

### Humanitarian aspect:

As of the morning of December 17, more than 1,313 Ukrainian children were affected by the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. As a result of the war, **450 children died, and more than 863 sustained injuries of various degrees of severity**, the Prosecutor General's Office reports.

As of December 17, **the energy system of Ukraine continues to recover**, but the shortage of electricity in the system, due to the consequences of 9 missile attacks, is still significant, the press service of "Ukrenergo" reports. Atomic power plants are being gradually brought to capacity; hydroelectric plants work in the regular regime, and damaged objects are being restored.

After the Russian rocket attacks on December 16, restoration works are ongoing in **Kyiv Oblast**; about 50% of residents are currently without electricity, Oleksiy Kuleba, the head of Kyiv OMA, said. The situation is complicated by snow and icy rain. At around 18:30, Kyiv mayor Klytchko said that 75% of Kyiv residents had their heat supplies restored.

According to the deputy mayor of **Zaporizhzhia**, Oleksandr Vlasyuk, the Russian military fired more than 20 rockets at Zaporizhzhia and the region, including at the Dniprovska HPP. The power plant needs maintenance, and the work is ongoing.

The geography of the Russian attacks expanded on December 16. According to the Oblast State Administrations, 11 Oblasts came under Russian attack. **Five people died, and another 22 were injured in Ukraine over the past day**. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, Russia fired 98 missiles on Ukraine on December 16.

The body of a 1,5-year-old boy was found today under the rubble of a building in **Kryvyi Rih** destroyed by yesterday's Russian missile attack. The bodies of his parents were found yesterday. A total of 4 civilians were killed, and 13 people, including 4 children, were injured.

As a result of the massive Russian attack on December 16 and the ensuing lack of electricity in the Kryvyi Rih, Pavlograd and Synelnyk districts, more than 3,000 miners were trapped underground. Everyone has been brought to the surface, Mykola Lukashuk, head of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council, said.

On Saturday, Russian troops shelled the village of Stepanivka in the suburbs of **Kherson** with a mortar, hitting a humanitarian aid center, Deputy Head of the Office of the President Kyrylo Tymoshenko said. 1 woman died from injuries and 2 more people are in the hospital.

The Ministry for the Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories helped return two more children to Ukraine. One of them was held in Russia, and one in the temporarily occupied Torez,

Donetsk Oblast. Their mother returned from Russian captivity as a part of the "woman exchange" on October 17.

### **Occupied territories:**

According to the advisor to **Mariupol** city mayor Petro Andryushcheko, the city center is literally filled with Russian military personnel in full gear. The reason is unknown, but the last time so many soldiers were observed was during active hostilities. The troops also actively carry pyramidal anti-tank structures, the so-called "dragon's teeth", the trucks form "almost a continuous caravan".

Although the Russian occupying authorities promised from the very first day to resume the work of the "Azot" plant in Sievierodonetsk to create a huge number of jobs, this did not happen, the head of **Luhansk Oblast** Military Administration, Serhiy Haiday, said. The enterprise is currently under the strict protection of the Rossgvardiya riot police units, and either metal or equipment is being taken away from there. They are taken to Rozsosh, an enterprise that produces mineral fertilizers. Also, equipment is removed from the mines, consequently, a large number of miners no longer have a job.

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### **Operational situation**

*(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 14) developments)*

*It is the 297th 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").*

Over the past day, units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces have repelled Russian attacks in the areas of more than twenty towns and villages, in particular near Ploshanka, Chervonopopivka, Bilohorivka of Luhansk Oblast and Bakhmut, Opytne, Zelenopillia, Andriivka, Maryinka, Pobieda and Novomykhailivka in Donetsk Oblast.

At the same time, the Russian military launched a massive missile attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. In total, Russia launched 98 rockets and fired more than MRLS 65 rounds. The occupiers shelled the areas of Hai in Chernihiv Oblast; Havrylova Sloboda, Seredyna-Buda, Yastrubyn and Kindrativka in Sumy Oblast and Strilecha, Starytsya, Ambarne, Vilkhuvatka, Dvorichna and Krasne in Kharkiv Oblast with artillery. The threat of Russian air and missile strikes on critical infrastructure facilities persists throughout the territory of Ukraine.

