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Commander of the Land Forces of Ukraine returns to the front. Day 1070 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

The Russians have captured Velyka Novosilka, the last significant point of Ukrainian resistance on where Donetsk Oblast borders Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. It is likely that some of the defenders failed to break out of encirclement, although this has been denied by the Ukrainian command. North of Velyka Novosilka and south of Pokrovsk, Ukrainian forces are now only holding out only on the outskirts of Donetsk Oblast, and the Russians are 3 km away from its borders at the narrowest point. The exception is the salient west of Kurakhove, where Ukrainian positions stretch 40 km into the oblast's territory. After Russian troops began storming the junction settlement Andriivka, the threat of their encirclement increased.

Fighting continues on the outskirts of Toretsk and in the centre of Chasiv Yar, where Russia has made further advances. Shifts in Russia's favour have also occurred between the Toretsk agglomeration and Myrnohrad and Pokrovsk, nevertheless Russia has still not managed to control the road junction on the Pokrovsk-Kostiantynivka route. **The declining importance of Pokrovsk as the main logistical hub of Ukrainian forces in the Donbas means that this role is increasingly being taken over by Kostiantynivka, from where supplies are directed to the groupings in the Chasiv Yar and Toretsk areas** (Pokrovsk has become a de facto independent defence region). However, it is increasingly directed from the Kharkiv region, via Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

The Russians are likely to have captured the nodal Dvoritsa on the right bank of the Oskil River, enabling them to continue their advance south toward Kupiansk or westward deep into the Kharkiv region. They have also made further field advances on the border of Luhansk, Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts (towards Lyman and Borova) and in Kursk Oblast (pushing towards Sudzha from the northwest).

The return of General Mykhailo Drapatyi to the front should be considered a direct consequence of the inability of Ukrainian forces to stabilise their defences in the Donbas. On January 26, President Volodymyr Zelensky appointed him commander of the Khortytsia operational-strategic group of troops which is responsible for (among other things) the defence of Pokrovsk. Drapatyi is also likely to remain commander of the entire Ukrainian Land Forces, a position to which he was appointed last November 29. Previously, he

commanded the Luhansk operational-tactical group of troops (subordinate to the Khortytsia higher command). Leaving Drapatyi in both positions, while conflicting with command pragmatics, would not set a precedent. They were combined by the current Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, General Oleksandr Syrskyi, from 2022 to 2024.

Russian air attacks

The Russians are continuing their massive attacks on Ukrainian military infrastructure and facilities. The most serious one in terms of impact took place on January 23 in Zaporizhzhia, where a power facility was damaged. 20,000 consumers were temporarily cut off from electricity supplies, and 17,000 had no heating. Damage to critical or industrial infrastructure was reported on January 25 and 28 from Cherkasy and Cherkasy Oblast, on January 27 from Sumy and also Dnipropetrovsk and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, and on January 28 from Kharkiv. Damage to civilian facilities was reported in Mykolaiv (January 21), Sumy (January 21 and 26), Kharkiv (daily from January 22 to 26), Zaporizhzhia (January 22), Dnipro (January 27) and Odesa (January 28), as well as Kyiv (January 22–25 and 28) and Lviv (January 24) oblasts, among others.

The effectiveness of Russian drone strikes is increasing, as indicated by both reports from the field and communications from the Ukrainian Air Force Command. The latter has seen an increase in the number of drones that have been declared neither shot down nor locally lost "without negative consequences." From the evening of January 21 to the morning of January 28, the invaders are thought to have used a total of 586 drones and 13 missiles. Ukraine declared 365 drones and two missiles shot down, and described 175 drones as locally lost. This would mean that 46 of them may have hit targets directly, while a week earlier there were 16 hits, with a total of 551 drones. Earlier in the period, the Ukrainian side had repeatedly declared 100% effectiveness against drones, with the damage mainly coming from falling debris. The declining effectiveness of anti-drone defences should be considered a direct result of the increasing dispatch of soldiers from mobile drone combat teams operating in the country's rear to the front.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

