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Iskander damages Ukrainian government building. Day 1294 of the war

Andrzej Wilk, Piotr Żochowski

The situation on the frontline

The Russians continue their offensive in the border areas of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Advancing along a 12–15 km wide front running from this oblast's border with the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblast in the south to the Volcha River in the north, they have so far captured seven towns (according to DeepState, Russia does not control three of them and remain in the grey zone) and have advanced 10 km into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Their progress is primarily due to the weakness of local defences (the few fortifications were built to repel an enemy attack from the south, not from the east). There are still no signs that they will be used to develop larger-scale operations towards the key town of Pokrovsk and, further, Zaporizhzhia and/or Dnipro. However, the breach will probably allow the invaders to "roll up" the front in the eastern part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast – if Pokrovsk is captured, they will be able to strike from the north at Huliaipole, the main centre of Ukrainian defence in this area, which Russia has been unsuccessfully attacking from the south since 2023.

Russian forces pushed the enemy back from Novoekonomichne and advanced to the north-eastern outskirts of Myrnohrad, thus negating the effects of Ukrainian counterattacks in previous weeks. They also expanded the area under their control on the south-western outskirts of Pokrovsk. Their positions on both sides of the pocket are 10–12 km apart, and the Pokrovsk conurbation is under their complete fire control. Russia has advanced to the eastern outskirts of Siversk and activated the front south of the city, which had been relatively stable since 2023. They have also made further progress north and east of Lyman, where Ukraine is facing increasing logistical problems. The main supply route for the Ukrainian forces in Donbas, leading from Kharkiv to Kramatorsk, is now within range of Russian fibre-optic drones, and the section between Izium and Sloviansk is thought to be under constant attack (Ukraine report ten lost vehicles per day and is appealing to civilians to not use this road). Russia's attempt to take control of the centre of Kupiansk with a surprise attack ended in failure, but it most likely controls its northern quarters. After more than 100 days of fighting, it also captured Yunakivka in Sumy Oblast.

Russian air attacks

On 7 September, Russia carried out the most powerful air strike on Ukraine since the start of full-scale aggression. According to the Ukrainian Air Force Command (UAFC), they used 810 strike drones and their imitators (82 more than in the previous record attack on 9 July) and 13 ballistic and manoeuvrable missiles. Ukraine declared that it had neutralised 747 unmanned aerial vehicles and shot down four missiles. The main targets included Kyiv, where industrial facilities were primarily attacked (this was confirmed by the NASA FIRMS fire map). The Ukrainian government headquarters (which is thought to have been hit by an Iskander-M ballistic missile whose warhead did not explode) and a residential building were damaged – three people were killed and 11 were injured (a total of 20 injuries were reported in the capital). The greatest damage outside Kyiv was recorded in Zaporizhzhia, where at least eight Shahed drones were said to have hit industrial facilities and infrastructure, injuring 15 civilians. Kharkiv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Odesa and Sumy were also affected (in the latter, the headquarters of the regional military administration was hit, among other targets).

From a military perspective, the most important target of the strike was the bridge over the Dnipro River in Kremenchuk, through which a significant part of the supplies for the Ukrainian forces in Donbas (via Kharkiv) **passed**. The drones damaged the railway section and the bridge's lifting mechanism, which allowed larger vessels to pass underneath it. Ultimately, the road section was also taken out of service and a ferry crossing was organised. Railway trains carrying supplies for the front were diverted to circular routes. The Russians have so far refrained from attacking the strategically important crossing over the Dnipro (the destruction of the Antonivsky Bridge near Kherson in autumn 2022 was contributed to by the defenders, thus forcing the enemy to withdraw from the right bank of the river). If Russia continues its attacks on these crossings, it would indicate that it is preparing for larger-scale offensive operations, including an attempt to return to manoeuvring operations. At the same time, it would suggest that Moscow has, at least temporarily, limited its annexation plans to the eastern part of Ukraine.

The main target of the massive air strike carried out by the Russians on 3 September was the defenders' rear to the west of the Dnipro. Serious damage to infrastructure occurred at the Znamyanka railway junction in Kirovohrad Oblast, through which supplies to the front pass via Kremenchuk and Kharkiv. Rail traffic resumed seven hours after the end of the attack. Industrial facilities were struck in Khmelnytskyi (the Kation and Novator plants), Lviv (aircraft repair plants) and Lutsk (Motor), as well as in the Ivano-Frankivsk and Kyiv regions. The Rivne and Zakarpattia regions were also attacked. According to the UAFC, Russia used 502 unmanned aerial vehicles and 24 missiles, of which Ukraine neutralised 430 and 21, respectively.