Units of the missile and artillery troops of the Ukrainian Defense Forces hit 5 areas of Russian personnel, weapons and military equipment concentration, one command post and one Russian ammunition depot.

### **Kharkiv direction**

- *Topoli - Siversk section: approximate length of combat line - 154 km, number of BTGs of the RF*

*Armed Forces - 23-28, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 5.5 km;*

- *Deployed enemy BTGs: 26th, 153rd, and 197th tank regiments (TR), 245th motorized rifle regiment (MRR) of the 47th tank division (TD), 6th and 239th TRs, 228th MRR of the 90th TD, 25th and 138th separate motorized rifle brigades (SMRBr) of the 6th Combined Arms (CA) Army, 27th SMRBr of the 1st Tank Army, 252nd and 752nd MRRs of the 3rd MRD, 1st, 13th, and 12th TRs, 423rd MRR of the 4th TD, 201st military base, 15th, 21st, 30th SMRBr of the 2nd CA Army, 35th, 55th and 74th SMRBr of the 41st CA Army, 275th and 280th MRRs, 11th TR of the 18th MRD of the 11 Army Corps (AC), 7th MRR of the 11th AC, 80th SMRBr of the 14th AC, 76th Air assault division, 106th airborne division, 2nd, 3rd, 14th, 24th and 45th separate SOF brigades of the Airborne Forces, military units of the 1st AC of so-called DPR, 2nd and 4th SMRBr of the 2nd AC, PMCs.*

The areas of Senkivka, Orlyanka, Tabaivka, Berestove and Vyshneve of Kharkiv Oblast, Makiivka, Ploshanka, Chervonopivka, Dibrova, Hirsky Volodymyrivka and Stelmakhivka of Luhansk Oblast were affected by artillery fire.

The most intense battles were fought in the area of Bilohorivka, where the Russian forces have been trying for three days to break through in the direction of Siversk in order to relieve the pressure of the Ukrainian Defense Forces on Kreminna from the south.

Units of the 144th motorized rifle division carried out a series of attacks north of Kreminna, but failed to stop the advance of the Ukrainian Defense Forces, which advanced 1.5 km from Dibrova. The units of the 30th separate motorized rifle brigade and the 20th BARS detachment attacked Yampolivka but were drawn into a bag of fire by Ukrainian units, where they suffered such losses that they retreated in disarray.

### **Donetsk direction**

- *Siversk - Maryinka section: approximate length of the combat line - 144 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 13-15, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 9.6 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 68th and 163rd tank regiments (TR), 102nd and 103rd motorized rifle regiments of the 150 motorized rifle division, 80th TR of the 90th tank division, 35th, 55th, and 74th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 41st Combined Arms Army, 51st and 31st separate airborne assault brigades, 61st separate marines brigade of the Joint Strategic Command "Northern Fleet," 336th separate marines brigade of Baltic Fleet, 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 shelled more than twenty-five towns and villages. Among them are Verkhnyokamyanske, Spirne, Bilohorivka, Vesele, Soledar, Bakhmutske, Bakhmut, Opytne, Zalizne, Maryinka and Pervomaiske in Donetsk Oblast.

Detachments of the "Wagner" PMC and units of the 31st separate motorized rifle brigade of the Russian Armed Forces carried out a massive offensive on the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut. The Russian advance was stopped by units of the 71st separate jaeger brigade and the "Georgian

Legion", which, after a series of effective artillery barrages, returned the previously lost positions on the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut in the area of the streets of Fedor Maksimenko Street. The 31st separate motorized rifle brigade suffered significant losses and was withdrawn from the area of hostilities due to incapacitation.

