

Sloviansk has become a combat zone. Day 1644 of the war

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The situation on the frontline

On 21 August, the Donetsk Regional Military Administration designated Sloviansk as an active combat zone. This decision was preceded by a massive bombardment of that city and Kramatorsk on 20 August (in which one person was killed and 24 were injured), as well as Russian forces encroaching into the neighbouring town of Mykolaivka on the same day, where the Sloviansk Thermal Power Station (which has been out of operation since April this year) is located. The Russians have also made further advances across a broad front to the east of both cities; however, they are still unable to extend their encirclement of the urban area from the north, where the Ukrainians are mounting effective counterattacks in the Lyman area.

Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups have entered Dobropillia in Donetsk Oblast from the east and north-east. According to Ukrainian sources, the Russians are sending an increasing number of drone operators to the Donbas. The number of FPV drones attacking Dobropillia and its surroundings has reached 1,200 per day, whilst those targeting Druzhkivka and its supply routes number 1,500–2,000 per day.

Ukrainian forces are attempting to prevent the Russians from gaining control of the areas to the south and east of Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and ongoing counterattacks mean that the infiltration of the eastern districts of that town has decreased. The neighbouring towns of Novodanylivka and Mala Tokmachka remain the main areas of fighting. The Russians, however, have made advances north-east of Orikhiv, where, according to some sources, they have crossed the Verkhnia Tersa River, reaching Novosoloshyne, which lies to the west of it.

Russian air attacks

On 20 August, the Russians carried out their largest attack of the month on Kyiv and Kyiv Oblast. According to OSINT sources, they used a total of 75 missiles, only a few of which were aimed at Dnipro and Pavlohrad. Ukraine neutralised most of the cruise missiles (38 out of 52, or 39 out of 44 according to a statement from the Ukrainian Air Force Command), but

failed to shoot down any of the 23 ballistic and hypersonic missiles. Of the Patriot systems defending the Ukrainian capital, only two PAC-3 interceptor missiles were reportedly fired. The main targets of the attack were the Antonov aircraft factories, which produce, amongst other things, Ukraine's most advanced long-range drone, the An-196 Liutyi; the industrial zone in the western part of the city, where, according to some sources, there are facilities producing components for FP-1 drones and FP-5 Flamingo cruise missiles; and the warehouses of three retail chains in eastern Kyiv. Electricity was periodically cut off for 90,000 customers; 16 people were killed (plus a further two in a drone attack that afternoon), and 42 were injured. In Brovary, near Kyiv, a fuel depot, a logistics centre and the warehouses of two retail chains were damaged. One person was killed and eight were injured.

On 22 August, the main targets of the attack on Kyiv were the Ukrzaliznytsia depots and the rolling stock repair facility in Darnytskyi District. With the air defences completely inactive, extensive fires broke out there. Ballistic missiles also struck the areas of Vasylkiv, Brovary and Boryspil. In total, the Russians are believed to have used between 11 and 13 of these missiles. Photographic evidence from the rescue operation confirmed reports that, amongst other things, warehouses containing FP-1/FP-2 drone-launching trucks had been destroyed near Boryspil.

On 22 and 24 August, Russia carried out massive air strikes on the energy, industrial and transport infrastructure of Odesa Oblast. Following the first of these, the energy company DTEK reported significant damage to several facilities. Damage was also recorded to port infrastructure in Odesa and Chornomorsk, as well as to railway infrastructure at the Rozdilna junction station on the border with Moldova. On 24 August, two shopping centres belonging to the Epitsentr chain were damaged in the regional capital, whilst the Hemoplast plant and fuel depots in Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi were also affected. During the attacks on the Pivdennyi port, which began on the evening of 23 August and which continued intermittently until the morning of 25 August, damage was caused to transshipment infrastructure, warehouses at the logistics terminal, fuel tanks, a tanker and a general cargo ship, as well as a substation supplying the port with electricity. On 19 August, in two waves of attacks on Chornomorsk, fuel tanks, port infrastructure and a general cargo ship were hit. In total, between 18 and 24 August, six ships were damaged in the area known as 'Greater Odesa'. **In addition, Russian drones struck border crossings with Moldova**, resulting in traffic being suspended at these points. On 21 August, infrastructure at the Tabaky–Mirnoe crossing was damaged, and on 25 August, that at the Vynohradivka–Vulcănești crossing.

