

Humanitarian aspect:

Energy system: On Sunday, December 18, electricity was restored to another three million Ukrainians. In total, after the last Russian missile attack, electricity was restored to nine million residents of our country, said president Zelensky in his evening video address. NEC "Ukrenergo" informed that the process of restoring the power system is ongoing. Nuclear generation continues to operate with limitations. Energoatom reported that as of 1:00 p.m., all nine nuclear power units located on the territory controlled by Ukraine are operating. "However, the total capacity of the two units is limited by more than 600 MW due to the unpreparedness of the power system to accept the entire possible amount of electricity from them, as the energy infrastructure facilities have not yet been restored after the shelling on December 16," the message reads. The chairman of the board of Ukrenergo, Volodymyr Kudrytsky, warned of possible significant power shortages due to the low temperatures this Sunday and Monday. In Kyiv, the heat supply was completely restored after the December 16 shelling.

Consequences of enemy shelling as of the morning of December 18

- On December 17, the Russian forces carried out artillery strikes on the border regions of **Kharkiv Oblast**. No victims were reported. A 32-year-old employee of the State Emergency Service was blown up by a mine in the Chuguyiv district; he was hospitalized in a serious condition. The head of the Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration (OMA), Oleh Syniegubov, reported on the shelling of the Kupyansk district on December 18. As a result of the attack, the hospital building was damaged, and a 31-year-old paramedic was injured.
- On December 17, the Russian forces shelled the territory of the **Kherson Oblast** 54 times. 3 killed and 6 wounded civilians were reported. The shelling damaged a medical facility, private homes and multi-apartment residential buildings in Kherson. In the afternoon of December 18, the occupiers hit the center of Kherson again. Two killed and four injured residents were reported.
- The enemy shelled civil infrastructure in the Polohy, Zaporizhzhia and Vasylivka districts of **Zaporizhzhia Oblast**.
- At night, the occupiers shelled three territorial communities of **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast**. A 59-year-old man was injured in Nikopol. Several private houses, farm buildings and a gymnasium were damaged.

Occupied territories:

In the temporarily occupied **Melitopol**, the [Russian] occupiers use children as human shields and place equipment on the school territory, reported the Melitopol mayor, Ivan Fedorov. According to him, in Melitopol, the equipment of the invaders is located on the territory of at least five educational institutions. In the Vasylivka district, they have placed personnel in some school buildings. At the same time, the educational process continues, and children go to these schools.

Ivan Fedorov also reported that since December 15, the Russian military had not released a single person towards the territory of the Zaporizhzhia region controlled by Ukraine. He notes that only 174 people were released from the Russian-controlled territory of the annexed parts of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast over the past week. Furthermore, he noted that filtration has increased on alternative routes for the evacuation of the civilian population. "Instances have become more frequent when Russians turn Ukrainians' cars right at the border," writes Fedorov. Also, according to him, barriers appeared in Melitopol, which may indicate that the Russian army is preparing for street battles for the city.

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 17) developments)

It is the 298th 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 is trying to improve its tactical position in the Lyman area and is concentrating its efforts on conducting offensive actions in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka areas. Over the past day, the units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled the enemy attacks in the areas of more than fifteen towns and villages. Among them are Stelmakhivka and Serebryansk forestry in Luhansk Oblast and Verkhnyokamyanske, Vyimka, Veselie, Bakhmut, Klishchiivka, Optyne, Pervomaiske, Nevelske and Krasnohorivka in Donetsk Oblast. Over the past 24 hours, the enemy fired 5 missile attacks and 42 MLRS rounds. The areas of Seredyna-Buda and Vovkivka of Sumy Oblast and Strilecha, Hlyboke, Starytsia, Vovchansk, Volokhivka, Chugunivka, Novomlynck and Dvorichna of Kharkiv Oblast were shelled. Ukrainian air defense intercepted two Russian Onyx cruise missiles heading towards Odesa Oblast. The threat of enemy air and missile strikes persists throughout Ukraine.

Over the past 24 hours, Ukrainian missile and artillery units have hit 8 enemy personnel concentration areas, 2 command and control points, and 4 ammunition depots.

On December 17, Putin worked during the day at the Joint Headquarters of the Russian Armed Forces, listened to reports on the progress of the "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine, and held a meeting at the Joint Headquarters and a separate meeting with commanders. The Kremlin is trying to rehabilitate the image of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation in order to balance the growing influence of pro-war ultra-nationalist figures, primarily the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov and the "financier" of the Wagner group Yevheniy Prigozhin and their paramilitary structures.

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 SMRBrs of the 2nd CA Army, 35th, 55th and 74th SMRBrs 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 SMRBrs of the 2nd AC, PMCs.

The areas of Berestove, Yagidne, Kotlyarivka, and Krokhmalne of Kharkiv Oblast and Novoselivske, Makiivka, Ploshanka, Chervonopopivka, and Stelmakhivka in Luhansk Oblast suffered fire damage.

The Ukrainian Defense Forces led an offensive in the direction of Sofiyivka, advanced near Svatove, and stormed Russian positions near Terny, Nevske, and Holykove. They tried to push back Russian forces beyond the Krasna River, repelled Russian assaults near Ploshanka, Chervonopopivka, and Dibrova, struck Russian rears in Lantrativka, Schastia and Kadiyivka.

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 regiments 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.

More than fifteen towns and villages were shelled, including Verkhnyokamianske, Spirne, Bilohorivka, Soledar, Bakhmutiske, Bakhmut, Chasiv Yar, Opytne, Maryinka and Novomykhailivka in Donetsk Oblast.

