

Humanitarian aspect:

On the evening of September 20, the Russian military fired S300 rockets at several villages in **Zaporizhzhya Oblast**, namely Hryhorivka, Yulyivka, Richne, and Komyshevakha, head of Zaporizhzhya Oblast Military Administration Oleksandr Starukh said. Information about damages and victims is being clarified.

The head of the **Donetsk Oblast** Military Administration, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said that the Russian forces struck Bakhmut around 1 a.m, hitting a high-rise building. Three entrances to the building collapsed. There may be two people under the rubble.

Mykolayiv Mayor Oleksandr Senkevych said that the volume of humanitarian aid coming to the city has decreased about tenfold in the last three months. However, there are several humanitarian programs, and it is possible to purchase products in supermarket chains, so the local residents are not at risk of starvation. According to him, it is not pensioners who are affected the most, but the people of working age who lost their jobs due to the war.

Kharkiv Oblast police urged residents of Malynivska, Chkalivska and Pechenezka amalgamated communities to refrain from returning home soon. The retreating Russian forces left mined areas behind, and there are cases of local residents getting blown up by mines.

The head of the Pechenihiy amalgamated community in Kharkiv Oblast, Oleksandr Husarov, warned residents of the Pechenihiy village about the possible flooding of their houses due to Russian strikes on the Pechenihiy dam. He also informed the people about the evacuation plan prepared by the local authorities in such an emergency.

According to the director of the Kharkiv Oblast health care department Maksym Haustov, many medical facilities have been destroyed during the occupation, and it's necessary to find different inpatient and outpatient care locations. He added that the Russian troops also broke a lot of equipment or took it away. "The losses in technical terms are actually 95%," Haustov said.

An operation to transfer the bodies of the fallen soldiers was held today. **Ukraine returned the bodies of another 25 of its defenders**, the Ministry of Reintegration said.

Two more bodies of men killed and tortured by the Russian forces were found at the former Russian army positions near the village of Myrotske, Bucha district, **Kyiv Oblast**, the head of Kyiv Oblast Police Andriy Nebytov reported. One of them was a civilian, and his hands were tied behind his back. The other wore a sweatshirt with SBU academy chevrons.

Occupied territories

Russian-installed authorities of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya, and Kherson Oblasts announced that they would hold a vote on joining Russia between 23 and 27 of September. An unrecognized

Russian "senator" from Crimea, Olha Kovitidi, said that after the vote is held, Ukraine's strikes on the occupied Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts will be considered strikes on the Russian territory. Kovitidi's words help explain why Russia decided to go ahead with the sham referenda knowing that their results would be legally void and would not be recognized internationally.

The occupying authorities in Zaporizhzhya Oblast announced that to hold the vote, a group of "election commission" members accompanied by policemen would go from door to door so that residents could vote. Polling stations will be organized for those who cannot vote during such visits.

Volodymyr Rogov, a Russian-installed collaborator from Zaporizhzhya Oblast, said on "Solovyov Live", a Russian state TV propaganda show, that the entire Zaporizhzhya Oblast, including the parts currently controlled by the Ukrainian government, will declare independence based on the results of the referendum. Vladimir Putin did the same with the Ukrainian Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts when recognizing their "independence" on February 21.

Operational situation

It is the 209th day of the strategic air-ground offensive operation of the Russian Armed Forces against Ukraine (in the official terminology of the Russian Federation – "operation to protect Donbas"). The enemy continues to concentrate its efforts on establishing full control over the territory of Donetsk Oblast, organizing defense and maintaining control over the captured territories, and disrupting intensive actions of the Ukrainian troops in certain directions.

The enemy fired at the positions of the Ukrainian Defense Forces along the contact line. Russian military takes measures to regroup troops in different directions, deploys reserves and conducts aerial reconnaissance.

Over the past 24 hours, in violation of the norms of international humanitarian law, laws and customs of war, the Russian forces have launched 10 missiles and 15 airstrikes and fired more than 56 MLRS rounds at targets on the territory of Ukraine. Over the past day, the infrastructure of more than 33 Ukrainian towns and villages has been damaged due to the Russian shelling. In particular, Slavhorod, Kramatorsk, Bakhmut, Mayorsk, Vodyane, Dorozhne, Soledar, Novopil, Zaporizhzhya, Mykolaiv, Oleksandrivka, Snihurivka, Nova Odesa, Shyrokye, Bilohirsk, Myrolyubivka, and Bila Krynytsia have been affected.

