

The Ukrainian army counterattacks near Kupiansk. Day 1392 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

As a result of a successful counteroffensive in the Kupiansk direction, Ukraine managed to capture Myrne, Tyshchenkivka, Radkivka and Kindrasivka, and reach the Oskil River and the north-western suburbs of Kupiansk. This cut off the remaining Russian group of about 200 soldiers in the central part of the city (among other things, the underground pipeline channel used by the invaders to move to the northern outskirts of the city was destroyed). **Russian troops took complete control of Siversk and the village of Sviato-Pokrovske, pushing the Ukrainians across the Bakhmutka River and further west to the Riznykivka-Zakitne line.** They also made progress south of Siversk, occupying Vyimka and Zvanivka, and in the Myrnohrad area, where several hundred Ukrainian soldiers are believed to be surrounded by Russian troops. Kyiv will most likely not decide to announce a retreat for fear that the Kremlin will use this for propaganda purposes in the ongoing peace negotiations.

Russian forces are also gaining ground south of Kostiantynivka, where they have managed to take up positions near Ivanopillia, from where they will try to penetrate the southern outskirts of the city. The enemy is also advancing west of the Kleban-Byk reservoir, seeking to bypass Kostiantynivka from the west in the vicinity of Illinivka.

The situation of the defenders in Huliaipole in Zaporizhzhia Oblast is also deteriorating, with Russian troops establishing bridgeheads on the western side of the town and penetrating its central part.

Russian air attacks

The Russian air force continues its relentless attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Odesa Oblast has been hit particularly hard by missiles and drones. On 13 December, one of the largest combined attacks on the oblast since the start of the full-scale war took place. According to the Ukrainian Air Force Command, Russian forces used 495 aerial weapons – 30 missiles of various types and 465 unmanned aerial vehicles. Among other

things, 20 power substations were attacked, which resulted in Odesa and part of the region being almost completely cut off from electricity, water and heating. **On 12 December, as a result of shelling of the port infrastructure in Chornomorsk, a fire broke out on a ship belonging to a Turkish shipowner.** In connection with this incident, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed concern about the safety of navigation in the Black Sea. These fears were confirmed a day later when **Russian troops carried out a drone attack on a Turkish merchant ship in Ukraine's exclusive economic zone** (however, no major damage was reported). **On the night of 9–10 December, Russia shelled the Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv and Sumy oblasts, causing power outages and, in the latter, also water outages.** On the night of 12–13 December, Russia attacked critical and industrial infrastructure in the Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Kirovohrad, Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson oblasts. The southern regions were particularly hard hit, including Kherson, which suffered a complete black out. In order to eliminate the effects of the shelling, the authorities in Kyiv set up a crisis management team headed by Deputy Minister of Energy Oleksandr Vyazovchenko.

In addition to strikes on energy infrastructure, the Russians continue to carry out acts of terror directly targeting the civilian population. On the night of 13–14 December, they attacked Kharkiv with unmanned aerial vehicles, damaging several residential buildings, as well as Zaporizhzhia, where a supermarket was hit. On the same day, one of the drones struck a hospital in Kherson.

According to estimates by the Ukrainian Air Force Command, between 9 and 16 December, Russia used 1,136 drones (705 Shaheds), 16 Kalibr missiles, eight Iskander-M and five Iskander-K ballistic missiles, and four Kinzhal missiles. A total of 933 attack drones and 17 missiles were neutralised.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On 10 December, Ukrainian Sea Baby naval drones attacked a tanker belonging to the Russian "shadow fleet" in the Black Sea. According to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the vessel, flying the Comoros flag, was moving in Ukraine's exclusive economic zone towards the port of Novorossiysk. According to The Atlantic website, the strikes are the result of intelligence sharing by the Donald Trump administration. As noted in [the publication](#), the US president is not opposed to operations of this type. Although Washington is aware of the risk of destabilising the global energy market, it considers attacks on Russian oil logistics to be an effective means of putting pressure on Vladimir Putin. It expects that a reduction in oil export revenues will force the Kremlin to seek a compromise more actively in the ongoing peace negotiations.

On the night of 10–11 December, Ukrainian drones attacked the Akron chemical plant in Novgorod. The company is one of the largest producers of substances used in the manufacture of gunpowder, ammonium nitrate and other explosives for the Russian army. The strike caused a fire at the plant. However, the extent of the damage remains unknown.

On 11 December, Ukrainian naval drones attacked an oil production platform in the Caspian Sea belonging to Lukoil-Nizhnevolzhskneft. This was the first attack of its kind in this area. As a result, oil and gas production was suspended at more than 20 wells in one of Russia's largest fields. A day later, **Ukrainian forces attacked two Russian merchant ships** in the same sea. The vessels were allegedly carrying weapons and military equipment, and the information about this was provided by representatives of the anti-Putin guerrilla movement operating in Russia "Black Spark". Both vessels are on the US sanctions list because of their use for military supplies between Iran and the Russian Federation.

