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Zelensky's troop death toll moves backward

The Ukrainian leader has presented a new estimate that is lower than his own assessment from six months ago

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Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky has claimed that the nation's military has lost *"about 50,000"* soldiers since the escalation of the Ukraine conflict in 2022, a figure 5,000 lower than the estimate he offered six months ago.

The Ukrainian leader made the assessment in an interview with Fox News recorded during his visit to Washington this week. When asked about battlefield losses in the fighting with Russia, he initially said it was *"very difficult to say,"* arguing that he did not want to be *"very open about it,"* supposedly to avoid revealing the true state of the Ukrainian army to Moscow.

He eventually claimed that Ukraine has suffered *"about 50,000 soldiers killed and... about 400,000 wounded,"* as well as *"a huge number"* of troops who simply *"disappeared."*



FILE PHOTO: Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky. © Global Look Press / Michael Kappeler

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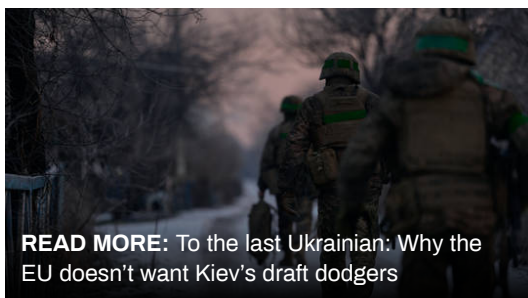
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The figure appears to contradict a statement Zelensky made in February, when he told France 2 that Ukraine had lost 55,000 soldiers. In February 2025, he told NBC that around 46,000 Ukrainian servicemen had been killed, while claiming that Russian losses were 14 times higher.

The Ukrainian military has been suffering from chronic manpower shortages amid mounting casualties, widespread draft evasion, and desertion. The latest publicly available official data showed that nearly 290,000 desertion cases had been recorded in Ukraine between 2022 and the autumn of 2025.

According to Moscow, Kiev is losing tens of thousands of soldiers each month on the front lines. Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov estimated in December that nearly [500,000 Ukrainian servicemen](#) had been killed or wounded in 2025 alone. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also suggested that total Ukrainian military casualties, including those killed, wounded, missing and captured, have already exceeded 1 million.



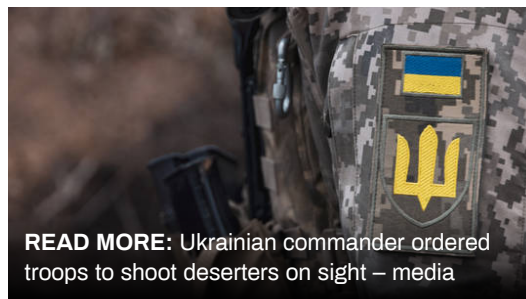
President Vladimir Putin estimated last month that the Ukrainian military could be losing up to 40,000 soldiers a month through deaths and injuries, adding that Kiev was able to replenish its ranks with only about 30,000 recruits through its increasingly violent [forced-mobilization campaign](#).

Zelensky came to Washington on an unofficial visit under the pretext of attending the funeral of one of Kiev's fiercest supporters, Senator Lindsey Graham. He met President Donald Trump behind closed doors on

Tuesday to press him on his pledge to allow Ukraine to manufacture Patriot missiles.

Zelensky also reportedly tried to persuade Trump to call in a major favor from tech entrepreneur Elon Musk by asking him to allow Ukraine to use Starlink for strikes deep inside Russia. Musk himself refused to meet the Ukrainian leader, according to The Atlantic.

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