The invaders continued their **attacks on energy infrastructure in north-eastern Ukraine.** As a result, on 3 September, there was a temporary power cut in Nizhyn (Chernihiv Oblast), followed by another in Sumy the next day, then in Novohrad-Siverskyi (Chernihiv Oblast), and on 8 September in Shostka (Sumy Oblast), as well as in the vicinity of these cities. On 8 September, Russian drones damaged the Trypilska Thermal Power Plant south of Kyiv, depriving part of the Obukhiv district of power. As a result of the missile attack on Chernihiv on 4 September, members of a humanitarian mission involved in mine clearance were injured (two people were killed and eight were wounded). On the same day, enemy missiles or drones also struck Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi and Odesa, then Dnipro on 5 September and Mykolaiv and Zaporizhzhia on 6 September. According to Ukrainian sources, from the

evening of 2 September to the morning of 9 September, Russia used a total of 1,951 attack drones and their imitators, as well as 62 missiles (including both massive attacks). Ukraine neutralised 1,670 unmanned aerial vehicles and 27 missiles.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 5 September, Ukrainian drones attacked a refinery in Ryazan, and two days later, another in Krasnodar Krai. A fire broke out at the former, and according to the Ukrainian General Staff, an oil processing facility was hit. The same source reported a strike on the distribution station of the Steel Horse pipeline in Bryansk Oblast, where a fire also broke out. This was probably another attack on the Druzhba pipeline, as reported by other sources (the fuel depot and distribution station called "Steel Horse" are located in the Orlovskiy District). On 4 September, Ukrainian missiles hit a fuel depot in occupied Luhansk, and on 9 September, another in Belgorod Oblast. According to the commander of the Ukrainian Unmanned Systems Forces, Robert Brovdi "Madyar", on 8 September, the Vtorovo pumping station in Vladimir Oblast, which pumps diesel fuel to the pipeline supplying Moscow, was damaged. Citing intelligence sources, the Ukrainian media reported that on the same day, an oil pipeline and a gas pipeline in the Penza region were damaged. These reports have not yet been confirmed by other sources.

Ukraine's military potential

On 3 September, **Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleksandr Syrskyi ordered the completion of underground shelters in all army training centres as soon as possible**. This decision was made in response to the increasing number of hostile missile and drone attacks on these facilities. Syrskyi emphasised that numerous works had already been carried out during the summer, including the construction of underground facilities and covered passageways. In some centres, all training personnel were transferred to permanent underground accommodation.

On 4 September, **the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill tightening criminal liability for unauthorised absence from a military unit during martial law**. A soldier who does so faces a penalty of at least five years' imprisonment. In addition, the bill provides for the abolition of the possibility for courts to apply mitigating circumstances, which means that penalties will be imposed regardless of the individual specifics of the case. The decision to tighten the regulations was taken after the 30 August deadline for the voluntary return of soldiers who had previously left their units. Currently, responsibility for this step may be disciplinary, administrative or criminal, depending on the length and nature of the absence. The new regulations are aimed at counteracting desertion and strengthening discipline in the armed forces. At the same time, soldiers' rights spokesperson Olha Reshetylova pointed out that **the vast majority of cases of unauthorised absence from military units involve soldiers undergoing training or being transferred to frontline units, rather than those fighting on the front line.**

A day later, the State Investigation Bureau arrested five officers of the State Border Service suspected of assisting in smuggling men of conscription age abroad. According to reports,

the practice took place at the Polish-Ukrainian border crossing between Uhryniv and Dołhobyczów. According to investigators, those detained had deliberately violated passport control procedures: they did not check data in databases, did not register border crossings, and allowed people who did not have the right to do so to leave. In this way, at least 80 people aged 18 to 60 illegally left Ukrainian territory.

Russia's military potential

According to Ukrainian military intelligence (HUR)**, Russia has significantly increased its production of Shahed-136/Geran-2 drones, reaching a level of 2,700 units per month**. In addition to the combat version, the enemy also manufactures "imitator" drones – without warheads, whose purpose is to confuse and overload air defences.

HUR also reported that, **since the beginning of the year, approximately 280,000 contract soldiers have been enlisted in the Russian army**. Recruits are offered financial incentives, including a 2 million rouble (approximately $23,000) bonus for signing their first contract.

HUR also reported that **approximately 6,000 North Korean civilian specialists are working in Kursk Oblast, of whom over a thousand have already arrived**. Their tasks include rebuilding roads and preparing defensive lines. Some of them sign contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defence and take part in military operations.

The war and the internal situation in Ukraine

According to data from the Ukrainian Chamber of Auditors, the process of demining the area is slow, ineffective and organisationally distributed. At the current rate, it could take up to 83 years to completely clear the country of mines. The audit revealed serious planning errors, a lack of uniform procedures, insufficient monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and poor coordination between state institutions. The auditors warn that without profound sectoral reforms, it will be impossible to restore the land to safe use within a foreseeable time frame, which poses a threat to Ukraine's food security and economic recovery. Currently, approximately 13.9 million hectares of the country's territory are considered potentially mined. Of this, as much as 9.85 million hectares are agricultural land in ten regions that cannot be safely cultivated.

The situation in the occupied territories

According to data published by British intelligence, **more than 19,500 Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported to Russia or occupied Crimea**. Some of them have been sent to so-called re-education camps, from where they are mobilised into the Russian army upon reaching adulthood. In response to these findings, on 3 September, the government in London announced sanctions against those involved in the forced deportation of minors. Experts from Yale University estimate the total number of Ukrainian children on Russian territory at 35,000.


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