On 21 August, a Russian drone struck the largest shopping centre in Kryvyi Rih, killing 16 people and injuring 140, including 23 children. Three people, including a child, remain missing. DTEK reported that, as a result of the attack carried out on 18 August on the Kryvyi Rih Thermal Power Station in Zelenodolsk, the station sustained such damage that it can no longer generate electricity. On 19 August, a Banderol small cruise missile (rocket-drone) struck the building of the Main Regional Police Headquarters in Zhytomyr, killing three and injuring 53 people, mainly police officers. On the same day, and again on 22 August, Zaporizhzhia was targeted; on 21 August, Sumy and Chernihiv were targeted (in a follow-up attack on the latter city on 24 August, 14 people were injured, including two children); Kharkiv on 23 and 24 August, and Kryvyi Rih again on 25 August. On 22 August, a massive attack took place in Poltava Oblast, where railway infrastructure, warehouses, a gas

extraction plant and an industrial facility were damaged. According to data from the Ukrainian Air Force Command (UAFC), from the evening of 18 August to the morning of 25 August, the Russians used a total of at least 1,089 strike drones and their imitators, as well as Banderol missiles, of which 902 were neutralised. In line with its new information policy, the UAFC did not disclose the number of ballistic and hypersonic missiles; exceptionally, in its statements of 19 and 25 August, it mentioned Iskander-M missiles (two and one respectively), whilst for the remaining categories of missiles it gave a figure of 59, stating that 45 had been shot down. OSINT sources reported that Russia had used a total of between 106 and 108 missiles, of which 39 were shot down.

Western support for Ukraine

On 24 August, on the 35th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, **another meeting of the so-called coalition of the willing took place in Kyiv and via videoconference**. It was chaired by the UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham, the President of France Emmanuel Macron, the German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and President Volodymyr Zelensky. The meeting emphasised the continued development of the so-called multinational forces, which will be deployed in Ukraine once hostilities have ended. Furthermore, it was announced that:

- **The United Kingdom has granted authorisation for the release of classified technical data relating to the Storm Shadow/SCALP-EG missiles.** The aim is to assist France in setting up licensed production of these missiles in Ukraine. These missiles are assembled using components that are the exclusive intellectual property of British and French companies. The authorisation granted will allow this know-how to be transferred to France and/or Ukraine;
- The European Commission has approved a further tranche (€6.1 billion) of the EU's €90 billion loan to Ukraine;
- **Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and President Zelensky signed a defence cooperation agreement under the 'Drone Deal' framework.** Furthermore, Oslo confirmed that in 2027 it will maintain its support for Ukraine at the current level, i.e. 85 billion Norwegian kroner (7.8 billion euros), as part of its Nansen Programme;
- **According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, agreements have been signed between the ministry and Ukrainian and Finnish defence industry firms (as well as directly between the firms).** Their aim is to develop cooperation in this sector and to manufacture unmanned systems in Finland for the Ukrainian Armed Forces;
- The announcement was reiterated that one battery of the SAMP/T system would be delivered to Ukraine this autumn from France, and it was announced that a contract would be signed in September between Kyiv and Paris for the production of additional Aster-30 missiles for this system;
- **Germany has pledged to supply approximately 600 older PAC-2 GEM-T missiles for Patriot systems in 2027–2028.**

On 17 August, the **US Department of the Army** announced a tender for the supply of spare parts, no longer in production, for the M2A2 ODS SA Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, which had been transferred to the Armed Forces of Ukraine in previous years.

On 18 August, the **Latvian company NEWT21** announced the start of production of surface reconnaissance drones for the **Ukrainian Armed Forces**. Funding for this project comes from the European Union.

On 20 August, the Italian defence contractor Leonardo announced the opening of a subsidiary in Ukraine. Its main areas of activity will be research and development into communications and navigation systems, software, IT services, and electronic and optical technologies.



