Moscow forces’ favor at this late stage.

by Tyler Durden

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