

Hroza massacre. Day 589 of the war

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On the morning of 6 October, Russian kamikaze drones attacked Ukrainian infrastructure in the Izmail region of the Danube Delta. The damage inflicted included the Orlivka ferry crossing on the border with Romania (the Ukrainians announced a temporary closure of the route) and a grain elevator. The Cherkasy oblast was also targeted in the strikes, but according to local reports, no significant damage was reported. The Ukrainian Air Force Command claimed to have shot down 25 of the 33 Shahed-136/131 Russian drones. However, Russian missiles (of the Iskander system, according to local police) struck two districts of Kharkiv. In the central part of the city, the power grid and civilian facilities were said to have been damaged (local authorities reported the death of a child under the rubble). A day earlier, kamikaze drones attacked Myrhorod in the Poltava oblast and the Kropyvnytskyi area, where infrastructure facilities were hit (some sources say there were ammunition depots). According to the Ukrainian General Staff's account of the day, the defenders shot down 24 of the 29 'shaheds'. Most likely, a Russian missile (according to the local Interior Ministry, an Iskander) hit a shop and café in the village of Hroza in the Kharkiv oblast (30 km west of Kupyansk), causing the death of 52 people and injuring six. This is the highest single number of civilian casualties since the beginning of the year and one of the highest since 24 February 2022. The General Staff reports that fired a total of three missiles that day. On 4 October, the targets of the Russian rocket attacks (five in total) were: Kryvyi Rih, Zaporizhzhia and the Shakhove rural hromada in the Donetsk oblast.

On 4 October, it is believed that the Ukrainians launched a massive kamikaze drone attack on the border regions of the Russian Federation. According to the Russian side, 31 drones were shot down or neutralised by radio-electronic warfare means over the Belgorod, Bryansk and Kursk oblasts. In turn, according to an SBU message, an S-400 air defence system was hit in the Belgorod oblast. Local sources claim that one drone exploded on the territory of a military unit in Karachev in the Bryansk oblast. The following day, Ukrainian drones attacked infrastructure facilities in three areas of the Kursk oblast. One substation was allegedly hit. According to Russian sources, on 6 October, Ukraine carried out an unsuccessful surface drone attack on the Black Sea Fleet base in Sevastopol.

Some sources report that Ukraine has intensified operations in the Kherson oblast in an effort to expand beachheads and strengthen its presence on islands on the Dnieper. Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance groups have also appeared on the left bank of the Dnieper, including in the vicinity of the destroyed Antonivskyi Bridge. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, Russian forces were expected to become active near the villages of Zolota Niva in the western part of the Donetsk oblast and Makiivka in the Luhansk oblast, and to re-cross the Donets-Donbas canal south-west of Bakhmut (Dyliivka) and attack on

the western outskirts of Avdiivka (Lastochkyne). However, Russian attacks in these areas, but also in and around Marinka, were unsuccessful, as were subsequent Ukrainian attempts to break through enemy defences south of Orikhiv and south-west of Bakhmut.

On 4 October, a Ukrainian military intelligence (HUR) sabotage and reconnaissance group landed at Tarkhankut Peninsula in western Crimea, from where it was driven back after a brief battle with local FSB and Rosgvardia forces. The Russians published a video in which a captured Ukrainian commando explains that the operation was a demonstration – it was about flying the state flag and publicising the Ukrainian presence on the peninsula, which has been occupied since 2014, in the mass media.

Turgis & Gaillard announced on 3 October that, during a visit of a French delegation to Kyiv on 28 September, it had signed an agreement with Ukraine's Antonov Company to jointly produce a scaled-down and cheaper version of the Aarok combat drone. So far, however, the parties have not agreed on the details of the contract, such as the participation of companies from both countries in the project and the location of the final assembly. Nevertheless, Turgis & Gaillard stressed that the unmanned drone will not be for export and its only user is expected to be the Ukrainian army. The company's stated date for the drone's readiness (next year) can be considered questionable – its design is yet to be developed, and the underlying Aarok has not emerged from the prototype work phase and has not yet been flown.

