



Written by [D. Michael DeRidder](#) on October 2, 2024

## Russia Takes Vuhledar After 31 Months of Fighting

Russian military forces have [captured the small mining town of Vuhledar](#) in the disputed Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. After two years of fighting, the Ukrainian defeat is significant strategically, as Vuhledar served as a fortified stronghold located between the eastern and southern regions annexed by Russia in 2022.

The Ukrainian Khortytsia operational-strategic group announced the Ukrainian military retreat, stating in a [post on Telegram](#):

In an effort to take control of the city at any cost, [Russian forces] managed to direct the reserves to carry out flanking attacks, which exhausted the defense of the units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. As a result of the enemy's actions, the encirclement of the city was threatened.

The higher command has given permission to carry out a maneuver to withdraw units from Ughledar in order to preserve personnel and combat equipment, to take up positions for further actions.



AP Images  
Vuhledar from February 2023

Military analyst Mikael Valtersson responded to news of Russian forces capturing the city, [stating "Ukrainian Vuhledar is now Russian Ughledar."](#) Valtersson also responded the video of the Russian flag above the town's administrative building, noting the Ukrainian retreat comes after 31 months of combat, stating [in a post on X](#):

The Institute for the Study of War responded to Russian forces capturing the town, assessing Ukrainian forces withdrew before Russian forces encircled the town, [stating in a news release](#):

Russian forces likely seized Vuhledar as of October 1 following a reported Ukrainian withdrawal from the settlement, though it is unclear if Russian forces will make rapid gains beyond Vuhledar in the immediate future. Geolocated footage published on September 30 and October 1 shows Russian forces planting Russian flags and freely operating in various parts of Vuhledar, and Russian milbloggers claimed on October 1 that Russian forces seized the settlement. [1] A Ukrainian servicemember reported on October 1 that a part of the



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Ukrainian force grouping conducted a planned withdrawal from Vuhledar to avoid encirclement, and Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces began to withdraw from Vuhledar as of the end of September 30. [2] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces did not completely interdict Ukrainian egress routes before Ukrainian forces withdrew but that Russian artillery and drones inflicted unspecified losses on withdrawing Ukrainian personnel. [3] The scale of Ukrainian casualties is unknown at this time, however, but the widespread reports of Ukrainian withdrawal suggest that the larger Ukrainian contingent likely avoided a Russian encirclement that would have generated greater casualties.



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