Ukrainian operations against Russia

Ukrainian drones struck the warehouses of Ozon, Russia's second-largest online retailer.

Warehouses and logistics centres in Chapayevsk in Samara Oblast (22 August), Orenburg (23 August), Druzhny in Adygea, Nevinnomyssk and Tyube in Dagestan (24 August) sustained varying degrees of damage. Furthermore, on 23 August, a fire broke out at a warehouse adjacent to an Ozon facility in St Petersburg, and a day later a Ukrainian drone struck a building materials depot in Krasnodar. From 17 July to 16 August, the Ukrainians targeted only the warehouses of Wildberries, Russia's leading e-commerce retailer, whilst warehouses belonging to other owners were damaged sporadically, mainly by debris falling as a result of Russian air defence operations.

Ukrainian forces continued their attacks on the Russian fuel sector. Fires broke out at the following refineries: Bashneft-UNPZ in Ufa, Bashkortostan (19 August; a facility undergoing repairs following one of the previous attacks was struck), TANEKO in Nizhnekamsk, Tatarstan (20 August), Lukoil-Permnefteorgsintez in Perm (21 August; the plant suspended operations following damage to one of its main installations), in Novokuybyshevsk in Samara Oblast (22 August) and in Afipsky in Krasnodar Krai and Novoshakhtinsk in Rostov Oblast (25 August; the latter facility suspended operations due to the damage). Furthermore, in Krasnodar Krai, fires broke out at the Tamanneftegaz oil terminal in Volna (20 August) and at the port in Yeysk (22 August; fuel tanks were likely hit). The Ukrainian General Staff also reported damage to facilities at the Astrakhan Gas Processing Plant and a renewed attack on the Kamensky Combine in Kamensk-Shakhtinsky in Rostov Oblast, both of which took place on 24 August. According to Russian sources, the Ukrainians have once again broken the record for the number of drones deployed. On 18 August, the Russian Ministry of Defence declared that it had neutralised 1,671 'aircraft-type' unmanned aerial vehicles over Russia and the occupied territories within a 24-hour period. The Russian Ministry of Defence reported an equally high figure – 1,504 – on 20 August, whilst over a thousand Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles were also reportedly neutralised on 22 and 23 August (1,053 and 1,120 respectively). Furthermore, on 24 August, the Russians are reported to have shot down – depending on the source – between 8 and 11 Flamingo cruise missiles (i.e. all those used).

Energy infrastructure in the occupied territories and Russian shipping in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea remain a constant target of attacks, albeit at a much lower intensity than in July this year. According to Robert Brovdi “Magyar”, commander of the Ukrainian Unmanned Systems Forces (USF), as part of Operation “Crimea Shutdown” between 17 and 22 August, a further 27 “energy hubs” on the peninsula and in other occupied territories were struck. This resulted in further power and water cuts, which were reported from Crimea on 19 and 20 August, and from Mariupol on 24 August. Brovdi’s information also indicates that between 16 and 24 August, a further 16 vessels were struck in the vicinity of ports in Russia and the occupied territories. One of them, the Greek bulk carrier ‘Anna S’, suspended its voyage as a result of the damage. In total, between 1 and 24 August, the USF reported that 38 vessels had been hit (between 6 July, when the operation began, and 31 July, 206 were reported to have been hit). Bloomberg reported that Ukrainian drones had, for the first time, carried out large-scale strikes against ships carrying grain. On 17 and 18 August, five such bulk carriers were reportedly hit in the Novorossiysk and Tuapse areas.

According to statements from the Unmanned Systems Forces and the General Staff of the Ukrainian Army, the intensity of attacks on enemy airfields has increased. On 23 August, MiG-29 and Su-33 fighter jets were damaged in Anapa in Krasnodar Krai (neither type – as they are not used in combat – had previously appeared on the list of Russian air force losses). However, reports of damage there to a large Orion reconnaissance drone, as well as the destruction of a Su-24M tactical bomber at Saky air base in occupied Crimea and damage to a newer aircraft of this type – the Su-34 – in Akhtubinsk in Astrakhan Oblast were not confirmed (in both cases, the attacks were said to have taken place on 20 August). Furthermore, strikes were carried out on Primorsko-Akhtarsk air base in Krasnodar Krai (20 August), Marynivka in Volgograd Oblast (21 August) and Dzhankoi in Crimea (24 August), as well as elements of the ground-based component of the air defence system at over a dozen other locations on the peninsula and in its vicinity, mainly radar stations.

