

Slowdown in Russia's advances on the front. Day 1469 of the war

Krzysztof Nieczypor, Jacek Tarociński, Piotr Żochowski

The situation on the frontline

Russian forces continue their offensive west of Huliaipole, attempting to break through Ukrainian defences at Verkhnia Tersa. The operational objective is to try to encircle Ukrainian forces around Orikhiv, accompanied by Russian attacks from Stepnohirs'k and Prymorsk, where Russian progress has been halted in recent days. It is thought that the Ukrainian offensive operation on the border of the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, ongoing since the beginning of February, is hindering the success of this Russian plan. The Ukrainians are trying to drive a wedge towards Novohryhorivka, seeking to bring the route connecting Huliaipole and Velyka Novosilka within the range of their drones in order to cut off the Russian forces from their logistical support. According to Ukrainian sources, Ukraine has made progress in this area, taking control of nearby Verbove and Berezove.

Russian forces continue their advance from the south on the outskirts of Kostiantynivka. Small groups are managing to penetrate the city from the south and the Bakhmut–Pokrovsk road. From the north, on 25 February, Russia blew up a dam in the area of the village of Osykove. As a result, the route from Druzhkivka to Kostiantynivka was partially flooded, which led at least to a temporary interruption of the logistics route and hindered the supply and movement of Ukrainian troops. The attack heralds a concentration of efforts on an attempt to isolate Kostiantynivka, accompanied by the Russian advance west of Chasiv Yar towards Druzhkivka.

According to the DeepState analytical website, in February, Russian forces made their smallest advances since July 2024, capturing only 126 km² of Ukrainian territory (for comparison, in January 2026, they captured 245 km², and in December 2025 – 445 km²). As noted, the Russians were most successful in the directions of Sloviansk-Kramatorsk (49 km²), Pokrovsk (40 km²) and Kostiantynivka (26 km²). The creators of DeepState emphasise that the slowdown in the pace of territory capture was not accompanied by a decrease in the frequency of attacks, which remained at almost the same level as in January. The slowdown is also confirmed by Russian sources, which indicate that 560 km² were captured in January, compared to only 255 km² in February. This was due to unfavourable weather conditions and counterattacks by Ukrainian forces in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.

On the night of 25–26 February, Russian troops carried out another massive attack on energy and logistics infrastructure in Ukraine. The main targets were Kyiv, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, Poltava and Kharkiv. As a result of the attack, the Kyiv power substation on the outskirts of the capital and the Chernihiv substation near Chernihiv were damaged. In Poltava, the gas pipeline junction supplying Kharkiv and Sumy was destroyed, and the railway junction was destroyed in Fastiv. In Zaporizhzhia, a shopping centre warehouse complex and several residential buildings were hit, resulting in at least nine people being injured. Similar attacks took place in Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih and the vicinity of Odesa and Vinnytsia. Near Kharkiv, enemy drones struck a dormitory inhabited by displaced persons (16 were injured). In the city itself, multi-storey residential buildings were hit. **The day before, in the northern part of Kharkiv, the first case of an attack on a civilian car by a drone controlled by a fibre optic cable was reported.** According to estimates by the Ukrainian Air Force Command, a total of 420 drones (including 280 Shahed strike drones) and 39 ballistic and cruise missiles were used that day.

On 27 February, the Russians carried out attacks on energy infrastructure facilities in Zaporizhzhia Oblast and port facilities in Odesa Oblast (the attack was repeated on the night of 2 to 3 March). On the same day, a hotel building in the centre of Sumy was double tapped, following a pattern repeated in recent months. This means that, after the first attack and the arrival of emergency services, another attack followed, with the aim of increasing the number of casualties. On 28 February, Russia carried out an attack on Dnipro, as a result of which fragments of one of the unmanned aerial vehicles hit by air defence systems fell near the apartment of the city's mayor, Borys Filatov. On the same day, one of the railway stations in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast was also hit, and on 2 March, a suburban train at Apostolove station in the same oblast was hit, killing at least one person. On 1 March, a student dormitory in Kharkiv was targeted, and a day later, buildings of private companies in Kryvyi Rih. In total, according to Ukrainian sources, from the evening of 24 February to the morning of 3 March, the Russians used a total of 1,180 drones (including 710 strike drones) and 40 ballistic and cruise missiles. Ukraine announced that it had destroyed 1,051 unmanned aerial vehicles and 32 missiles.

On 1 March, President Volodymyr Zelensky summarised the air strikes on energy infrastructure facilities that had been ongoing since the beginning of December. **According to his estimates, in three months, the Russians fired over 14,670 aerial bombs, 738 missiles and nearly 19,000 strike drones.** On 24 February, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced that during four years of full-scale conflict, Russia had carried out 5,796 attacks on energy facilities. As a result, 247 energy company employees were killed. In turn, a statement by Ukrenerho stated that, since the beginning of this year, Russia had used over 300 missiles and more than 7,000 drones in attacks on its facilities. Since 2022, the Russians have used 12,700 unmanned strike vehicles and 2,900 missiles to strike energy infrastructure.

