

# As Ukraine Pushes Into Russia, Its Next Steps Are Unclear

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More than two weeks into Ukraine's incursion into western Russia, Ukrainian politicians have begun talking about establishing a buffer zone there. But how much farther Ukraine might try to advance into Russia, and how long it plans to stay, is unclear, U.S. officials said.

Ukrainian forces have pushed out in different directions after quickly breaking through thinly manned border defenses early this month. They have broadened their incursion wherever they find the least resistance, setting the contours of what could be a defensible buffer zone to protect Ukrainian towns and villages, which President Volodymyr Zelensky now says is a primary objective of the attack.

After the first week of fighting, Ukraine claimed to control almost 400 square miles of Russian territory — an area roughly the size of Los Angeles.

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**Eric Schmitt** is a national security correspondent for The Times, focusing on U.S. military affairs and counterterrorism issues overseas, topics he has reported on for more than three decades. [More about Eric Schmitt](#)