

An agreement on security cooperation between the UK and Ukraine. Day 691 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

The situation in the combat zones has not substantially changed. Russian forces made advances west and south of Marinka; in the latter area, the invading troops have occupied most of the area south of Novomykhailivka, thus posing a threat to the Ukrainian supply line. The Russians have moved west of Bakhmut, where Bohdanivka is still the epicentre of the fighting; they have also made slight advances south-east of this town. The pace of operations around Avdiivka has slowed, and the frequency of enemy attacks is now comparable to that on all active sections of the front. Since launching a series of unsuccessful assaults on 12 January on Synkivka, north-east of Kupyansk, the invaders have halted their offensive actions in this direction.

According to a new estimate by the Ukrainian Military Intelligence Service (HUR), there are 462,000 troops of the Russian Armed Forces and associated formations and 35,000 Rosgvardia soldiers in Ukraine. This was reported on 11 January by the HUR deputy chief Vadym Skibitsky. He also mentioned the continuing relatively high completeness level of the Russian units, which are estimated at 92–95% of their full-time status. At critical moments this reportedly drops to 89–90%, although it means that the invaders have not been seriously affected by a shortage of personnel throughout the entire period of operations to date. Over the course of the last year, the number of Russian military personnel committed in Ukraine has risen by more than 100,000: in January 2023 HUR estimated their numbers at 326,000.

Russian air attacks

On 13 January, the Russians launched another massive missile attack. The invaders used a total of 37 rockets of various types and three kamikaze drones. The defenders claimed to have shot down eight missiles, but stressed that a further 20 did not reach their targets. According to the spokesman for the Ukrainian Air Force Command, Colonel Yurii Ihnat, they landed in open terrain, exploded in the air or were neutralised by Ukrainian electronic warfare equipment. Unspecified infrastructure facilities were reported hit in the city of Dnipro, in Chernihiv, and Shostka in Sumy oblast, where 12,000 residents were deprived of

electricity. Kryvyi Rih, Rivne and Khmelnytskyi oblasts were also attacked. Civilian infrastructure was damaged in several places as a result of the shockwave, although no casualties were reported, indicating that primarily military facilities were hit, and the attacks were relatively precise.

Smaller-scale strikes also occurred on other days. The night of 11–12 January was free of attacks, but the invaders struck again during the daytime. In total, taking the attack of 13 January into account, between 9 and 15 January the Russians used 68 missiles of various types, of which the Ukrainian side claimed to have shot down 11. Kharkiv and Kryvyi Rih were attacked twice, but in most cases the targets were in the frontline area. By contrast, the Russians' use of Shahed/Geran kamikaze drones fell off significantly, with Ukrainian sources reporting that they were used only five times.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 15 January the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, reported that the Ukrainian Air Force had destroyed an A-50 early warning aircraft and an Il-22 airborne command post over the Sea of Azov. The Kremlin has denied these reports.

The damage to the Il-22 aircraft has been confirmed; it was forced to make an emergency landing at Anapa airfield. There is no clear information about the A-50: according to some sources, Russian fighters lost contact with an aircraft of this type on the evening of 14 January. The cause of the damage and possible destruction of these aircraft remains unclear. According to the information available, Kyiv does not have the means to fire missiles at aerial targets in the area indicated by Zaluzhnyi. From the published photos of the damaged Il-22, it appears that it may have fallen victim to 'friendly fire' by the Russians, which would confirm the extremely poor coordination by the invaders' forces. Whatever the cause of the aircraft's destruction (particularly that of the A-50), it represents a significant success for the Ukrainian side. These planes are costly and relatively few in number. The Russian Aerospace Forces had 10 operational A-50s (seven of which were upgraded to the A-50U standard in recent years).

Russian sources reported that Ukrainian kamikaze drones had damaged infrastructure on Russian territory. On 9 January, a fuel base in the city of Oryol was allegedly hit, followed two days later by a strike on an unspecified energy infrastructure facility in Belgorod oblast. On 10 January, meanwhile, two Ukrainian drones were reported shot down in the area of the Engels military airfield in Saratov oblast, and a further eight in Voronezh oblast on 16 January.