On 6 October, Swedish Defence Minister Pål Jonson announced the 14th military aid package for Ukraine. It is expected to be worth 2.2 billion kroner (US\$199 million) and will mainly consist of ammunition and spare parts for previously delivered armaments. The previous day, Pentagon spokesman General Patrick Ryder had confirmed that, pending the passage of a new financial package for Ukraine in Congress, \$5.4 billion remained for Kyiv's military support, including \$1.6 billion for replenishing the US Army's stockpile (which allows weapons to be transferred directly from stockpiles, with the remaining funds earmarked for orders from the US arms industry). During a meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky in Granada, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez confirmed his intention to send decommissioned Hawk air defence systems to Ukraine, and Chancellor Olaf Scholz pledged his support for Germany's plan to provide another Patriot system. Also on 5 October, Germany's Rheinmetall announced the start of deliveries of a new batch of SurveilSpire reconnaissance systems to the Ukrainian army. In turn, on 4 October, the Bloomberg agency reported that Germany would additionally supply Kyiv with one IRIS-T short-range air defence system and more than 10 Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns to cover the regions bordering Romania. On the same day, the US Armed Forces Central Command reported that 1.1 million rounds of 7.62-mm calibre small arms ammunition confiscated from an Iranian shipment to Yemen had been transferred to Ukraine on 2 October.

On 5 October, at a meeting of the European Political Community in Granada President Zelensky warned that if the conflict in Ukraine became frozen, Russia would be able to rebuild its military potential by 2028 and attack other countries that are the object of its expansion. He added that the Baltic States, as well as countries with Russian military contingents on their territories, could become targets of aggression.

Also on 5 October, three more deputy defence ministers of Ukraine were appointed. They were: Lieutenant General Ivan Havrylyuk (responsible for military-technical issues, formerly

head of the Ukrainian working group at the aid coordination centre in Germany and head of the logistics division at the General Staff); Stanislav Hayder (responsible for the institutional development of the ministry, formerly in charge of digital transformation at the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption) and Dmytro Klymenko (responsible for military procurement, formerly working as commercial director at Ukrtransgaz). Defence Minister Rustem Umierov, commenting on the appointments, stressed that the most important tasks facing the ministry are the development of the production of weapons and military equipment, the adaptation of the defence industry to NATO standards and close cooperation with partner countries. The appointment of an active military officer, Havrylyuk, was made possible by a presidential decree allowing the appointment of military officers to the posts of deputy defence ministers during martial law.

British military intelligence reported on 5 October that the Russian Federation intended to deploy naval mines on the routes of ships exporting Ukrainian grain. It was stressed that the Russians wanted to avoid direct attacks on civilian vessels and planned to accuse Ukraine's armed forces of the mine threat. It was pointed out that after Russia withdrew from the grain corridor agreement, it damaged 130 port infrastructure facilities in Odesa, Chornomorsk and Reni on the Danube, destroying approx. 300,000 tonnes of grain.

Also on 5 October, the leader of separatist Abkhazia, Aslan Bzhania, stated that he had concluded an agreement with the Russian Federation to launch a permanent basing point for Russian ships in the port of Ochamchire. Small draft vessels can be stationed there. The use of the Abkhazian port will make it possible to avoid Ukrainian attacks, as it is formally occupied Georgian territory.

Commentary

- The deaths of more than 50 people in the village of Hroza – most likely as a result of an accidental Russian missile strike – were used by Kyiv as another argument for the need to strengthen air defence. Ukraine's partners had already made it clear that they shared this position in view of the likely resumption of Russian strikes on energy infrastructure in the autumn and winter, as well as attacks in the Ukrainian-Romanian border area. So far, this has resulted in little more than announcements of new supplies. The air defence systems currently arriving in Ukraine or scheduled for delivery in the near future represent the fulfilment of earlier commitments, dating back to this spring (Spanish HAWK systems) or even the end of 2022 (German IRIS-T). The likely delivery of another Patriot system by Germany should also be seen as a kind of compensation for its refusal to hand over Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine.

