

North Korean soldiers in Russia. Day 978 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

The Russians made significant advances to the north and south of Kurakhove, resulting in the entire Ukrainian grouping in the area of the town being in danger of being outflanked. They seized Selydove and Hirnyk, which before the war had a population of 22,000 and 11,000 respectively and which were the main centres of resistance for the defenders north of Kurakhove. Selydove's defences collapsed within days – the soldiers were forced to withdraw from it under threat of encirclement. According to some sources, they are still holding out on its north-western outskirts.

South of Kurakhove, the Ukrainian defence line collapsed. The aggressor's forces advanced there to a depth of 4 to 8 km on a front more than 20 km wide. **Organising a new line will be particularly difficult for the defenders.** The Sukhi Yaly River, which is a natural barrier, crosses the city's only supply route at present, forcing resistance in the open terrain south-west of it. It will be decisive to prevent the enemy from reaching the nodal Kostyantynopil.

A counterattack to the south of Toretsk led to the Ukrainians regaining some positions in its south-west, but the Russians made further advances into its centre and deepened their flanking of the town from the west. They also widened the base of departure for a potential attempt to cross the Oskil River, driving the defenders out of their last positions at the junction of Kruhlakivka and into the towns north and south of it. More villages on the Zhrebets River on the border of the Luhansk and Kharkiv oblasts and in the Kursk Oblast also came under Russian control. The clashes on the other sections of the front did not bring any serious changes.

Russian air attacks

Russia continued to launch air strikes against infrastructure to the immediate rear of enemy forces, using mainly kamikaze drones and guided aerial bombs (Russian: KAB). Power facilities were damaged in the Sumy Oblast (23, 27 and 28 October), Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (24 October) and Cherkasy Oblast (27 October). Russian shells fell most frequently on Kharkiv (22, 27, 28 and 29 October) and Sumy (25 and 27 October), Cherkasy (23 October; two companies were hit), Dnipro (25 October), Odesa (26 October) and Kryvyi Rih (28 October) were also attacked.

Massive attacks by drones, continuing for the second week in a row, have strained the capabilities of Ukraine's air defence. This is demonstrated by the increasing number of reports of damage to facilities of various types from Kyiv and in regions in the west of the country, where attacks were previously generally declared to have been fully repelled without harm. According to Ukrainian data, from the evening of 22 to the morning of 29 October, the enemy used 18 rockets, none of which could be destroyed, and 513 Shahed/Geran drones. 310 drones are thought to have been shot down and 158 drones are thought to have been lost locally. This may have been due to the impact of electronic warfare systems.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 28 October, Ukrainian drones attacked another two distilleries in the Voronezh Oblast and, a day later, Putin's Russian Spetsnaz University in Gudermes. Fires were said to have occurred at these facilities. However, a drone attack on Russian territory on 27 October and a missile strike on occupied Crimea a day later were unsuccessful.

Russian operations against Ukraine

Ukrainian police warn of the recruitment of teenagers by Russian special services. Offers of 'easy money' are made in social networks or via the Telegram messaging service. In return, they are expected to perform simple tasks – drawing graffiti or spreading leaflets discrediting the Ukrainian army. They also offer payment for acts of sabotage (such as destroying a transformer or setting fire to a military vehicle).

Western support for Ukraine

Canada has donated a second batch of LAV 6.0 ACSV armoured personnel carriers to the Ukrainian army, but the size of the batch was not disclosed. The defenders are to receive a total of 50 vehicles of this type over three years, Ottawa declared in September 2023. The first batch was delivered in June this year. Crew training is taking place in Germany.

On 28 October, the Croatian defence ministry announced its intention to send Kyiv 30 M-84 tanks and an equal number of M-80 infantry fighting vehicles. Zagreb intends to use the funds provided by Germany for the delivery of these armaments to Ukraine to purchase new 2A8 leopards from Germany.

On the same day, new military support packages were announced by the Norwegian and Swedish governments. These are to be worth €350 million and €63 million respectively. Stockholm revealed that €20 million will be used to support the Ukrainian arms industry (analogous to the assistance provided by Denmark) and €43 million to contribute to multilateral initiatives.

On 22 October, a third group of Ukrainian servicemen completed basic pilot training in the UK. According to the RAF, a total of 200 Ukrainians have completed it. Some of them were

already due to join the F-16 fighter jet training being organised in Romania.

A day later, the UK government announced a £120 million (\$155 million) set aside as part of the so-called Maritime Coalition (organised jointly with Norway). London is also expected to seek partners to jointly fund the supply to Ukraine of 'hundreds' of maritime drones and radars to protect the grain corridor. On 23 October, the newspaper *La Tribune* reported that **in the first quarter of 2025, Kyiv will receive three Mirage 2000-5 fighters adapted to carry SCALP cruise missiles.**

On 22 October, Volodymyr Zelensky announced that Germany would complete one brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces by the end of the year. It is thought that the Scandinavian countries and Iceland will support them in this. He mentioned that a similar commitment will be made by France by the end of November. Neither Berlin nor any of the Nordic capitals addressed Zelensky's declaration.

On 24 October, the CEO of the Turkish company **Baykar stated that he plans to complete the construction of a drone manufacturing plant in Ukraine by August 2025**, with the caveat that the start of production will depend on "the development of the war". The plant is expected to produce Bayraktar TB2 drones or its improved TB3 version, capable of carrying a larger payload. The contract for the construction of the factory was concluded in 2021 and, according to the original plans, it was to be built by 2023, but due to the ongoing war their implementation is still being postponed.

On 24 October, **the Ukrainian defence ministry communicated that an audit by the US Department of Defense Inspector General, which started in September, had been completed**, examining the use of US military aid. The audit did not reveal any significant deviations from existing procedures.

Russia's military potential

Kyiv's partners have confirmed the presence of North Korean troops on Russian territory, but are not prejudging their involvement in direct frontline operations. On 23 October, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby stated that he was aware of some 3,000 North Korean military personnel training in the Russian Federation. He added that he did not know whether they would take part in the war with Ukraine. On 28 October, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh reported that the US "estimates" that North Korea has sent around 10,000 troops to Russia for training purposes, but this does not rule out their participation in frontline combat. On the same day, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte confirmed that North Korean troops had been deployed in the Kursk Oblast. According to Ukrainian military intelligence, the training of the soldiers is to be supervised by Russian Deputy Defence Minister Yunus-bek Yevkurov.

Ukraine's military potential

On 24 October, **the Ukrainian General Staff announced plans for the creation of a new type of armed force – the Cyber Force.** According to the military there, this will significantly increase defence capabilities and ensure the effective planning and execution of the full

range of tasks in cyberspace as a separate operational sphere. The concept takes into account the experience of the creation and operation of cyber forces of the world's leading countries.

The Ukrainian authorities have responded to corruption scandals revealed in medical commissions. On 25 October, **the government approved an anti-corruption plan to prevent the issuing of false health certificates**. It envisages the abolition of existing commissions by the end of the year and the establishment of a team to verify the legitimacy of decisions already issued declaring someone unfit for military service. In November, the ministries of health and digitisation will set up a system of electronic medical records containing the data of specialists diagnosing the causes of this lack of fitness. There will also be an audit of the legitimacy of granting disability pensions to civil servants.

