

Russians occupy Sudzha. Day 1119 of the war

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 The situation on the frontline

Russian forces have seized Sudzha and surrounding villages. However, Ukrainian troops have managed to stabilise defences in the border areas of Kursk Oblast. Several tens of square kilometres of Russian territory including two settlements remain under the control of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and fighting is ongoing over two others. The Russians continue to try, without much success, to physically cut off the enemy's logistics by attacking in the border region of Sumy. Particularly fierce battles are being fought over Basivka, located on the Ukrainian side 2.5 km from the Sumy-Kursk road. Its seizure would allow the Russians to go to the rear of the Ukrainian forces and force their final withdrawal from the Russian territory.

The Ukrainian defence line now consists of a belt of border hills (on the Russian side), which significantly hinders attacks launched by the enemy from the Sudzha side. **On 18 March, Ukrainian forces entered Russian territory in the Belgorod region, 30 km south of Sudzha,** presumably to draw back some of the Russian forces attacking on the Kursk and Sumy oblasts' border. There are no reports that this diversion was successful.

For several days, fighting has been underway west of Orikhiv on the first line of Ukrainian defences in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Following sabotage and probing operations since the beginning of the month, on 15 March the aggressor launched an assault in this direction, penetrating up to 5 km across a 10 km-wide strip between the villages of Stepove and Shcherbaky. There is conflicting information coming out of the battle area, but it is likely that clashes are still ongoing over the two villages and that Russia has not managed to cross the road on which the first line of Ukrainian defence is based. According to some sources, Russian operations were facilitated by the early withdrawal of some Ukrainian forces to other directions.

A relative stabilisation of the situation has occurred south-west of Pokrovsk and in Toretsk, where Russia has again shifted to offensive actions and pushed the defenders out of some of the positions they had regained in previous weeks. It is most likely that neither side currently has the forces there to develop a larger-scale assault. Russia is continuing north of Velyka Novosilka, where it has taken another two settlements. Slight shifts in their favour also occurred in the vicinity of Siversk and Kupiansk. In contrast, on the border of the Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts (north of Borova), the Ukrainians are thought to have counterattacked successfully.

The Russians hit Ukrainian logistics in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

Energy infrastructure facilities securing train traffic were damaged (13 and 15 March), resulting in the temporary disorganisation of rail transport. Power generation and distribution facilities were also attacked, resulting in some residents and industry in both regions being temporarily cut off from power supplies. Damage to infrastructure occurred in Dnipro (11, 12 and 17 March), Kryvyi Rih (12 and 14 March) and Zaporizhzhia (13 March).

Odesa and its surroundings remain a constant target for attacks. Damage to the Barbados-flagged ship 'MJ PINA' and port infrastructure (11 March), energy facilities (15 and 17 March) and fuel tanks (17 March) was reported there. Russian drones also struck in Kharkiv (12 and 13 March), Sumy (14 March), Chernihiv (twice on 15 March), Kremenchuk (17 March) and the Kyiv region (12, 13, 15, 16 and 17 March). According to Ukrainian data, from the evening of 11 March until the morning of 18 March, Russia used a total of 856 drones. Ukraine announced it had brought 518 of them down and 272 were to be locationally lost. The Russians are thought to have used only seven or eight missiles during this period (probably only Iskander-M ballistic missiles), none of which were shot down.

 Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 14 March, one of the tanks of a refinery in the town of Tuapse in Krasnodar Krai was hit, and the resulting fire was extinguished over three days. Initial reports indicated that the facility had been hit by drones, but on 17 March the media reported that it was a new Ukrainian missile – an upgraded Neptune cruise missile with its range extended to 1,000 km. On the day of the attack, a successful test of this missile, described as the 'Long Neptune', was reported by President Volodymyr Zelensky. With less success, Ukrainians attacked other targets on Russian territory – industrial facilities in the Rostov and Voronezh oblast (12 March) and Kaluga (13 March, according to Ukrainian military intelligence, a drone manufacturing company was hit), a refinery in Volgograd (15 March) and gas processing plants in Astrakhan region (17 March).

