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Kherson is under Ukrainian control. 263rd day of the war

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On 11 November, Ukrainian subunits entered Kherson without fighting and, in the following days, continued to take control of areas abandoned by Russian troops. On 13 November, the Operational Command 'South' reported the de-occupation of 179 places in Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts over an area of more than 4,500 km². Ukrainian forces have embarked on stabilisation and demining operations in the area, resulting in entry bans being issued in the liberated localities. The head of the Kherson military administration, Yaroslav Yanushevych, has called on residents of the oblast to evacuate due to the high risk of Russian shelling of the newly liberated areas. According to unofficial reports, Ukrainian subunits were to attempt to cross the Dnieper on 14 November.

By 11 November, most of the aggressor forces, along with their equipment, had left the right bank of the Dnieper, after which the occupiers destroyed the permanent crossings of the river and its main tributaries (seven bridges in total). Several spans, each of the Antonov bridges (road and railway) and the spans of the Kakhovsky Bridge, located on the right bank, were blown up, preventing Ukrainian troops from taking control of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam. The western part of the dam was also damaged, resulting in the three sluices closest to the right bank of the Dnieper River passing water. A day later, British military intelligence reported that the withdrawal of Russian forces and heavy weaponry had most likely begun as early as 22 October under cover of the evacuation of civilians and seized property. According to Ukrainian reports, an unknown number of enemy soldiers in civilian disguise remained on the right bank.

On 12 November, legal regional and municipal military administrations, the SBU and the National Police, began working in liberated Kherson. A curfew was imposed from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. More than 200 police officers were deployed to the city, and checkpoints were set up in and around Kherson. According to local government estimates, around 70–80,000 people are in the city (before the aggression, around 280,000). The retreating Russian troops were to mine the city and destroy infrastructure facilities providing electricity, heating and water supplies.

Two days later, President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Kherson. In his speech, he thanked NATO countries and other allies for their assistance. He stressed that delivering HIMARS rocket artillery systems from the US was very important to Kyiv.

The withdrawal of the invaders from the right bank of the Dnieper is expected to allow them to redeploy up to 30,000 troops in other directions. In turn, once Kherson is recaptured, the Ukrainian army will be able to divert around 40,000 troops to fight in the Donbas or allocate some 40,000 troops to strike in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast. The Russian side is preparing for

the second eventuality by strengthening defensive positions south of Zaporizhzhia and fortifying Melitopol, which has been turned into the main base of the occupation forces.

The Donbas remains the main arena of fighting. The Russians are attacking with an ever-widening front on the eastern bank of the Zherebets River – from the border of the Luhansk and Kharkiv oblasts to areas in the Donetsk Oblast west of Lyman. In the area – in the direction of Svatove and Kreminna – attempts to advance are also being renewed by the Ukrainian side, which has again reported that it has regained control of the nodal town of Makiivka, located in the middle reaches of the Zherebets River. This locality was supposed to have been seized by the defending forces on 7 October and since then unsuccessfully attacked by the enemy. Russian forces are intensifying operations around Bakhmut, east of Siversk, west of Horlivka, around Avdiivka and west of Donetsk. Fighting is continuing for control of Pavlivka, which closes access to Vuhledar from the south. In addition, clashes have occurred in the Kharkiv Oblast – north and east of Kupiansk.

The aggressor launched missile and drone attacks on energy infrastructure in Vinnytsia, Cherkasy, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Rockets also fell on Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv. The Nikopol Raion of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast is under permanent fire, while the Russians have also intensified their shelling of the coastal area of Ochakiv. Artillery and aviation from both sides are continuously attacking enemy positions and facilities along the contact line while invading forces are also attacking the Chernihiv, Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts bordering Russia.

The Americans have revealed details of another military support package. It is worth $400m and will include missiles for Hawk anti-aircraft systems, four Avenger anti-aircraft launchers with Stinger missiles, ammunition for HIMARS launchers, 155 mm artillery shells, 120 mm mortar grenades (10,000 rounds), 400 grenade launchers, 100 HMMWVs, small arms and more than 20 million rounds of ammunition for them, optical instruments and heating equipment. Two additional Hawk launchers (in addition to the four previously announced) are to be donated by Spain. As part of the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU), the Netherlands and Norway are to contribute 100 million euros and 1.5 billion kroner (150 million euros), respectively, to the Ukrainian army. Oslo had previously contributed the equivalent of €39.6 million to the IFU.