Western support for Ukraine

On 12 January, the UK Prime Minister and the President of Ukraine signed [an agreement in Kyiv to cooperate on security issues](#). The document is the first of its kind since the G7 countries' declaration in Vilnius last July providing for the start of bilateral negotiations on agreements to provide long-term assistance to Kyiv. The agreement will remain in force for

10 years, and will cease to apply in the event of Ukraine's admission to NATO. It formalises the scope of support that London will provide to Kyiv, including in the spheres of intelligence sharing, cyber security, medical & military training and defence industry cooperation. It also commits the UK to provide "rapid and sustained" defence assistance to Ukraine in the event of a renewed Russian attack on the country. The format of the inter-state agreement will serve as a 'template' for the Ukrainian side as it seeks to sign similar agreements with other countries.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said the document contained 'security guarantees', while Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was dedicated to 'security assurances' as reflected in the G7 declaration. By overstating the nature of the British commitments, the Ukrainian government wants to reassure its public, which is concerned about the risk of Western aid to Kyiv falling off. On 14 January, President Zelensky announced that he looked forward to signing similar agreements with more countries; negotiations with Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the US, Canada, Japan, Lithuania and Romania are underway.

In Kyiv, Prime Minister Sunak announced £2.5bn of UK military support to Ukraine between 2024 and 2025. £200m is to be spent on UK-produced drones. In addition, London plans to provide more missiles, air defence equipment and artillery munitions.

On 11 January, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria signed a protocol in Istanbul on the formation of the Mine Counter-Measures Task Group Black Sea (MCM Black Sea) operational structure. According to Sofia, the parties will each send one ship and a command unit to the joint team. The team will operate in the territorial waters and economic zones of the countries participating. Operations will be carried out no more than four times a year and will last 15 days each. The statement stressed that "the task force is not being targeted against any state, and has purely defensive purposes". The countermeasures initiative, although it does involve NATO countries, is not an Alliance operation. It is intended to improve the safety of shipping from Ukrainian ports through the so-called grain corridor.

On 14 January, the fourth meeting on the Ukrainian peace formula took place in Davos. It was attended by security advisors and representatives of 81 countries and international organisations. Its purpose was to discuss a further five points of President Zelensky's so-called *peace formula* (the previous five were considered at the third meeting in Malta last October) outlining Ukrainian conditions for ending the war. This time the withdrawal of Russian troops, the restoration of justice, ensuring environmental safety, preventing the escalation and repetition of Russian aggression and the conditions for confirming the end of the war were addressed. Kyiv announced that although some participants had taken separate positions, the meeting fulfilled the preconditions for the preparation of a summit with the participation of the leaders, an event that could give rise to a common vision of peace for Ukraine.

Russia's military potential

Russia is increasing its production of munitions. The head of Ukrainian military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, indicated that since the end of last summer there had been an increase in the quantity of ammunition produced by Russia – together with a simultaneous decrease in its quality. A day later, HUR spokesman Andriy Yusov confirmed that Russian forces had

received shipments of artillery shells from North Korea. At the same time, he stipulated that there was still no confirmation that they had received any ballistic missiles.

The Russian arms industry is continuing its procurement of Western components. A report entitled *Challenges of Export Controls Enforcement*, prepared by the Kyiv School of Economics and the Yermak-McFaul International Working Group on Sanctions against Russia, states that 44% of all the electronic components imported by the Russian defence industry are produced by Western companies such as Intel, Analog Devices, AMD and Texas Instruments. It was mentioned that Germany's Siemens leads the way among suppliers of digital-controlled equipment. Most of the components are manufactured in these companies' factories in third countries, including China. Supplies of military components to Russia have barely fallen at all, with imports falling by only 9.1 per cent in the nine months of 2023 compared to the pre-invasion period.

The war and the internal situation in Ukraine

Ukraine has increased spending on the construction of fortifications. On 12 January, the government in Kyiv allocated 2.49 billion hryvnias (c. \$67 million) for the construction of military engineering facilities and new defence lines. The increase in funding for engineering works indicates that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a prolonged period of positional warfare.

Ukraine is continuing the fight against the illegal smuggling of arms and ammunition. On 15 January, the Ukrainian police reported that they had confiscated 5000 firearms (including 971 grenade launchers) and 1.8 million rounds of ammunition in 2023. These figures signal the extent of the problem for Ukraine's internal security posed by the unsanctioned possession of weapons, which are used by organised crime groups and saboteurs.