Russian operations against Ukraine

On 21 August, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) announced the arrest of the commander of a National Guard special operations unit. The arrested officer was alleged to have passed on classified information to Russian military intelligence (GRU) and to have allowed them to log in via his own account, which could have granted access to information on operational planning. According to investigators, the GRU also instructed him to set fire to a military vehicle and prepare an explosive device for an attack in southern Ukraine.

On 18 August, the SBU’s military counter-intelligence unit detained a man suspected of registering 27 Starlink terminals on behalf of Russians. The SBU reported that the devices were intended for communication and for coordinating the activities of units and drones, and that at least one of the terminals was being used by Russian soldiers in the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast. The suspect was also alleged to have been collecting the coordinates of Ukrainian military facilities.

Ukraine's military potential

On 24 August, President Zelensky announced that the funding shortfall for the Ukrainian Defence Forces until the end of 2026 stands at \$27 billion. The Ministry of Defence was reported to have already exhausted the funds allocated in the budget for the remainder of the year. His suggested solutions were to bring forward the disbursement of part of the European loan funding scheduled for 2027 and to use frozen Russian assets. It is difficult to say where such a high figure came from and it is highly unlikely that it represents the real shortfall in the defence budget. According to the influential website Ekonomichna Pravda, the army's additional funding requirements are 'more realistically' estimated at \$7.2 billion.

On 19 August, the Verkhovna Rada appointed Yevhenii Khmara as Ukraine's Minister of Defence by a majority of 312 votes. He had been acting head of the ministry (see '[Ukraine: new government overshadowed by a controversial dismissal](#)') since 16 July and had previously served as acting head of the SBU. Before the vote, Khmara outlined three equal priorities: strengthening the armed forces' capabilities, protecting the lives and health of soldiers, and increasing Ukrainian arms production. He also pledged to develop the technological capabilities of the country's defence industry.

A total of 113 Ukrainian military personnel returned from Russian captivity in two phases of an exchange. On 19 August, Ukraine recovered 103 soldiers from the Armed Forces, the Navy, the Territorial Defence, the National Guard and the Border Guard. On 24 August, a further ten servicemen, previously considered missing, were released. According to Kyiv, 9,716 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been rescued from Russian captivity since the start of the full-scale war.

Two Ukrainian companies are working on their own ballistic missiles, but mass production has not yet begun. President Zelensky announced this during a meeting with journalists on 23 August, noting that mass production levels have not yet been reached.

Ukrainian manufacturers are warning that delays in tender processes could lead to a halt in the supply of new weaponry in a few months. On 21 August, the director of the Ukrainian Armaments Council warned of the risk that, in about six months, the army could be left without supplies of certain new weapons, as most tenders have not yet begun. The problem is said to stem partly from delays in the provision of technical data. In response, the Ministry of Defence assured manufacturers that most of the documentation is already ready.

Russia's military potential

According to Ukrainian military intelligence (HUR), North Korea has sent a new contingent of 8,500 soldiers to Russia, including 400 drone operators and around 1,000 engineers and sappers. HUR assesses that the operators may be deployed to operate strike drones targeting Ukraine. It estimates that, since autumn 2024, over 14,000 North Korean military personnel have already taken part in operations on the Russian side, and that Russia may be

seeking a further 50,000 soldiers from North Korea.

On 21 August, Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service reported that the first public recruitment service for Belarusian citizens to join the Russian army had been launched in Belarus. The website, operating under a Belarusian domain, offers contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defence providing for a one-off payment of \$28,000 and over \$3,100 per month. According to Ukrainian intelligence, nearly 2,900 Belarusian citizens have served in the Russian armed forces to date, of whom at least 440 have been killed.