 Western support for Ukraine

On 11 March, the US resumed the supply of arms and military equipment to Ukraine and the transfer of intelligence to it. This decision was taken by President Donald Trump after the Ukrainian-US talks in Saudi Arabia that took place that day. On 17 March, the move was officially confirmed by the Pentagon. Washington's suspension of military support to Ukraine took place on 3 March and did not have time to visibly affect the situation on the frontline. It did not extend to the Starlink system, which the Ukrainians had been using continuously.

Finland has earmarked €200 million in military support for Ukraine, Defence Minister Antti Häkkinen announced on 13 March. The country's 28th aid package is to include artillery

ammunition. On the same day, Häkkinen and his Ukrainian counterpart Rustem Umerov signed a memorandum on defence cooperation. Also on 13 March, **Kyiv's 18th military support package, worth €271 million, was announced by the Swedish government.** It provides for the purchase of 18 howitzers on the Archer vehicle chassis and five Arthur counter-battery radars, deliveries of which will begin in 2026 and 2025 respectively. Part of the funds will go to support the Ukrainian arms industry (including the development of the Bohdana howitzers), as well as to contribute to the 'artillery coalition', which Stockholm plans to join.

On 17 March, the German government updated the inventory of military aid supplied to Ukraine. The new deliveries included three Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns and 10,000 pieces of ammunition for them, missiles for IRIS-T air defence systems, 24 MRAP armoured vehicles, artillery ammunition (5,000 155 mm calibre shells, 2,000 122 mm and 8,000 mortar grenades), ammunition for Leopard tanks and Marder infantry fighting vehicles, 50 Vector reconnaissance drones and 30 Gereon RCS tracked platform robots. Two days earlier, **the Italian daily Corriere della Sera reported that Ukraine had used up all the Aster-30 missiles for the two SAMP-T air defence systems given to them.** France and Italy are said to be holding off the decision to send more due to their own stocks running low.

Ukraine's military potential

Change in the position of Chief of the General Staff. Since 16 March, this has been General Andriy Hnatov, the former commander of the "Khortytisia" army grouping, fighting, among other places, in the Pokrovsk area. According to the president, Hnatov's military experience will allow better planning of frontline operations, and his main task will be to oversee the development of the corps system of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. His predecessor, Anatoly Barhylevych, was transferred to the General Inspectorate of the Ministry of Defence.

On 14 March, Colonel Andriy Biletsky, commander of the 3rd Assault Brigade, announced that it would be reformed into the 3rd Army Corps under his command. He gave no details as to the future structure of the corps, which is likely to be subordinated to other tactical compounds. It cannot be ruled out that two new brigades will be formed from subunits of the 3rd Assault Brigade as part of the 3rd Army Corps. For the conditions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, this unit was relatively large – it had as many as seven battalions (six mechanised and one armoured) and two artillery divisions.

On 12 March, the Ministry of Defence reported that, as part of the implementation of the 'Contract 18–24' junior mobilisation programme, training follows a three-stage programme and lasts a maximum of three months. It includes basic military training, vocational training in a specific military speciality and an adaptation course. Soldiers study in platoons of 25–30 men. The adaptation course aims to improve coordination within small tactical groups under conditions of intensive combat operations.

The Kyiv city authorities are continuing to fund the purchase of military equipment and assistance for veterans and their families. Since the beginning of the year, 5.5 billion hryvnias (more than \$130 million) have been allocated for this purpose. Kyiv is a leader among Ukraine's regions and cities in providing material aid to the military, having donated

around 10 billion hryvnia (around \$250 million) in 2024.

On 17 March, the Ukrainian defence ministry reported that **more than 45,000 people** (mainly from Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia and Zaporizhzhia oblasts) **had applied to recruitment centres since last November**. The share of women reporting for military service remains at around 20%.

Russian operations against Ukraine

Russian special services have initiated bombings in Ukraine. On 11 March in Ivano-Frankivsk, two minors (15–17 years old) detonated an explosive device near a railway station. On the same day, a 16-year-old who intended to activate an explosive device in the centre of Zhytomyr was detained.

On 13 March, **the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) warned that theories incriminating the Ukrainian authorities for launching the war with Russia** and questioning the territorial integrity of the state **are increasingly being spread in the national information space**. A campaign against the President is also underway, pointing out that his views are allegedly not taken into account during US-Russian negotiations. The SBU recalled that some 2,500 cases have been opened against online agitators promoting anti-Ukrainian content over the past year.