Ukrainian operations against Russia

On the night of 1 to 2 March, unmanned aerial vehicles attacked the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk in Krasnodar Krai. The strike, carried out by the Alpha Special Operations Centre of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), targeted military and fuel facilities, including the infrastructure of the Sheskharis oil terminal. Six of the seven oil transshipment stations were reportedly damaged. The terminal is one of the largest fuel facilities in Russia, handling a significant proportion of Russian oil exports from the Ural region by sea. According to Ukrainian sources, a warship, a radar guidance system for the S-300 system and the Pantsir air defence system were also hit. The attack came after Ukraine's ambassador to US, Olha Stefanishyna, revealed on 25 February that the US had issued a diplomatic note warning against strikes on another nearby terminal in Novorossiysk belonging to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), in which the American company Chevron, among others, has a stake.

Russian operations against Ukraine

On 24 February, **during a speech at the Federal Security Service (FSB) college, Vladimir Putin admitted that Ukrainian military and special operations pose a particular threat to state security.** He instructed the FSB to strengthen the protection of high-ranking employees of the Russian Ministry of Defence and defence industry enterprises. Additional security measures are also to cover representatives of the central and local authorities. In his speech, Putin stressed that enhanced protection should also apply to "public opinion leaders, journalists and volunteers" who, he said, are constantly threatened by the actions of the "Kyiv regime". He also ordered "additional measures" to be taken to strengthen the protection of the Russian Federation's state border, through which Ukrainian saboteurs are infiltrating. These measures are to be coordinated by the National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAC).

Ukraine's military potential

On 25 February, the SBU announced the arrest of the logistics commander of the Air Force Command and the head of the SBU department in Zhytomyr Oblast (according to media reports, these are colonels Andriy Ukrainets and Volodymyr Kompanychenko). Both were allegedly caught red-handed while accepting a bribe of \$320,000 as part of an organised scheme to embezzle funds for the construction of protective structures at military facilities of strategic importance, including Air Force operational airfields. The defendants allegedly attempted to embezzle approximately 13 million hryvnia (representing 1% of the total investment) by signing fictitious documents confirming the proper implementation of the

projects despite negative inspection reports. Both men face up to 12 years in prison.

Russia's military potential

During a meeting with journalists on 27 February, Ukrainian Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov announced that **the Ukrainian armed forces had succeeded in destroying the Mesh communication system deployed on Belarusian territory**. The installations were used to retransmit the signal enabling the control of Russian Shahed strike drones attacking central Ukraine. The support provided to the Russian army in this way was one of the reasons why Kyiv imposed sanctions on Alyaksandr Lukashenka (see '[Sanctions against Lukashenka. A shift in Ukraine's policy towards Belarus](#)').

The war and the internal situation in Ukraine

On 25 February, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a law on social security for soldiers performing military service and their family members. Minister Fedorov explained that the new regulations create a “clear and fair system of social guarantees” – both before, during and after service. The law provides for financial, medical, food and material support, the right to family leave, treatment and rehabilitation based on the decision of the military authorities, accommodation, and free travel and postal services. The period of service will be counted towards the insurance period, length of service in the profession, length of civil service and the preferential period when determining pension rights. After discharge from service, there are guarantees of the right to return to a position no lower than the previous one, one-off financial assistance equal to the average salary, the possibility of professional adaptation and the right to holiday leave in the first year of work. Separate provisions apply to the families of soldiers who have been killed or declared missing. The law introduces uniform rules for compensation. The total amount of assistance to the family will be 15 million hryvnias (approximately \$350,000), and if a soldier is declared missing, his relatives receive a monthly benefit of 120,000 hryvnias (approximately \$3,000). However, once death is confirmed, the remaining part of the compensation is paid out so that the total amount of support amounts to 15 million hryvnias.

On 26 February, **Ukrainian spokesperson for missing persons Artur Dobroserdov reported that over 90,000 Ukrainian citizens currently have the status of missing persons** in special circumstances. The register includes both military personnel and civilians, including children. Earlier, during his speech at the Munich Security Conference, President Zelensky stated that approximately 7,000 Ukrainian soldiers are being held captive in Russia.

Western support for Ukraine

On 24 February, **Canada announced a military aid package for Ukraine, consisting of 66 LAV 6 and 383 Senator (Roshel) MRAP vehicles.** In addition, it was declared that CA\$ 2 billion (US\$ 1.46 billion) would be allocated to military support for Kyiv in 2026–2027.

Also on 24 February, during the Ukraine–Nordic-Baltic Council meeting in Kyiv, **Lithuania announced the transfer of 30 missiles for RBS 70 portable anti-aircraft missile systems, and Estonia declared a contribution of €11 million for purchases for Kyiv in the US under the PURL** (Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List). During the event, Ukrainian defence companies signed three agreements with companies from Denmark, Finland and Latvia with a total value of approximately €800 million. Only one of these agreements concerns support for Kyiv: **Remtecnology and NewPaakkola Oy have agreed to establish a joint venture in Finland to produce 1,500 unmanned aerial vehicles for the Ukrainian army.**

On 26 February, **the French Armed Forces announced that they were training three more Ukrainian pilots on Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets.** To date, Paris has delivered three of the six promised aircraft, and Ukraine has lost one.