The Russian military fired tanks, mortars, and various types of artillery at Mykolaivka, Chernihiv Oblast, and Novovasylivka, Slavhorod, and Rzasne, in Sumy Oblast. The threat of Russian air and missile strikes throughout the territory of Ukraine persists.

The so-called "mobilization" is continuing in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia. As of September 14, the previously issued documents postponing mobilization for about five hundred workers of the Yenakiyev Metallurgical Plant are canceled. In addition, a ban was introduced for male residents to depart the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimea without the permission of the military commissariats.

The Russian military continues to replenish losses and form reserve units. According to available information, four rifle battalions are being formed at the base of the 36th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 29th combined arms army of the Eastern Military District (Borzya of the Zabaykalsky Krai). The officer positions in the aforementioned battalions are staffed with Far Eastern Higher Military Command School teachers. In addition, the formation of a naval rifle regiment at the base of the Black Sea Higher Naval School in temporarily occupied Sevastopol is underway.

During the past 24 hours, the Ukrainian Defence Forces Air Force hit 24 Russian manpower and military equipment concentration areas, 4 anti-aircraft missile systems positions, and one ammunition depot.

Ukrainian air defense units destroyed a Su-25 plane, a cruise missile, and three enemy UAVs.

Over the past day, Ukrainian missile forces and artillery have hit 16 enemy targets, including 6 areas of Russian personnel, weapons and military equipment concentration, 7 artillery firing positions, and 3 ammunition depots.

The morale and psychological state of the personnel of the invasion forces remain low.

Kharkiv direction

- *Zolochiv-Balakleya section: approximate length of combat line - 147 km, number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 10-12, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 13.3 km;*
- *Deployed enemy BTGs: 26th, 153rd and 197th tank regiments, 245th motorized rifle regiment of the 47th tank division, 6th and 239th tank regiments, 228th motorized rifle regiment of the 90th tank division, 1st motorized rifle regiment, 1st tank regiment of the 2nd motorized rifle division, 25th and 138th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 6th Combined Arms Army, 27th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 1st Tank Army, 275th and 280th motorized rifle regiments, 11th tank regiment of the 18th motorized rifle division of the 11 Army Corps, 7th motorized rifle regiment of the 11th Army Corps, 80th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 14th Army Corps, 2nd and 45th separate SOF brigades of the Airborne Forces, 1st Army Corps of so-called DPR, PMCs.*

The Russian forces shelled the positions of the Ukrainian troops with tanks, mortars, barrel and rocket artillery in the areas of Kozacha Lopan, Shevchenkive, Dergachi, Kamianka, Strelecha, Hlyboke and Dvorichna.

Units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated Krymka, Yarova and Oleksandrivka.

Kramatorsk direction

- *Balakleya - Siversk section: approximate length of the combat line - 184 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 17-20, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 9.6 km;*

- *252nd and 752nd motorized rifle regiments of the 3rd motorized rifle division, 1st, 13th and 12th tank regiments, 423rd motorized rifle regiment of the 4th tank division, 201st military base, 15th, 21st, 30th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 2nd Combined Arms Army, 35th, 55th and 74th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 41st Combined Arms Army, 3rd and 14th separate SOF brigades, 2nd and 4th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 2nd Army Corps, 7th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 1st Army Corps, PMCs.*

The Russian forces shelled the Ukrainian Defense Forces with tanks, mortars, barrel and jet artillery in the areas of Oleksandrivka, Donetsk, Raihorodok, Shchurove, Kryva Luka, Ozerne, Bilohorivka, Pryshyb, Hryhorivka and Siversk.

On September 18, a successful attack on the area of the Russian weapons and military equipment concentration was confirmed around Novoaidar, Luhansk Oblast. About 50 units of enemy military equipment were destroyed and put out of order; ammunition was also destroyed.

In the area around Svatove, units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces inflicted damage on the Russian manpower concentration area. 70% of the personnel was destroyed.

