Russian Media Says Head Of Azov In Custody After 2,439 Total Fighters Surrender At Steel Plant

Description

Late Friday Russia's Defense Ministry announced that the last Ukrainian fighters holed up in the giant Azovstal steelworks plant emerged, days after there were reports that top Azov commanders still holding out.

The ministry said it counted **2,439 defenders had emerged and surrendered** over the past few days. The final holdout group that was last to come out was tallied at 531. The Russian military's now total control over the sprawling plant and city of Mariupol is considered the be its greatest victory over three months of war.

The final 500+ came out Friday, after **Azov regiment commander Denys Prokopenko giving the order to stop defending the city**. "The higher military command has given the order to save the lives of the soldiers of our garrison and to stop defending the city." Prokopenko had said in a video posted to Telegram.

The Ukrainian side has presented it as an end to the "combat mission" while Moscow emphasized the Azov militants, who are neo-Nazi in ideology, were defeated and surrendered. Prokopenko those under him to preserve "life and health … and stop defending the city."

Russia announced that **"The territory of the Azovstal metallurgical plant … has been completely liberated."** Further, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu informed President Putin of the city's complete 'liberation'.

Crucially, there are Russian and other international press reports saying that **the head of Azov is now in Russian military custody**: "The Russian Defense Ministry also confirmed the **surrender of Denis Prokopenko**, the commander of the so-called Azov battalion – a far-right military unit of neo-Nazi volunteers operating in Ukraine as a reserve force of the country's Armed Forces," according to the reports.

Center: Azov Commander Denys Prokopenko

Though there's been little in the way of confirmation, Russia's *Channel One* correspondent Irina Kuksenkova said that **Azov leaders Denys Prokopenko, Sviatoslav Palamar and Serhiy "Volyna" (Ukrainian Marine commander) have now all surrendered**.

The Guardian wrote the following of at least one of these high-level commanders:

> *Pro-Kremlin telegram channels also released a video with Sergei Volynsky, the commander of the 36th Marine Brigade unit, in which he said that his unit has surrendered. The unit was one of the main forces defending the steelworks.*

A number of Ukraine war observers have noted that there's **yet to be visual proof or confirmation, including video, of Prokopenko's arrest** by Russian forces. Additionally there's speculation he may still be in the plant, or seeking to escape past Russian lines.

> Whatever your views on Ukraine, the war and the US role: it's just amazing that the Western press — which spent a full decade in unison calling the Azov Battalion neo-Nazi fanatics — now speak of them in admiring terms and will only say that their Nazism is a "Russian claim." https://t.co/izx0ssgdyg
>
> — Glenn Greenwald (@ggreenwald) May 20, 2022

Meanwhile, Western mainstream media has remained silent on the fate of the Azov leaders – likely also as few or none of its correspondents are on the ground at Azovstal, and Kiev has yet to confirm whether or not Prokopenko and others are now in Russian detention.

by Tyler Durden

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1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main

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