

Another barbaric attack on Kyiv. Day 1259 of the war

Andrzej Wilk, Piotr Żochowski

 The situation on the frontline

Russian forces have reached the railway line running north from Pokrovsk and are now less than 3 km away from the main supply route used by the defending Ukrainian forces, which runs in the same direction. Fighting has begun for the town of Rodynske, located at the junction of these two routes. If Ukrainian forces lose control of it, they will be forced to completely reorient their logistics along roads heading west from Pokrovsk. These routes are also under threat from the Russian advance and remain under constant shelling, as only 4 km separate the Russian-controlled south-western outskirts of the city from these outbound roads. According to some sources, Russian troops have advanced into the urban area of Pokrovsk on at least one occasion, but were subsequently pushed back.

Russian forces have driven the defending Ukrainian troops out of the densely built-up area in Chasiv Yar, leaving only its south-western outskirts under Ukrainian control. From its northern part, Russian troops have launched a new assault on Mykolaivka, located to the west. The Ukrainian command has denied these reports; according to some sources, Ukrainian troops continue to hold positions in the Shevchenko microdistrict. **Russian forces have also reached the outskirts of Siversk**, completing their effort to eliminate the salient east of the town, where Ukrainian defences had held relatively steady for over two years.

Russian troops have deepened the breach between Pokrovsk and Kostiantynivka, seizing additional settlements north of the road linking the two cities. They have also advanced south of Kostiantynivka; according to some sources, they have cut off a Ukrainian grouping in the Toretsk area, to the north and east of Lyman. **On 31 July, the head of the Donetsk Oblast Military Administration stated that the area under Ukrainian control had shrunk to 32.8% of the region's total territory.** Russian forces are now occupying 17,804 km², including 847 settlements. This means that 400 towns and villages have come under Russian occupation since February 2022. Ukrainian forces currently hold 451 settlements in the oblast.

Russian troops have stepped up their activity north of Kharkiv, capturing further positions in and around Vovchansk and attempting to cross the Russian-Ukrainian border near Hoptivka. Fighting continues in the northern part of Kupiansk. Russian forces have deepened their flanking of the city from the north-west and dislodged Ukrainian troops from additional positions east of the Oskil River. North of Sumy, however, Ukrainian forces have managed to regain control of the area between two settlements recaptured in recent weeks.

In early August, Russian airstrikes damaged a bridge connecting the Korabel microdistrict, located on an island in the Dnipro delta, with the rest of Kherson. This has further worsened the humanitarian situation in the area and prompted the authorities to begin evacuating the remaining residents. The strike on the bridge coincided with renewed activity by Russian reconnaissance and sabotage groups in the Dnipro delta and near the Antonivskiy Bridge, the main road connection between Kherson and the left bank of Kherson Oblast, which was destroyed in 2022. These developments suggest that Russian forces may be preparing to launch a landing operation on the river's right bank.

Russian air attacks

On 31 July, Russia carried out another large-scale attack on Kyiv, one of the deadliest strikes on the Ukrainian capital since the beginning of the full-scale war. Thirty-one people were killed and 159 were injured; the toll included two children among the dead and 16 among the wounded. Most casualties were caused by a missile that struck a residential block. In total, five or six missiles and around 20 attack drones reportedly hit the city and its surroundings. According to Ukrainian data, Russia launched a total of eight missiles and 309 drones, primarily targeting Kyiv. Colonel Yuriy Ihnat, the spokesman for Ukraine's Air Force Command, stated that Russia used jet-powered attack drones on a larger scale for the first time, deploying eight such UAVs in the assault.

Kharkiv continues to be one of the most frequent targets of Russian airstrikes. Russian drones struck the city on 30 July, 1 August and 3 August. The second of these attacks left 11 people injured. Other targets included Pavlohrad (30 July), where railway infrastructure and an industrial facility were damaged, Sloviansk (30 July, 1 August and 2 August) and Sumy (30 July and 1 August), where the second strike hit critical infrastructure, leading to power outages and damaging railway facilities. In Bila Tserkva, a Russian strike on 1 August caused a fire at an industrial site, which was extinguished the following day. Additional attacks were reported in Kramatorsk (1 August), Mykolaiv (3 August), where damage to energy infrastructure caused power cuts, Kyiv (3 August), Odesa (4 August), Starokostiantyniv (4 August) and Lozova in Kharkiv Oblast (5 August), where 10 people were injured in a strike on railway infrastructure.

On 29 July, Iskander-M missiles struck the 169th Training Centre of the Ukrainian Ground Forces in Honcharivske, Chernihiv Oblast. According to official reports, three soldiers were killed and 18 wounded. Between the evening of 29 July and the morning of 5 August, Russia reportedly launched 796 attack drones and drone decoys, along with 29 ballistic and cruise missiles. In total, 678 drones were reportedly neutralised – either shot down, jammed by electronic warfare systems, or locationally lost without any negative consequences. Six missiles were successfully intercepted.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 2 August, Ukrainian drones struck the Ryazan and Novokuybyshevsk oil refineries operated by Rosneft as well as the 'Elektropribor' and 'Radiozavod' plants in Penza. A fire broke out at the Novokuybyshevsk refinery near Samara, forcing a partial shutdown.

Damage was also reported at the Elektropribor plant. In addition, drones caused a fire at the airfield in Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai, where, according to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), Russian forces had been storing attack drones. The Ukrainian General Staff also reported a strike on the 'Anna Naftoprodukt' fuel and lubricant depot in Voronezh Oblast. Another Ukrainian attack on the industrial facilities in Penza took place on 31 July, but appears to have been unsuccessful. The strikes on the Beriev aircraft plant in Taganrog on 1 August and on occupied Crimea on 2 August likely failed as well.

