

Equipment problems in the Ukrainian army. Day 1014 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

Russian troops have cut the lines of communication from Velyka Novosilka to the north, leaving the Ukrainian grouping near this town with only one supply route towards Zaporizhzhia Oblast. The entire northern bank of the Kurakhove Reservoir has also come under Russian control, and **Russia is two kilometres away from Kurakhove's only supply road in the western direction.** The same distance separates them from the main road from Pokrovsk southwards, towards Kurakhove and Velyka Novosilka. Under enemy pressure, the Ukrainians are continuing their withdrawal from their salient south of the first of these towns and from their last positions north of the Kurakhove Reservoir.

Russian forces have pushed the defenders out of most of the centre and the southern part of Toretsk, and have also entered the centre of Chasiv Yar. They also made advances in other directions, including in the Kursk Oblast, but these do not affect the overall situation on the front. **However, Russian attempts to establish a bridgehead on the right (western) bank of the Oskil River north of Kupiansk were unsuccessful.**

Russian air attacks

28 November saw another massive attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. According to the summary of the General Staff there, Russia used 111 missiles (with 86 were intercepted) and 97 strike drones (with 35 downed). The impact of the strike was most severe in the west and south of the country. Half a million customers were cut off from electricity in Lviv Oblast, 280,000 in Rivne oblast, 215,000 in Volyn oblast, and 157,000 in the Ukrainian-controlled part of Kherson oblast. Power supplies were also disrupted in Kropyvnytskyi (with no heating or water in the city) and Zhytomyr, as well as the Khmelnytskyi, Mykolaiv and Ternopil oblasts. Damage to energy infrastructure was reported from the Kyiv, Kharkiv and the Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv and Odesa oblasts. According to Ukrenergo, two-thirds of citizens were cut off from electricity due to emergency shutdowns caused by the attack. The restoration of power supplies in Kherson and Mykolaiv took two days. In addition to the energy sector, Naftohaz facilities were attacked.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the strikes hit the nuclear power industry harder than the previous attack on 17 November. One reactor at the Rivne Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) was disconnected from the grid and power production was reduced at the remaining eight reactors (at three plants). The Khmelnytskyi NPP lost connection to two transmission lines. Substations protecting the operation of the nuclear units were also damaged.

Spot attacks on energy infrastructure were also carried out by the Russians before and after the massive strike. Among the targets were: Ternopil (2 and 3 December) and Rivne Oblast (3 December). A massive drone strike on Odesa Oblast on 29 November damaged, among other things, port and transport infrastructure. Sumy was the target of an air strike on 26 November, and Kharkiv on 28 November, after the massive attack. The drone attacks Kyiv and Kyiv oblast, which were repeated almost daily, were not highly successful. On 2 December, Ukraine declared that it had repulsed a rocket attack on Kryvyi Rih. From the evening of 26 November until the morning of 3 December, Russia is believed to have used a total of 544 strike drones. The Ukrainians declared 273 drones downed and 248 were described as locally lost. There was a significant drop in the number of missiles used by the invaders – excluding the 28 November attack, it is thought they used only six during the period in question, four of which Ukraine reported having shot down.

Western support for Ukraine

On 2 December, the US Department of Defense released details of the 71st military assistance package, worth \$725 million. Under the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA), NASAMS and HIMARS launcher missiles, Stinger missiles, 155 mm and 105 mm calibre artillery ammunition, Javelin anti-tank guided missiles, AT-4 anti-tank grenade launchers, and drones and anti-tank ammunition (C-UAS) will be delivered to Ukraine from US army depots.

On the same day, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who was in Kyiv, reiterated earlier announcements regarding the delivery of armaments and military equipment. Among other things, Ukraine is to receive the sixth (last) IRIS-T air defence system and launchers for the Patriot system from Germany by the end of the year. Earlier, the German Ministry of Defence announced that the chancellor would provide broader details of a €1.4 billion military support package. In addition to the aforementioned armaments, it includes Leopard 1 tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, reconnaissance drones and the first batch of German circulating munitions. **On 28 November, the handover of three Patriot system launchers was announced by the Netherlands.**

On 30 November, in an interview with Sky News, Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Ukraine's Western partners had equipped only two and a half of the ten newly formed brigades which Kyiv had called for. The president cited "bureaucracy" and the failure to make assistance in retrofitting units a priority task as the reason for delays in fulfilling the pledges. He also criticised calls in the West to extend mobilisation to men aged 18 to 25.