Overnight on January 24 and 27, Ukrainian drones struck a refinery in Ryazan, causing fires in fuel tanks. According to some sources, the company halted operations after the second attack. In addition, Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council reported **that the Kremniy El plant in Bryansk,** one of Russia's major microelectronics manufacturers, **was also damaged on January 24. Ukraine's attack carried out that day was the largest since the beginning of this year.** According to Russian data, a total of 121 enemy drones were shot down over 13 regions of the Russian Federation. However, apart from damaging facilities in Ryazan and Bryansk, it was not successful. On January 27, the target of the attack was also thought have been a fuel base in Tver Oblast, but there are no reports on its outcome.

Western support for Ukraine

Ukraine will receive its first Mirage 2000-5F fighter jets by the end of the first quarter of this year, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot announced on January 28. In doing so, he responded to doubts raised by reports earlier this month that the first three aircraft would be delivered to Kyiv by January 20. French experts stress that the Ukrainian air force is still not sufficiently prepared to receive them. It is expected to receive a total of ten of these aircraft.

German conglomerate KNDS Deutschland has officially opened a joint venture with a Ukrainian company, Ukraine's Minister for Strategic Industries Herman Smetanin announced on January 21. It will handle the servicing and overhaul of armaments donated to Kyiv by KNDS. A company carrying out similar tasks was launched in Ukraine last year by Germany's Rheinmetall, and Poland's PGZ and WB Group were forerunners in this regard.

On January 21, Ukraine and Albania concluded *a ten-year agreement on security cooperation and long-term support*. The document included a declaration of cooperation on security and defence issues, political cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The Albanian side said it will make a financial contribution to the European fighter coalition, which will provide English-language training for Ukrainian pilots and technicians. So far, Ukraine has concluded 28 security cooperation agreements.

Russia's military potential

On January 23, Ukraine's military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov indicated that **North Korea will transfer at least 150 KN-23 short-range ballistic missiles and artillery shells and systems to Russia** this year. He added that over the past three months Pyongyang has delivered around 120 M-1989 Koksan 170 mm caliber self-propelled artillery systems and 120 M-1991 240 mm caliber rocket systems to Russia. So far, there is no confirmation that the artillery from North Korea, which has been observed several times in recent months on Russian territory, has been transferred to and used by units of the Russian army. It is also unknown whether the North Korean contingent has used it in the Kursk region.

On January 24, **British intelligence estimated North Korea's losses in the Kursk region at about 4,000 soldiers killed or wounded.** In doing so, it stressed that Russian and North Korean forces are facing interoperability difficulties due to the language barrier. On the same day, Estonian intelligence did not rule out that North Korea will send more troops to Russia before the summer.

Ukraine's military potential

On January 22, the State Bureau of Investigation arrested General Yuri Halushkin, the former operational-tactical commander of the Kharkiv army grouping, who is on bail. He faces charges that in May 2024 he misjudged the potential of the enemy and by his actions contributed to the abandonment of the battlefield by soldiers of the 125th Infantry Brigade.

He was also alleged to have ignored available intelligence and underestimated the risk of a Russian attack in the Kharkiv region. Similar charges were also brought against former 125th Brigade commander Artur Horbenko, while the former commander of Kyiv's 155th Anna Kyiv Mechanised Brigade, Dmytro Ryumshin, was taken into custody (he was accused of failing to supervise the state of discipline in the unit and accepting violations of soldiers' rights, which led to mass desertions).

The publicity about the initiation of criminal cases against senior commanders is intended to show that officers commanding units are responsible for failures at the front, rather than the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or the commanders of military branches. This was indirectly confirmed by Oleksandr Syrskyi, who asserted that the situation in the 155th Brigade had improved due to his personal contacts with the command staff.