Donetsk direction

- *Siversk - Maryinka section: approximate length of the combat line - 235 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 13-15, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 17 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 68th and 163rd tank regiments, 102nd and 103rd motorized rifle regiments of the 150 motorized rifle division, 80th tank regiment of the 90th tank division, 35th, 55th and 74th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 41st Combined Arms Army, 31st separate airborne assault brigade, 61st separate marines brigade of the Joint Strategic Command "Northern Fleet", 336th separate marines brigade, 24th separate SOF brigade, 1st, 3rd, 5th, 15th, and 100th separate motorized rifle brigades, 9th and 11th separate motorized rifle regiment of the 1st Army Corps of the so-called DPR, 6th motorized rifle regiment of the 2nd Army Corps of the so-called LPR, PMCs.*

The Russian military fired at the positions of the Ukrainian Defense Forces near Mayorsk, Mykolaivka, Verkhokamyanske, Soledar, Bakhmutske, Bakhmut, Vesela Dolyna, Odradivka, Vesele, Vyimka, Mykolaivka Druha, New York, Bilohorivka, Yuryivka, Spirne, Zaitseve, Yakovlivka, Krasnohorivka, Maryinka, Novomykhailivka and Pervomaiske.

Units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled Russian attacks in the areas of Mayorsk, Vesele, Kurdyumivka and Novomykhailivka.

Zaporizhzhya direction

- *Maryinka – Vasylivka section: approximate length of the line of combat - 200 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 17, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 11.7 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 36th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 29th Combined Arms Army, 38th and 64th separate motorized rifle brigades, 69th separate cover brigade of the 35th Combined Arms Army, 5th separate tank brigade, 37 separate motorized rifle brigade of the 36th Combined*

Arms Army, 135th, 429th, 503rd and 693rd motorized rifle regiments of the 19th motorized rifle division of the 58th Combined Arms Army, 70th, 71st and 291st motorized rifle regiments of the 42nd motorized rifle division of the 58th Combined Arms Army, 136th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 58 Combined Arms Army, 46th and 49th machine gun artillery regiments of the 18th machine gun artillery division of the 68th Army Corps, 39th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 68th Army Corps, 83th separate airborne assault brigade, 40th and 155th separate marines brigades, 22nd separate SOF brigade, 1st Army Corps of the so-called DPR, and 2nd Army Corps of the so-called LPR, PMCs.

The Russian forces did not take active actions.

Vuhledar, Velyka Novosilka, Mykilske, Mali Shcherbaky, Novomayorske, Mala Tokmachka, Chervone, Pavlivka, Hulyaipole, Novopil and Vremivka were affected by enemy artillery shelling.

Kherson direction

- *Vasylivka–Nova Zburiivka and Stanislav section: approximate length of the battle line - 252 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 27, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 9.3 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 114th, 143rd and 394th motorized rifle regiments, 218th tank regiment of the 127th motorized rifle division of the 5th Combined Arms Army, 57th and 60th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 5th Combined Arms Army, 135th, 503rd and 693rd motorized rifle regiments of the 19th motorized rifle division, 70th, 71st and 291st motorized rifle regiments of the 42nd motorized rifle division, 51st and 137th parachute airborne regiments of the 106th parachute airborne division, 7th military base of the 49th Combined Arms Army, 16th and 346th separate SOF brigades.*

There is no change in the operational situation.

Kherson-Berislav bridgehead

- *Velyka Lepetikhha – Oleksandrivka section: approximate length of the battle line – 250 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces – 22, the average width of the combat area of one BTG – 11.8 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 108th Air assault regiment, 171st separate airborne assault brigade of the 7th Air assault division, 4th military base of the 58th Combined Arms Army, 429th motorized rifle regiment of the 19th motorized rifle division, 33rd and 255th motorized rifle regiments of the 20th motorized rifle division, 34th and 205th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 49th Combined Arms Army, 224th, 237th and 239th Air assault regiments of the 76th Air assault division, 217th and 331 Air assault regiments of the 98th Air assault division, 126th separate coastal defense brigade, 127th separate ranger brigade, 11th separate airborne assault brigade, 10th separate SOF brigade, PMC.*

The Russian forces shelled more than 28 towns and villages, including Oleksandrivka, Novohryhorivka, Zorya, Shevchenkove, Myrne, Shyroke, Bilohirka, Bezimenne, Myrolyubivka, Vysokopillya and Olhyne.