On 3 August, Ukrainian drones caused a fire at a Rosneft fuel depot in Adler, which supplies Sochi Airport. The following day, drone attacks targeted the Frolovo railway junction in Volgograd Oblast and, according to the SBU, the Saky airbase in Crimea. The SBU reported that the strike on Saky destroyed a Su-30SM fighter jet and damaged another aircraft of the same type and three Su-24 tactical bombers. However, these claims have not yet been confirmed. NASA FIRMS satellite data indicates that on 4 August, a fire broke out at Hvardiiske, another military airbase in Crimea. On 5 August, another fire was caused by an attack on the Tatsinskaya railway station in Rostov Oblast.

On 30 July, the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (HUR) announced it had conducted a cyberattack on the servers of the so-called Crimean government, gaining access to documents confirming the forced deportation of Ukrainian children from temporarily occupied territories, particularly from Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The compromised servers contained detailed lists of abducted children, including orphans, along with their personal data, documentation of unlawful decisions to place them under the care of Russian citizens and the addresses of their new places of residence. This information will serve as evidence in criminal proceedings against those responsible for the abductions and will be used to support efforts aimed at securing the children's return to Ukraine.

On 30 July, the SBU announced the arrest of a Ukrainian Armed Forces officer on suspicion of spying for Russia. The SBU stated that the suspect, a major and flight instructor with one of Ukraine's aviation brigades, passed on information about airfields hosting F-16, Mirage 2000 and Su-24 aircraft. He also provided details on Ukrainian Air Force operations, including the coordinates of aircraft locations and airbase infrastructure as well as take-off and landing schedules. He reportedly maintained contact with a Russian intelligence officer through anonymous email accounts and encrypted chats on messaging platforms.

Western support for Ukraine

The Netherlands will provide Ukraine with a €500 million package of US-made equipment, including spare parts and missiles for Patriot systems. The announcement was made by Dutch Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans, who noted that the Netherlands will be the first country to pay the United States for military aid to Ukraine.

Ukraine's military potential

On 3 August, celebrated as Ukraine's Air Force Day, President Volodymyr Zelensky appointed General Anatolii Kryvonozhko as Commander of the Ukrainian Air Force. Kryvonozhko had been serving in this role in an 'acting' capacity since 30 August last year, following the dismissal of General Mykola Oleshchuk. Prior to that, since 2015, Kryvonozhko had headed Air Command 'Centre', whose responsibilities include the defence of Kyiv. It remains unclear why President Zelensky delayed the formal appointment by 11 months.

On 30 July, the Office of the President of Ukraine announced that this year, local budgets across the country have allocated more than 25 billion hryvnias (c. \$630 million) to support Ukraine's Defence and Security Forces. In some regions, defence spending accounts for as much as 19% of the regional budget, while in municipalities and regional centres it averages 13%.

The Ukrainian government has taken further steps to recruit volunteers who are not subject to military mobilisation. On 30 July, it expanded the 'Contract 18-24' programme by launching a new specialisation for drone operators serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard and the State Border Guard Service. The duration of the contract service is two years. After signing a contract, candidates undergo three stages of training: up to 45 days of basic military training, up to 60 days of specialised training and a 14-day adaptation course. Participants are entitled to a financial bonus of 1 million hryvnias (c. \$25,000), paid in three instalments. Upon completion of service, they will also receive additional benefits, including the option to apply for a zero-interest mortgage loan.

In an interview with the BBC on 30 July, Ukrainian Defence Minister Denys Shmyhal expressed his firm opposition to the export of weapons produced by Ukrainian companies until the needs of the Armed Forces are fully met. He stressed that the military must receive the necessary weapons to conduct combat operations and that all production should primarily serve the requirements of the battlefield.

On 30 July, General Oleksandr Syrskyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, emphasised the need for strict adherence to safety protocols at training grounds and military training centres in light of ongoing Russian missile and drone strikes. He called for the training process to be relocated as much as possible to underground facilities. Currently, basic training lasts 51 days and includes instruction in countering attack drones, firearms and engineering training and survival techniques in trench warfare conditions.

On 31 July, the Public Anti-Corruption Council under the Ministry of Defence published the results of an audit that revealed serious irregularities and organisational chaos within the ministry's structure. The report highlighted the duplication of tasks and functions across departments and among individual staff members, unclear lines of accountability, opaque decision-making and the continued existence of redundant positions. The Council recommended reducing the workforce by 3,000 to 3,500 employees performing unnecessary or duplicative roles. The Ministry is currently undergoing a reorganisation following a change in leadership; Shmyhal is expected to make decisions based on the recommendations of independent experts and internal auditors.

On 4 August, the Ukrainian parliament passed legislation simplifying the procedure for granting citizenship to foreign volunteers serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The minimum required period of service to qualify for citizenship has been reduced from three years to one. The new provisions are aimed in particular at volunteers from Belarus and

Russia, who are unable to legalise their stay in Ukraine without Ukrainian passports.

Russian operations against Ukraine

On 29 July, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) released a statement claiming that a secret meeting had taken place in an Alpine resort between Ukrainian officials and delegations from the United States and the United Kingdom. The alleged purpose of the meeting was to discuss removing Zelensky from power and replacing him with Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the country's current ambassador to the UK. The SVR alleged that Head of the Presidential Office Andrii Yermak, the military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov and Western officials attended the meeting. All the participants supposedly agreed that "a change in Ukraine's presidency had long been overdue" and that Zelensky had become an obstacle to continued Western support for Ukraine. These claims fit into a broader Russian disinformation campaign aimed at sowing discord among Ukraine's elites, undermining public trust in the government and portraying Ukraine as a state dependent on decisions made by external actors. Ukraine's HUR firmly denied the allegations, describing them as part of a Russian psychological and disinformation operation.