On the night of 11–12 December, Ukrainian drones attacked the Slavneft-JANOS refinery in Yaroslavl. The strike on the facility, one of Russia's largest oil processing plants, caused a fire. Reuters reported that the oil processing facility and loading ramp were damaged and the company suspended operations. On the night of 13–14 December, the Afipsky refinery in Krasnodar Krai was attacked, as well as fuel depots in Uryupinsk in Volgograd Oblast and Feodosia in Crimea. The extent of the damage remains unknown. **On 15 December, the SBU announced that it had carried out an unprecedented operation using underwater marine drones to attack a Russian submarine.** The Sub Sea Baby unmanned aerial vehicles are thought to have hit a Warsaw-class vessel (according to NATO classification – Kilo-class) stationed in the port of Novorossiysk. It is believed that the ship was seriously damaged in the explosion. The Russian Ministry of Defence confirmed the hit but denied reports of the attack's effectiveness. According to the SBU, there were four Kalibr cruise missile launchers on board the submarine, which were to be used for attacks on Ukraine.

Ukraine's military potential

On 9 December, Ukraine's commander-in-chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi announced the completion of the reform of the command system of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and the complete transition of the army to a corps structure. He stated that all corps have taken up their areas of responsibility along the entire front line, replacing the existing operational-tactical and operational-strategic groupings. He emphasised that the next stage of the changes would be to complete the reorganisation of the structures by forming a full complement of corps, involving the rotation of individual brigades.

On the same day, Syrskyi also announced that unmanned systems currently play a key role in deterring Russia, accounting for approximately 60% of all hits on enemy targets. According to the estimates presented, unmanned aerial vehicles have carried out over 304,000 missions, and ground-based robotic systems have completed almost 2,000, hitting or destroying a total of approximately 81,500 targets.

Also on 9 December, the Land Forces Command **responded to criticism of its decision to disband the units of the International Legion of Defence of Ukraine.** It emphasised that **all decisions regarding the use of foreign soldiers are made as part of the overall transformation of the Defence Forces and taking into account the current needs of the front.** The Command provided assurances that foreign soldiers who sign contracts will still be able to serve in accordance with their experience, specialisation and training, and their combat skills will be used where they will be most beneficial to the defence of the state.

This was in response to a media statement by Lieutenant Colonel Andriy Spivak of the 2nd International Legion, who criticised the decision to disband his unit. He argued that the liquidation of foreign units and their incorporation into Ukrainian units could discourage potential foreign volunteers.

On 10 December, **the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office suspended the publication of statistics on crimes related to unauthorised absence from military units and desertion.**

According to the prosecutor's office, these statistics are used by Russia to conduct disinformation and psychological operations in order to draw false conclusions about the morale of Ukrainian soldiers. In addition, this information is used by the enemy to assess the level of military discipline, the combat readiness of individual units and the effectiveness of the mobilisation system. According to earlier data, in October this year, 18,909 criminal proceedings were initiated for unauthorised absence from a unit and 2,276 proceedings for desertion. In total, from February 2022 to September 2025, law enforcement agencies initiated nearly 300,000 criminal proceedings related to these offences.

In 2025, the number of complaints about the actions of military commissions increased significantly. Ukrainian Human Rights Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets admitted that there were "shameful" cases of violations of the law in relation to conscripts, including unlawful detentions, the confiscation of personal belongings, the use of physical force and restriction of access to legal aid. He also pointed to the poor quality of medical examinations, which leads to situations where people unfit for service are drafted into military units.

According to information from the Ukrainian General Staff on 11 December, **soldiers who returned to reserve battalions after leaving their military units without permission are being sent to combat brigades in need of personnel, in particular to assault units.** As emphasised, the army is taking steps to simplify the mechanisms for transferring soldiers between units. To this end, a new electronic information exchange mechanism has recently been introduced to ensure that requests are processed quickly by unit commanders. At the same time, the changes implemented do not create the possibility of using unauthorised departure from a unit as a way to transfer to a more "comfortable" unit.

On 13 December, **the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine decided to launch a pilot project for the automatic military registration of conscripts aged 18 and over and men aged 18–60 residing abroad.** They will automatically receive conscript status when applying for or replacing their passport documents, without having to visit military and medical commissions. The decision is part of a broader process of digitisation and reform of the military registration system. On 25 September, the government simplified the procedures for registration and removal from the register, enabling, among other things, the remote registration of 17-year-olds via the Reserve+ application. On 10 December, the Cabinet of Ministers updated the rules for issuing military documents, which will now only be available in electronic form.

On 15 December, **Defence Minister Denys Shmyhal announced that in the first quarter of 2026 the Armed Forces would receive 12 billion hryvnias (approximately \$287 million) for military equipment orders via the DOT-Chain Defence digital platform.** This platform allows military units to independently select and order the necessary equipment in simplified form. Currently, 186 brigades of the Armed Forces, as well as brigades of the Azov Corps and Khartia National Guard, have access to the platform. By December this year, unmanned

aerial vehicles and electronic warfare equipment with a total value of 7.6 billion hryvnias (over \$185 million) had been delivered to the front via DOT-Chain Defence.

Western support for Ukraine

On 9 December, the **General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces** announced that **talks were underway with Ukraine regarding the transfer of 6–8 used MiG-29 fighter jets** in exchange for access to selected drone and missile technologies. The transfer of the aircraft is related to them reaching the end of their service life and the lack of prospects for their further modernisation in the Polish Armed Forces.