Azov-Black Sea Maritime Operational Area:

The forces of the Russian Black Sea Fleet continue to project force on the coast and the continental part of Ukraine and control the northwestern part of the Black Sea. The ultimate goal is to deprive Ukraine of access to the sea and connect unrecognized Transnistria with the Russian Federation by land through the coast of the Black and Azov seas.

After the storm in the Black Sea ended, the number of enemy ships at sea significantly increased. Currently, there are 11 warships at sea providing reconnaissance and blocking shipping in the Azov-Black Sea waters. Among them are three cruise missile carriers. Up to 24 Kalibr missiles can be ready for a salvo.

Russian missile and artillery attacks on Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Ochakiv have resumed. The Russian military uses cruise missiles, S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, MLRS, and artillery. On the night of September 20, the port of Ochakiv was attacked by two Iranian-made kamikaze drones for the first time. The mine hazard on the Black Sea coast of southern Ukraine remains relevant.

Russian aviation continues to fly from the Crimean airfields of Belbek and Hvardiyske over the northwestern part of the Black Sea. Over the past day, 12 Su-27, Su-30, and Su-24 aircraft from Belbek and Saki airfields were involved. In addition, a large concentration of helicopters is observed at Crimean airfields, namely more than 70 in Dzhankoy and 7 in Kirovske.

Amphibious ships are in the ports of Novorossiysk and Sevastopol for replenishment and scheduled maintenance. There are no indications of preparation for an amphibious assault on the southern coast of Ukraine.

All 4 submarines of project 636.3 are at their main base in Novorossiysk.

The movement of military equipment by road and rail transport through the temporarily occupied Crimea in the direction of Kherson Oblast remains intensive. It is confirmed that the Russian Federation is moving its troops, equipment and ammunition to the right bank of the Dnipro by the river fleet vessels they have captured. The movement continues between Kherson, Oleshki, Hola Prystan and Nova Kakhovka (instead of using the damaged bridges).

On September 20, the Armed Forces of Ukraine sank a barge with Russian personnel and equipment near Nova Kakhovka. It should be noted that this is not the first Russian barge sunk by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Before that, the Ukrainian Armed Forces sank barges with the occupying forces on September 17 and 7. It is known that on September 7, the barge was sunk near Hola Prystan.

On September 20, bulk carriers PGE RAIN, SSI PRIDE, RIDER, TINA S left the quays of Odesa port, and APHRODITE M, NYMPHI, PAULINE, NORAN left the port of Chornomorsk. Also, today, the bulk carrier BC VANESSA, the fourth vessel chartered by the World Food Program (WFP) of the United Nations, was moored at the port of Odesa. The bulk carrier will be loaded with 30,000

tons of wheat to be delivered to Afghanistan. Since the departure of the first ship with Ukrainian food, 4.1 million tons of agricultural products have been exported (including 3.1 million tons in the first 20 days of September).

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 20.09

Personnel - almost 54,810 people (+160);
Tanks – 2,216 (+4);
Armored combat vehicles – 4,724 (+4);
Artillery systems – 1,323 (+10);
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 318 (+6);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 168 (0);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 3,587 (+6);
Aircraft - 252 (+1);
Helicopters – 217 (0);
UAV operational and tactical level - 925 (+5);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 239 (+1);
Boats / ships - 15 (0).

Ukraine, general news

85% of respondents expect Ukraine to join the EU by 2030, and 79% of Ukrainians would like Ukraine to join NATO by 2030, compared to 73% in May. The survey was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and the National Democratic Institute in Ukraine on August 2-9. It should be noted that in December 2021, 58% of Ukrainians wanted Ukraine's membership in the EU, and 48% of respondents were in favor of NATO, Ukrainska Pravda emphasized.

International diplomatic aspect

"He [Putin] is actually showing me that he's willing to end this as soon as possible," said Turkey's President. It was Erdogan's impression "because the way things are going right now is quite problematic." However, Vladimir Putin's political entourage is talking about referenda in Russia's occupied territories of Ukraine. "From the very beginning ... we've been saying that the peoples of the respective territories should decide their fate," said Sergey Lavrov. "They [referenda] completely change the vector of Russia's development for decades. Encroachment on the territory of Russia is a crime, the commission of which allows you to use all the forces of self-defense," wrote Dmitriy Medvedev, once "a liberal" President of Russia, in his telegram channel.