Other "Wagner" PMC detachments unsuccessfully attacked the positions of the 53rd separate mechanized brigade in Opytne. Russian artillery in this area suffered losses in counter-battery duels and is unable to provide adequate support to its infantry. The coordinated work of Ukrainian military MEDEVAC doctors and their modern equipment is noted, which allows defenders to avoid unnecessary losses.

The Russian forces managed to cut the Ukrainian supply route west of Kurdyumivka and advance to Bila Gora and Dylivka. The attack came in several waves of Russian infantry, which were effectively mowed down by the Joint Forces fire until the others had built a relatively acceptable frontier.

The situation in the Toretsk area stabilized. The Russian military was unable to advance in the directions of Druzhba and Pivnichne.

On December 14, the Russian forces launched a new attack on Vodyane with the aim of reaching Severne and Tonenke thus pushing Ukrainian forces away from Avdiivka. The assault was repulsed, as a result of the counterattack of the Joint Forces, the Russian forces were forced to retreat to Pisky and Pervomaiske.

### **Zaporizhzhia 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 (SMRBr) of the 29th Combined Arms (CA) Army, 38th and 64th SMRBr, 69th separate cover brigade of the 35th CA Army, 5th separate tank brigade, 135th, 429th, 503rd and 693rd motorized rifle regiments (MRR) of the 19th motorized rifle division (MRD) of the 58th CA Army, 70th, 71st and 291st MRRs of the 42nd MRD of the 58th CA Army, 136th SMRB of the 58 CA Army, 46th and 49th machine gun artillery regiments of the 18th machine gun artillery division of the 68th Army Corps (AC), 39th SMRB of the 68th AC, 83th separate airborne assault brigade, 40th and 155th separate marines brigades, 22nd separate SOF brigade, 1st AC of the so-called DPR, and 2nd AC of the so-called LPR, PMCs.*

The Russian forces inflicted fire damage near the towns and villages of Bohoyavlenka, Neskuchne, Prechystivka, and Vuhledar in Donetsk Oblast, Plavni, Hulyaipole, Dorozhnianka, Olhivske, and Nikopol of Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts.

### **Tavriysk direction**

- *Vasylivka – Stanislav section: approximate length of the battle line – 296 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 39, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 7,5 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs of: the 8th and 49th Combined Arms (CA) Armies; 11th, 103rd, 109th, and 127th*

*rifle regiments of the mobilization reserve of the 1st Army Corps (AC); 35th and 36th CA Armies; 3rd AC; 90th tank division; the 22nd AC of the Coastal Forces; the 810th separate marines brigade of the Black Sea Fleet; the 7th and the 98th airborne division, and the 11th and 83rd separate airborne assault brigades of the Airborne Forces, 10th separate SOF brigade.*

the Russian military continues to use artillery to destroy the civilian infrastructure in the residential areas along the right bank of the Dnipro River. More than 35 towns and villages were shelled, in particular, Chornobayivka, Antonivka, Kherson and Mylove.

The Russian military redeploys individual units and withdraws part of its troops from Kakhovka and Nova Kakhovka to the area of Nizhny Sirogozy. Russian servicemen spread information among the local residents that Kakhovka will be abandoned by Russian troops by the end of this year, so locals loyal to the occupiers are offered to move to the temporarily occupied Crimea.

#### **Azov-Black Sea Maritime Operational Area:**

*The forces of the Russian Black Sea Fleet continue to stay ready to carry out two operational tasks against Ukraine:*

- 1) to project force on the coast and the continental part of Ukraine by means of*
  - launching missile strikes from surface ships, submarines, coastal missile systems, and aircraft at targets in the coastal zone and deep into the territory of Ukraine and*
  - a naval amphibious landing to assist ground forces in the coastal direction;*
- 2) to control the northwestern part of the Black Sea by blocking Ukrainian ports and preventing the restoration of sea communications (except for the areas of the BSGI "grain initiative") by carrying out attacks on ports and ships and concealed mine-laying.*

*The ultimate goal is to deprive Ukraine of access to the Black Sea and extend and maintain control over the captured territory and Ukraine's coastal regions*

The Russian fleet keeps only 9 surface ships at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There are no Kalibr cruise missile carriers at sea. The Admiral Makarov frigate went to sea for the first time after being attacked by drones on October 29 and fired 8 Kalibr missiles during the Russian mass attack on Ukraine on the morning of December 16.

