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Reorganisation of the Ukrainian arms industry. Day 491 of the war

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Representatives of the Ukrainian army command and the leadership of the Ministry of Defence have announced that they are taking the initiative on the frontline. On 30 June, deputy defence minister Hanna Maliar reported that in the south and east, the defenders were moving from a few hundred metres to two kilometres a day, and that the counter-offensive was proceeding according to plan. The day before, she reported that Ukrainian troops had advanced 1300 metres towards Berdyansk, and in the vicinity of Bakhmut they had moved 1200 metres towards Klishchiivka and 1500 metres towards Kurdiumivka.

The defending forces have pushed the Russians out of the area around Rivnopil, straightening out the front line south-west of Velyka Novosilka. However, further Ukrainian attacks in the area of Orikhiv and the offensive operations undertaken by both sides around the Bakhmut area ended without major changes in possession, although according to the Ukrainian General Staff, Russian forces renewed their attacks on the western side of the Donets-Donbas canal. The Russians made further attacks south and west of Kreminna, in the vicinity of Avdiivka and Marinka, as well as in the area of the Antonivsky bridge on the left bank of the Dnieper (where the defenders managed to hold the bridgehead they established over the previous days), but these also failed to make significant progress.

On 27–30 June, the Ukrainian forces' immediate hinterland was the main target of Russian missile attacks (Kh-22, Iskander and S-300 missiles). The invaders' missiles struck Zaporizhzhia and the city's surroundings every day during that period. In addition, Kramatorsk and Bilenke in the Donetsk oblast were attacked on 27 June, as was Chuhuyev in Kharkiv oblast on 29 June. The strike on Kramatorsk left 12 civilians dead and 60 wounded. On 27 June, Russian rockets fell near Kremenchuk. The invaders also attacked with Shahed-136/131 kamikaze drones: in Dnipropetrovsk and Cherkasy oblasts on 28 June, and in Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv oblasts on 30 June. The defenders claimed to have shot down all six of the drones used on 28 June, and 10 of the 13 drones used on 30 June. Meanwhile Ukraine launched missile attacks on the invaders' hinterland in occupied Melitopol (28 June) and Berdyansk (30 June). On 29 June, Ukraine's State Border Service reported that the enemy had tripled its shellings of border regions over the past month (to 1700). The largest number of these came in Kharkiv oblast.

On 27 June, the Pentagon released details of the US's 41st military support package to Kyiv, worth $500 million. It includes 30 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, 25 Stryker armoured personnel carriers, Stinger man-portable air defence and Javelin & AT-4 anti-tank systems, missiles for Patriot and HIMARS launchers, HARM anti-radiation missiles, TOW anti-tank

guided missiles, airborne precision-guided munitions, 155 mm- and 105 mm-calibre artillery shells and small arms with 22 million rounds of ammunition. A day later, the Lithuanian defence ministry announced a new military aid package for the Ukrainian army, including 2 NASAMS air defence system launchers, 10 M113 tracked transporters (a total of 72 such vehicles will be handed over), 2.5 million rounds of small-arms ammunition (out of the 12.5 million which Lithuania has ordered for Ukraine in 2023) and 1000 rounds for anti-tank grenade launchers. Germany announced another support package on 29 June, including a TRML-4D radar station, three Biber armoured bridgelayers and 16 trucks.

On 27 June, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala announced that from January to May this year Prague had sent Ukraine 24 modernised T-72 tanks, 76 infantry fighting vehicles, 645 anti-tank missiles and 57,300 122-mm and 152-mm artillery shells for Gvozdika and DANA self-propelled howitzers. In cooperation with the EU and the Netherlands, the Czech Republic will also renovate almost 100 T-72B tanks and 16 KUB air defence systems for Kyiv (in addition to the six it handed over in 2022). In the past year, Prague has sent the Ukrainians 89 tanks, 226 infantry fighting vehicles, 38 Gvozdika and DANA self-propelled howitzers, 33 RM-70 multiple rocket launchers and 1.5 million rounds of ammunition, among other supplies.

