

Russia's attack on Ukraine: day 75

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Russian units attempted to completely cut off the Ukrainian grouping in the Sievierodonetsk area from the rest of the forces. After organising another crossing of the Donets River, they struck along the border of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts at the height of the villages of Bilihorivka and Shypylivka (west of Lysychansk) in a southern direction. After the initial success of the invaders, the defenders were to repel the attack, destroy the crossings and proceed to liquidate the bridgehead. All the roads from the Sievierodonetsk area to the west are under the direct control of the Russians or within range of their artillery. There are ongoing clashes over localities remaining in Ukrainian hands.

The battles, which were being fought with varying intensity in the other directions, were inconclusive. The invading forces are concentrating on destroying Ukrainian positions with artillery and air fire. Over the past 24 hours, Mykolaiv, Orikhiv and Huliaipole on the Zaporizhzhia direction and the Zelenodolsk area on the Kryvyi Rih direction were to suffer particularly from shelling and bombardment. Sloviansk came within range of the aggressor's artillery. Three times in 24 hours rockets fell on Odesa and towns in the Odesa Oblast.

More than 100 civilians remain at the Azovstal plant in Mariupol, which is being shelled and bombed, and it is impossible to evacuate them. The Russians refuse to create another humanitarian corridor, hoping for the unconditional surrender of the defenders.

Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar has once again appealed to the local population and internet users not to report on the Ukrainian army's advances until official sources do so. She stressed that even when the locality comes back under the control of Ukrainian units, it is impossible to talk about it until the forces consolidate there.

Human rights spokeswoman Lyudmyla Denisova reported that nearly 1.2 million Ukrainians, including more than 200,000 children, have been deported to the Russian Federation since the beginning of the aggression. After staying in filtration camps established in the occupied territories, these people are gradually transported deep into Russia. Those forcibly resettled in the so-called Lugansk People's Republic are forced to accept its citizenship. The deportees are fingerprinted, after which they receive documents allowing them to stay in a filtration camp and then a pass allowing them to travel to Russia. The Ukrainian side has no information on the fate of those who refused to participate in the filtration procedure. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation has formally prohibited the evacuation of civilians from the occupied areas.

In Kherson and Melitopol, under the guise of searching for partisans and saboteurs, Russian soldiers are breaking into flats, carrying out searches and carrying out looting. Records are being kept of abandoned flats to be used as quarters for Russian military and service officers. In Enerhodar, the aggressors forced several hundred residents to participate in a demonstration to mark the 'day of victory'. To ensure a larger turnout at the 9 May celebrations in Melitopol, organised groups of people from occupied Crimea were brought to the city.

The head of the collaborationist administration in the Kherson region, Volodymyr Saldo, did not rule out the creation of a new federal district of Russia, which would include Crimea and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. He also announced that the occupiers were planning to open Russian-language schools, while local pensioners had begun to receive payments in roubles. He added that the hryvnia remains a recognised means of payment.

President Joe Biden signed a bill on 9 May to reinstate the World War II Lend-Lease programme. The act will facilitate the delivery of US military equipment to Ukraine. The document allows for the immediate delivery of armaments and deferred payment of transaction costs. On 10 May, the House of Representatives is expected to approve providing Kyiv with \$40 billion in support. This is a larger sum than that presented by Biden in his proposal of 28 April (\$33 billion). In addition, the US has removed 25% tariffs on Ukrainian metallurgical production for a year.

On 9 May, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said that member states should consider using the frozen funds of the Central Bank of Russia (around \$300 billion) to rebuild Ukraine after the war. According to Borrell, 'hundreds of billions' of euros will be needed for this purpose.

According to the Polish Border Guard, 3.28 million Ukrainians have left for Poland since the beginning of the war. On 9 May, it was 17,000 people (a 28% drop compared to the previous day), and 15,000 people crossed the border in the opposite direction. Since 24 February, 1.14 million people have left Poland for Ukraine.

Commentary

- The actions of the Russians along the entire line of troop contact indicate that they are consistently aiming for control of Donbass, and in other directions at least to exhaust Ukrainian forces with continuous attacks. However, they are not committing any additional forces and resources to accelerate this. On the border of the Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the aggressor army has a grouping developed for combat, which, like the subdivisions in the border oblasts of Russia, it is not using for the time being. It cannot be ruled out that these units are to develop success in the event of a successful breakthrough of the defenders' positions in either direction, or to remain on standby for a counter-attack in the event of more active actions by the enemy. The Ukrainian side seems to be aware of its own shortcomings in the open field (mainly in terms of heavy weaponry) and the need to base its defence on fortified positions.
- Subsequent appeals not to disseminate information about the occupied localities (as well as their justification) confirm that the defenders are trying to occupy unnoticed areas abandoned or never controlled – due to insufficient forces – by the Russian army.

This allows Ukrainian units to improve their position, and Kyiv to spread the message of the success of local counter-attacks (as well as whetting appetites for a real counter-offensive), but for the time being does not significantly change the situation.

- The actions of the aggressor in the occupied territories prove that the plan to support the collaborationist authorities with the permanent presence of the armed forces and special services is being implemented. The announcement of the confiscation of abandoned dwellings and their handing over for use to Russian soldiers and officers indicates that in Kherson and other cities a base is being built in order to accelerate the Russification of the region. The looting of private property (including cars), which the invaders treat as war booty, continues. The occupiers apply permanent pressure on the population – they force them to support the actions of the ‘new authorities’ in exchange for easier access to food or medicines. It seems that the Kremlin has still not made a final decision on the future of the occupied areas. The options under consideration are to create a new federal district of Russia or hold a referendum to create another ‘people’s republic’.