On the morning of December 17, Russian troops attacked Odesa with two P-800 Onyx supersonic missiles from a coastal battery in Crimea. The missiles were destroyed by Ukrainian air defense.

In the Sea of Azov, the Russian military continues to control sea communications, keeping 2 boats on combat duty.

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, 14 combat aircraft from Belbek and Saki airfields were involved.

**"The Grain Initiative":** 14 million tons of Ukrainian agricultural products were sent to countries around the world. Over the last two days, 4 ships with 145,000 tons of wheat for Asia left the

ports of Greater Odesa. Among them is the bulker STAR EMERALD with 71,000 tons of wheat for Indonesia. Currently, 23 ships are being processed in the ports of Greater Odessa. 734,000 tons of Ukrainian agricultural products are loaded onto them. 3 ships are moving along the "grain corridor" to load 166,000 tons of agricultural products. In the Bosphorus, 92 vessels are awaiting inspection by the JCC. The queue continues to grow due to the artificial restriction on registration for the inspection by the Russian Federation. For example, out of 65 vessels declared by the aggressor, only 3 were registered for the current day. This situation limits the work of Ukrainian ports and results in the under-export of products of at least 3 million tons per month.

Since August 1, 558 ships have left the ports of Great Odesa, which exported 14 million tons of Ukrainian food to the countries of Asia, Europe and Africa.

### **Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 17.12.22**

Personnel - almost 97,690 people (+420);

Tanks - 2,985 (+5)

Armored combat vehicles – 5,958 (+6);

Artillery systems – 1,947 (+1);

Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 410 (0);

Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 211 (0);

Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,577 (+14);

Aircraft - 281 (0);

Helicopters – 264 (0);

UAV operational and tactical level – 1,648 (+4);

Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (+61);

Boats/ships - 16 (0).

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### **Ukraine, general news**

According to preliminary estimates of the Ukrainian Agrarian Business Club, the area under grain crops in 2023 will amount to 8.7 million hectares, which is 22% less than in 2022 and 45% less than in 2021. So far, the sowing of winter crops has already taken place, where 3.8 million hectares of grain crops were sown, which is 26% less compared to the autumn indicator of 2021 in the controlled territories and 43% less than in the entire territory of Ukraine.

The Security Service of Ukraine charged the "Minister of Health" and "Minister of Revenue and Collections" of the DNR terrorist group, who organized the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. According to the investigation, the suspects were involved in the organization of the forced removal of orphaned children from the temporarily occupied regions of the Donetsk Oblast to Russia under the guise of trips to children's recreational camps.

### **International diplomatic aspect**

Forty-eight percent of Germans believe their government should send tanks to help Ukraine, while forty-one percent disagree, according to a ZDF poll. With seventy percent supporting the idea, affiliates of the Green party are way ahead of the rest. Free democrats are in second place (56%), followed by the Social Democrats, the Chancellor's own party (55%), who blocks the whole

project, fearing escalation. Meanwhile, Olaf Scholz still believes in the necessity of talking to Putin to stop the war, contrary to the common wisdom based on Putin's actions, who have shown no second thought about his willingness to carry on.

"It remains to be seen whether this will happen by phone, video call or at a long table," Olaf Scholz expressed his belief in the necessity of talking to Putin to stop the war. A pre-war thesis goes against the fact that Putin's actions are aimed at a long war of attrition and confrontation with the West. "The outcome will be decided militarily. We need to give Ukraine offensive technology to increase the pain not just on the Russian army but politically on Putin... they [Ukrainians] need ATACMS, probably M1 tanks, and they certainly need lethal drones," US Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) concluded his sober analysis of the situation.