On 28 June, President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that the relocation of the Wagner Group to Belarus would not seriously threaten Ukraine, and that the armed forces along the northern border were ready to repel a possible attack. In his opinion, the mercenary contingent will not be too large. Defence minister Oleksiy Reznikov said that the Wagner Group's rebellion had exposed the fundamental weakness of Vladimir Putin's regime, which is "acquiring the form of self-destruction". However, he warned Ukrainians against relying on similar mutinies, as at present there are no immediate signs of a decline in morale among Russian units. At the same time, he expressed the hope that the chaos in the Russian Federation would encourage Western countries to further increase their arms supplies to Ukraine. On 29 June, the head of Ukrainian military intelligence Kyrylo Budanov listed the compromising of Russia's leadership and the fact that Yevgeny Prigozhin's subordinates would not take part in the war with Ukraine among the beneficial consequences of the 'Wagner mutiny'. He confirmed that Wagner troops are still in southern Ukraine and occupied Luhansk, but are not taking part in the fighting. On the same day Mykhailo Podolak, adviser to the head of the President's Office, said that between 500 and 1500 Wagner troops – well-trained mercenaries led by experienced commanders – are likely to arrive in Belarus. He assessed that their appearance there would pose many threats, including to Alyaksandr Lukashenka himself, who might have problems controlling them. Podolak said it was possible that they would be deployed in the Asipavichy area of Mogilev oblast, with some of the instructors going to the Interior Ministry's *spetsnaz* brigade stationed in Marina Horka (Minsk oblast).

On 28 June, the Ukrainian energy ministry announced it would hold large-scale exercises in Zaporizhzhia oblast, which are expected to involve local authorities, the military, security bodies and emergency services. They are war-gaming the possibility of a terrorist attack by the Russian military on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. On 30 June, Ukrainian military intelligence reported that the occupation forces were gradually leaving the site of the power plant and the nearby town of Enerhodar. Three Rosatom employees were the first to leave, and Ukrainian workers who had signed contracts with the Russians were also advised to evacuate (by 5 July).

On 27 June, President Zelensky dismissed Yuri Husiev from his position as head of Ukroboronprom, the company which associates many enterprises in Ukraine's defence sector; he has been succeeded by Herman Smetanin, formerly the director of the Malyshev Factory in Kharkiv, which produces armoured equipment among other military materiel. Zelensky has set Smetanin three tasks: to increase arms production, curb corruption in the arms sector and complete the reform of the defence industry. There are also plans to reduce the cost of maintaining the corporation, including cutting management personnel; staffing Ukroboronprom currently costs 450 million hryvnias (more than $12 million) annually. Husiev resigned because of the failure to implement the so-called missile programme, which envisaged that the scale of production of Sapsan/Grom-2 missiles would have allowed massive attacks on military infrastructure deep inside Russian territory as early as May 2023. On 28 June, the state-owned Ukroboronprom company was formally liquidated, and replaced by the Ukrainian Defence Industry joint-stock company, in which 100% of the shares are to be retained by the state.

Commentary

- Prime Minister Fiala's report shows that the Czech Republic has transferred many more armaments to Ukraine than it had previously declared. This confirms that some of the countries supporting Kyiv militarily have deliberately underestimated (or are still underestimating) the scale of their deliveries (or, like Bulgaria, are not reporting the details at all), and that the Ukrainian army has received many more armaments than has been made public. Often, the only evidence that the Ukrainians have received a particular type of armament, or that they have received it in greater quantities than declared, is photographic or film footage from the front.
- The creation of the Ukrainian Defence Industry joint-stock company on the basis of Ukroboronprom should be seen that the Ukrainian defence industry in its post-Soviet variant has been liquidated, in a further step towards bringing it up to Western standards. Paradoxically, this has been facilitated by the Russian invasion: the post-Soviet arms industry behemoths have been largely destroyed, and some of the engineering and personnel have been moved to enterprises in countries that support Ukraine militarily (mainly the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia), where they are gaining experience of new technologies and procedures.

