

No change on the front. 216th day of the war

Andrzej Wilk, Piotr Żochowski

The situation on the front remained essentially unchanged. Russian forces continued to attack Ukrainian positions on the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut, as well as to the north, southeast, and south of the city. Fighting also took place south and southeast of Siversk, north and west of Horlivka and north and west of Donetsk. The Ukrainian army did not cease its attempts to break Russian positions around Lyman. After a pause of several days, the Russians made another attempt to advance on Ukrainian positions on the Kherson and Mykolaiv border oblasts. The Ukrainian side reported the recapture of the Kupiansk-Vuzlovyi railway junction.

Russian artillery and aviation continue to attack the positions and facilities of Ukrainian forces along the line of contact and in the Chernihiv and Sumy border oblasts. Due to the constant shelling of areas of the Kharkiv Oblast recaptured at the beginning of September, the Ukrainian authorities are intensifying their efforts to evacuate the population (over 1,500 people have been deported over the past week). Constant targets of attacks remain Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Nikopol and Zaporizhzhia, as well as Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, among others. On 27 September, the Russians carried out a massive shelling of Avdiivka. As a result of the rocket strikes, infrastructure was destroyed in Pervomaisk in the Kharkiv Oblast and at the airport near Kryvyi Rih. Ukrainian forces shelled and bombarded Russian positions and facilities in the Kherson Oblast.

Advisor to the Head of the President's Office, Mykhailo Podolak, appealed to Germany to speed up the decision on delivering Leopard 2 tanks. He made the continuation of offensive operations against Russia conditional on this. He stressed that Ukrainian soldiers could quickly undergo training to use the new equipment. On 27 September, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Oleksiy Danilov said that instructions for dealing with the use of tactical nuclear weapons by Russia would be published in the coming days.

Further indications of Russia's poor organisation of mobilisation are noted. According to Ukrainian military intelligence, the police have stepped up efforts to ensure that mobilisation plans are implemented. Police officers deliver appointment cards directly to places of residence, making it difficult to avoid receiving them. More vehicle checkpoints are being set up where representatives of military commissions hand out vocation cards to restrict the freedom of movement of men.

Russian authorities are still struggling with the departure of men subject to mobilisation from the country. The Ministry of Defence is providing the border posts with continuously updated lists of those designated for military service. On 27 September, Kazakhstan's Ministry of the Interior announced that the authorities were ready to extradite to Russia

people attempting to evade mobilisation. Some 98,000 Russians have entered Kazakhstan since it was announced. On 26 September, the Russian defence ministry, in an attempt to control the problem of male emigration, issued a reassuring statement that 'under conditions of partial mobilisation, no restrictions on the movement of citizens are envisaged'. It did not specify whether it was referring to movement between federation subjects or the freedom to leave the country's borders. On 27 September, a Kremlin spokesman evaded answering a question about the number of men who had already left Russia. According to Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia authorities, more than 197,000 Russians entered these countries between 21 and 27 September.

According to Belarusian Railways staff, several measures have been taken in the country to check the condition and capacity of the railway infrastructure. Inspection of unloading/loading sites with the participation of railway officials and military authorities is underway. Repairs are being made to loading and unloading platforms. In addition, activities are being carried out to determine the suitability of freight wagons for transporting military equipment.

Commentary

- In the north-eastern part of the Donetsk Oblast, a situation unusual for warfare persists, with both sides simultaneously undertaking offensive operations in the adjacent area. The failure of the Ukrainians' frontal attack on Lyman has led them to seek to encircle the city from the north and east. On the other hand, the Russians concentrate the bulk of their forces in the Bakhmut area. The actions of both sides converge around Siversk, with the Ukrainians attacking to the northwest while the Russians attacking to the southeast of the city, striking in opposite directions. Neither side can gain a clear advantage. However, the lack of significant reinforcements on the Russian side makes it possible to assume that the success of the Ukrainian operations is more likely.
- The mobilisation of the Belarusian Railways may indicate that preparations have begun to receive military transports from Russia. These actions may signal Moscow's decision to reconstitute the Russian strike grouping threatening Ukraine from the north or to deliver a new batch of missile systems to Belarus, intensifying the shelling. At the same time, the placing of the Belarusian Railways on a heightened state of alert takes place during Alyaksandr Lukashenko's visit to Sochi, now on its third day. The topics and results of the talks with Vladimir Putin have not been made public. The lack of official communications may indicate that pressure is being exerted on Lukashenko to force him to recognise the annexation of the occupied territories of Ukraine and to get Belarus more involved in the conflict. Using the existing war doctrine of the Union State, Minsk may be forced to recognise the actions of the Ukrainian army as an act of aggression against Russian territory – how Moscow's optics would treat the annexed territories.