Meanwhile, the absolute majority of Ukrainians (97%) believe that the country is able to repel Russia's attack, according to the Rating group's poll. It's the highest figure since the all-out invasion. However, even in February, when Ukraine was in dire straits, seventy percent believed in it, while sixteen percent did not. The overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (82%) think the country is going in the right direction, while only seven percent that it is going in the wrong direction. Two-thirds believe that the next year will be better than the current one, while sixteen percent believe that it will be worse. While almost half of Ukrainians (48%) see no change in freedom of speech and democracy over the year, a third (34%) believe there have been improvements and 12% that the situation has worsened. Ukrainians see the worsening of the situation with consumer prices, particularly on medicines (90%), employment (72%), and the quality of education (55%).

Overall, the poll shows the high morale of the society backed by the successes of the defense forces. It's important that Ukrainians don't feel the freedom of speech and democracy suffering. Aside from the Russian propaganda, that talks about repressions against the opposition (Russian collaborators and enablers), media (pro-Russian propagandists), there's centralized media coverage and martial law prohibiting mass actions. Though there's some criticism of the current government in non-government-leaning TV channels and on social media, the level of criticism is moderate and is not about abuse of power.

The dissatisfaction with the prices and difficulties with employment is a natural consequence of the war. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, Ukraine's GDP shrank by 30.8% in the third quarter of the year yet increased compared to the second quarter. The quality of education may have decreased due to several force majeure factors: while some male teachers are engaged in defense, a lot of female teachers are still in refuge abroad, and at the same time, missile strikes significantly affect electricity supply and communications, making remote learning difficult.

Germany has opened the country's first floating liquefied natural gas terminal in the northern port city of Wilhelmshaven. The terminal will cover about 6% of Germany's annual gas demand and constitutes some 10% of Germany's gas imports from Russia via the Nord Stream pipeline. Germany plans to have four more terminals operational by the end of next year. Currently, the

countries' gas storages are filled by 98.24%, and the projected level of consumption guarantees a deficit-free completion of the heating season. Though the prices (€100-135 per megawatt-hour) are higher than they used to be in previous years, they've stabilized after the summer hike (€340). Despite Russia's pre-February 24 energy blackmail and actual energy war against the European countries, Germany, one of the most addicted on Russian gas countries, and the rest of Europe managed to avoid the crisis and avert doomsday scenarios the Kremlin and its cringe propaganda had been threatening with. The warmer European households, the less probability of falling support for Ukraine.

Since the Ukrainian Military Intelligence launched the project "I want to stay alive," some 1.2 million people have reached its call center. Now, it's about a hundred calls a day. The project guides Russian soldiers on how to surrender and save their lives. Besides Russian soldiers from the frontlines, the mobilized Russians who were still on the Russian territory and members of their families called the center. The innovative video "How to Surrender Safely" (with the employment of UAV technology) has been watched 6.3 thousand times on YouTube and 99 thousand times on Facebook in just five days.

### **Russia, relevant news**

Kommersant writes about Russian entrepreneurs who work in the sphere of education. In the first month after the start of the Russian aggression, sales of online courses fell by an average of 30%. The demand started growing back by the fall, however, after the partial mobilization was announced, Edtech companies recorded a new drop in sales and a decrease in traffic by 10-30%. According to experts, in 2022 the market may show a drop of 10-15%.

On December 16, Vladimir Putin worked all day at the joint headquarters of the armed forces involved in the "military operation" in Ukraine, the Kremlin said in a statement. He listened to the commanders' proposals for immediate and medium-term actions.

The Russian Investigative Committee did not find corpus delicti in the words of the director of broadcasting in Russian of the state channel RT Anton Krasovsky who called for the murder of Ukrainian children. On October 20, on the air of his program on RT, Krasovsky suggested killing Russian-speaking Ukrainian children if they believe that Ukraine is occupied by Russia. "Here, drowning these children, drowning them," the journalist said, "is our method ... you immediately throw them straight into the river with a violent, turbulent current."

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