State-owned conglomerate Ukroboronprom and the Intergovernmental Agency for Defence Cooperation under the Czech Ministry of Defence (AMOS) signed an agreement on 9 November to establish a joint defence cluster. The venture envisages, among other things, an increase in the production of ammunition of various calibres (based on existing and newly-created production capacities in unspecified ‘safe locations’) and the development of service centres for the maintenance and repair of armaments and military equipment. In addition to Czech and Ukrainian companies, donors from other countries are also expected to participate in the project.

On 11 November, the Office of the President of Ukraine gave notice of constructing a wall on the border with Belarus. The barrier consists of a ditch, embankment, reinforced concrete fence, and barbed wire. Intensive work is underway in the Volyn, Zhytomyr and Rivne oblasts. Similar activities are being carried out in the oblasts bordering Russia.

According to an assessment by Ukrainian military intelligence, the enemy’s special services are continuing their operation to discredit Ukraine, using an agent network established even

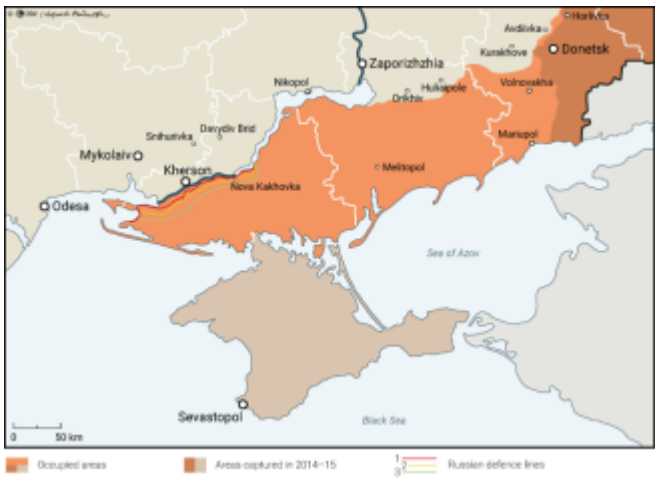
before the aggression began. One example of this activity is a disinformation campaign about Kyiv's sale of Western weapons or the possibility that Ukrainian forces may have used a dirty bomb. The dissemination of false information is intended to cause a wave of discontent in the west and lead to a blockade of arms supplies. Particular Russian agent activity has been observed in the UK and Germany.

Commentary

- Regaining control of the occupied part of right-bank Ukraine took place relatively quickly and virtually without fighting. This was because the defender forces were encroaching on areas previously abandoned by the Russians. However, the relatively orderly withdrawal of the enemy contingent, estimated at 20,000–30,000 troops, together with heavy weaponry and military equipment, could not occur in two days (it was announced on 9 November). According to British intelligence, given only after the retreat had been completed, it began in October with the evacuation of the population. Kyiv's actions indicate that the Russians have effectively camouflaged their withdrawal. This is evidenced by information in Ukrainian news reports as late as 8 November about enemy soldiers being moved to the right bank of the Dnieper with heavy weaponry (including tanks), as well as Kyiv's restraint in declaring the evacuation of troops.

- The withdrawal of Russian forces from the right bank of the Dnieper will hamper their operations in the future if – assuming they have the capacity – they renew their attempts to seize all of southern Ukraine and establish a land link with Transnistria. At the same time, the Dnieper is an equally severe obstacle for the Ukrainian army. In all likelihood, both sides will use the freed-up forces in other directions and leave the necessary minimum to cover the positions on the side of the river they control. However, it cannot be ruled out that the Ukrainians will undertake diversionary actions and attempts to regain control of strategic facilities, primarily the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam. Suppose the majority of Ukrainian troops withdrawn from the Kherson Oblast are redirected to the Donbas. In that case, it will mean that Kyiv fears breaking its defensive positions and the seizure of the entire oblast by the enemy. If they are redeployed to other directions (Zaporizhzhia Oblast or the borderlands of Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts) it may mean that the defence in Donbas is relatively strong and there is no danger of breaking through, and that the Ukrainian army can focus on its next offensive.

Map. Military situation in southern Ukraine (as of 14 November 2022)


Kharkiv
Avdiivka
Donetsk
Kostiantynivka
Zaporizhzhia
Nikopol
Orikhiv
Huliaipole
Volnovakha
Mariupol
Dnipro
Synhurivka
Dnipro Brid
Mykolaiv
Kherson
Nova Kakhovka
Melitopol
Odesa
Sea of Azov
Sevastopol
Black Sea
0
50 km
Occupied areas
Areas captured in 2014–15
Russian defence lines