It's symptomatic that Russia is so obsessed with sham referenda and elections, as it finds itself among the twenty least free countries according to the Freedom House and forty least free in the Human Freedom Index. Besides murdering and jailing political opponents and journalists, denying a slim chance of any opposition to get to the Parliament or regional legislatures, Putin held a referendum wiping off limits on his inevitable re-elections. On top of that, Russia is one of the most experienced countries in holding referenda at gunpoint in the occupied territories of Ukraine (Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk), Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and Moldova (Transnistria).

"The Russians can do whatever they want. It will not change anything," replied Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister. "[The referenda] are worth nothing - the truth is that the result is decided in the Kremlin and not by voting," Andrzej Duda told reporters during his attendance at the UN General Assembly.

The Russian Duma amended the Criminal Code and enriched it with "mobilization," "wartime," and "martial law" clauses. A voluntary surrender will lead to imprisonment for three to ten years, while looting will be punished with up to fifteen years behind bars. Reservists declining to attend military training are equivalent to deserting contract soldiers and conscripts. The anti-war "Vesna" movement called on Russian servicemen to refuse to participate in the war or to surrender before it became a criminal offence.

After heavy losses on the battlefield and waves of Russian soldiers' surrender, the Russian military leadership turned to covert mobilization, employment of Russian and foreign mercenaries, and even prisoners. "Our information indicates that Wagner [the Russian private military company, though illegal under Russian law] has been suffering high losses in Ukraine, especially and unsurprisingly among young and inexperienced fighters," said a Pentagon official. The Wagner Group is trying to recruit over 1,500 convicted felons to participate in the war, but many refuse to join. It is reported that the criminals are promised to be pardoned if they would serve half of a year in Ukraine. However, Russian legislation doesn't provide legal grounds for such pardon schemes. Meanwhile, Moscow's Mayor said he would establish a recruitment facility for military service at the Sakharovo migration center.

Russian dictator is coping with the inability to escalate the war, given the degraded capabilities of the invasion forces and restraints of replenishing arms and munition, along with combat-capable troops. Orchestrating sham referenda and tightening the mobilization legislation, Vladimir Putin is trying to impress his subjects and the target audiences in Ukraine and the West. His options don't include stopping war and withdrawing troops from the Ukrainian territory. Instead, he might declare an all-out war and call the general mobilization that won't change much in real terms. However, such a decision might accelerate the collapse of the shaky economy and break up a silent consensus among Russians who either formally support or are ignorant about the war but aren't eager to take arms.

Putin's "urgent" address to the nation, announced at 8 pm on September 20, was postponed first for an hour and then till tomorrow. It was leaked that he would comment on numerous referenda in Russia-occupied areas of Ukraine and announce total mobilization in Russia. Meanwhile, Russian Google searches queries "Delay from the army" and "How to leave Russia" have sharply increased on Google.

The EU Council formally adopted the decision to provide € 5 billion of additional macro-financial assistance to Ukraine. This decision should be followed swiftly by adopting the third stage of the planned macro-financial assistance for a further amount of up to €3 billion.

The UK will meet or exceed the amount of military aid spent on Ukraine in 2022 next year, which is £2.3 billion. "The precise nature of UK military support in 2023 will be determined based on the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. However, it is expected to include equipment like the Multiple Launch Rocket System," stated in the Downing 10 press release.

Ukraine will donate 30,000 metric tons of wheat to Ethiopia and Somalia, worth \$11.4 million. The bulker with the grain will depart from the Odesa port via the UN-backed grain corridor.

Russia, relevant news

In response to today's announcement about the planned fake referenda in the occupied Ukrainian territories, the Russian stock market fell by 8.84% during the main session on Tuesday. It's the maximum fall since February 24, according to the Moscow Exchange.

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) published its decision regarding the 2024 European Football Championship stating that Russia is not allowed to compete.

Centre for Defence Strategies (CDS) is a Ukrainian security think tank. We operate since 2020 and are involved in security studies, defence policy research and advocacy. Currently all our activity is focused on stopping the ongoing war.

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