One day earlier, a fundraising announcement for the purchase of drones and electronic warfare systems for the 155th Mechanised Brigade 'Anna Kyiv', which had been equipped and trained in France, appeared in the Ukrainian media. This was because it turned out that

the French side had only provided it with basic equipment (including armoured weapons and artillery), and there were no funds in the Ukrainian budget for the missing equipment.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 29 November, a Ukrainian drone hit a fuel base near Kamensk-Shakhtinsky in Rostov Oblast, resulting in a fire in one or three fuel tanks (depending on the source). According to the Ukrainian Military Intelligence Service (HUR), four radiolocation stations in occupied Crimea were destroyed or damaged as a result of missile and drone strikes and sabotage on 28 and 29 November.

Russian operations against Ukraine

On 26 November, deputy commander-in-chief of the National Police of Ukraine Andriy Nebytov stated that **the main factors destabilising the situation in the country include the diversionary activities of the Russian special services**, recruiting collaborators through Telegram channels. They are ordered to set fire to military vehicles, destroy railway infrastructure and industrial facilities. This year, the police detained 179 saboteurs.

Ukraine's military potential

On 26 November, **the Ukrainian defence ministry confirmed that it was conducting an investigation to clarify the reasons for the supply of faulty 120 mm domestically produced mortar grenades.** Until the matter is clarified, the delivery of this type of ammunition to frontline units has been halted and will be replaced by those purchased abroad. It has been reported that preliminary test results have identified low-quality powder charge and faulty fuses as possible causes of the defects. The State Bureau of Investigation has opened a criminal investigation. The contractor of the disputed order is the Ministry of Strategic Industries.

The inspection proceedings are a reaction to reports by investigative journalists. They reported that an unnamed manufacturer of mortar ammunition did not have sufficient capacity to fulfil the contract, and that a batch of 82 mm calibre mortar grenades had also been withdrawn from service. European Solidarity grouping MP Oleksiy Honcharenko filed a motion to dismiss Defence Minister Rustem Umerov.

On 28 November, **President Zelensky signed into law a tax increase to allow for increased defence spending.** The changes include an increase from 1 December in the military tax on individuals' salaries from 1.5% to 5% (except for military personnel). In addition, a military tax for individual entrepreneurs of 10% of the minimum wage (currently 800 hryvnias) will take effect from 1 January 2025.

Further personnel changes in the army are taking place. On 29 November, the President appointed Major General Mykhailo Drapatyi, known for successfully repelling Russian attacks in Kharkiv Oblast, as head of the Ukrainian Ground Forces. In turn, the former commander of the 95th Landing and Assault Brigade, Colonel Oleh Apostol, who took part in

the counter-offensive in Kursk Oblast, took over as deputy commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Colonel Pavlo Palisa, commander of the 93rd “Kholodnyi Yar” Brigade, which distinguished itself in the defence of Bakhmut, became deputy to Andriy Yermak as head of the Office of the President. Zelensky justified the personnel reshuffle by the need to accelerate changes in the functioning of the army, and Palisa becoming Yermak’s deputy is expected to improve the analysis of information from the front.

Controversy continues in the Ukrainian media over the situation surrounding the State Special Communications Service (SSSCIP). On 15 November, its head, Yuri Myronenko, considered to be closely linked to Deputy Prime Minister and head of the Ministry of Digitalisation, Mykhailo Fedorov, was dismissed. Four days later, the Cabinet of Ministers decided to strip the ministry of its oversight of the SSSCIP and make it directly subordinate to the government. Journalists unfavourable to Yermak saw this move as an example of the ‘manual control’ of the state administration, motivated by a desire to weaken the position of the Minister of Digitalisation, who enjoys a high degree of independence, and to gain control over significant financial resources.

The key competences of the SSSCIP include the purchase of drones as part of the Drone Army project, and this year the service had an earmarked budget of 46.9 billion hryvnias (about \$1.12 billion). Media outlets are warning that the distribution of SSSCIP funds will be handled by its new head’s first deputy, Rostyslav Zamlynskyi, who has a reputation of being “Yermak’s man” and was removed from his post as deputy defence minister in the past after fraud was detected in the purchase of goods for the army at inflated prices. Fedorov denied reports of a conflict with the Office of the President. His statement should be seen as a sign of loyalty to the president, but also an admission of defeat in terms of losing influence over the policy of purchasing drones.

Russia's military potential

On 26 November, the expatriate Belarusian Investigative Center, operating in Warsaw, published material confirming that the Russian arms industry has been purchasing Western electronic components used in fighter planes and missiles through Belarusian companies. Between September 2022 and June 2024, companies there supplied chips worth more than \$125 million to Russia. Some of the components (worth around \$400,000) turned out to be of Western origin. These include products from the US company Intel, used in Su-35S, Su-34 fighters, drones and Kalibr missiles.