The Ukrainian Joint Forces repelled the offensive of Russian troops on Bakhmut, Zelenopillya, Opytne and Andriivka. In the Opytne area, units of the PMC "Wagner" are reinforced by units of the marines transferred from the Vuhledar area.

The enemy attacked in the vicinity of Maryinka, Pobeda, Novomykhailivka, and Vodyane, Pervomaiske and Nevelske; fighting continued in the center of Maryinka. Units of the National Guards of Ukraine successfully repelled the Russian attack near Velyka Novoselivka.

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 SMRBrs, 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 military did not conduct active operations. They shelled twenty-four towns and villages with tanks, mortars, barrel and rocket artillery, particularly Biloghirya, Novodanilivka, Orihiv, Stepove, and Plavni. The enemy deployed UAVs in the area of Shevchenkove to clarify the position of Ukrainian troops. The Ukrainian Defense Forces fire impact at several areas of the enemy's manpower and military equipment concentration and two ammunition depots in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast on December 16 was confirmed. Enemy personnel losses amounted to more than 150 wounded servicemen and 10 pieces of destroyed military equipment. The command of the occupying forces plans to introduce a 24-hour curfew in populated areas of the temporarily occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia Oblast. The restrictions will be introduced in Chernihivka starting December 25 and in Berdyansk starting December 30, 2022, and last until January 3, 2023.

Tavria 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 enemy shelled with tanks, mortars, barrel and rocket artillery at twenty-four towns and villages, including Kozatske, Tyaginka, Mykilske, Kherson, and Dniprovske.

Unspecified Russian units have retreated from Kakhovka and Nova Kakhovka to Nyzhni Sirogozy. Russian forces have informed local residents that they will completely withdraw from the Kakhovka area by the new year.

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:

- *to project force on the coast and the continental part of Ukraine by 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 readiness for the naval amphibious landing to assist ground forces in the coastal direction

- to control the northwestern part of the Black Sea by blocking Ukrainian ports and preventing the restoration of sea communications 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 enemy keeps only 8 surface ships at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There are no Kalibr cruise missile carriers in the sea.

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

Enemy aviation continues to fly from Crimean airfields Belbek and Gvardiyske over the northwestern part of the Black Sea. Over the past day, 10 combat aircraft from Belbek and Saki airfields were deployed.

On December 17, a sea mine of the "MYAM" type was discovered on the coast of the Black Sea in Mykolaiv Oblast. Sappers of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine destroyed the mine.

On December 17, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine announced that Russia is strengthening the protection of captured facilities of water supply to the annexed Crimea in the occupied part of the Kherson Oblast. In addition, Russia continues strengthening the defense line on the administrative border of Kherson Oblast and Crimea.

Crimean Telegram channels reported that trenches are being dug in Crimea, and concrete pyramids are being built as anti-tank barriers.

"Grain initiative": The export of food from the ports of Odesa Oblast through the "grain corridor" decreased by more than 20%, reported the Administration of Sea Ports of Ukraine.

According to the ASPU, it was caused by several factors. In particular, Russia's blocking of the work of the Joint Coordination Center in the field of the number of ships entering and leaving the ports of the Odesa region.

Exports were also affected by weather conditions: rain and fog temporarily made it impossible to load ships. On December 5 and 6, a storm warning was issued, and the caravan of ships did not move.

On December 11, due to a missile attack on Odesa Oblast's energy infrastructure facilities, the Odesa and Pivdenny ports were completely de-energized, while the Chornomorsk port was partially operational. Considering these reasons, ASPU noted that from November 28 to December 4, 27 ships left the ports of Odesa, and last week - only 18.

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 18.12.22

Personnel - almost 98,280 people (+590);
Tanks - 2,987 (+2)
Armored combat vehicles – 5,963 (+5);
Artillery systems – 1,948 (+1);
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 410 (0);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 211 (0);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,579 (+2);
Aircraft - 281 (0);
Helicopters – 264 (0);
UAV operational and tactical level – 1,649 (+1);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);
Boats/ships - 16 (0).

International diplomatic aspect

The National Council of Austria adopted a resolution calling the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine a "terrible crime" of the Stalinist regime. The Parliament calls on the federal government to "continue to advocate, within the framework of the tried and tested Austrian way of dialogue, that hunger and scarcity of food are not used as weapons against the civilian population or as a means of pressure on governments, and to emphasize the parallels between history and the present and to condemn the corresponding crimes."

However, the [pro-Russian] right-wing populist Freedom Party of Austria and the Social Democratic Party rejected the proposal to recognize it as genocide. Meanwhile, Karin Kneissl, a former foreign minister installed by the Freedom Party, posted a photo from Moscow saying "Moscow + Snow = Beauty" under the twit of Dmytro Shulga, European program director at International Renaissance Foundation, with the picture of lonely lights in a partially destroyed multistorey apartment building in Kharkiv with "Ukraine + Bravery = Victory" caption. Karin Kneissl is infamous for dancing with Vladimir Putin at her wedding and serving on the Board of Directors of Russia's state gas company "Rosneft."

Dmitry Syty, Director of the Russian House cultural center in the Central African Republic (CAR), was seriously injured in an assassination attempt. Yevgeny Primakov, Chair of Rossotrudnichestvo, called the incident a terrorist attack and said that the life of the Director of the Russia House was in danger. "Rossotrudnichestvo" is an autonomous Russian federal government agency designed to project Russian soft power and cover intelligence operations across the globe. It has offices in 69 countries, including the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and others.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a founder and owner of the so-called Wagner PMC, accused France of an attempt to assassinate the Director of the Russian House cultural center. "I have already called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation so that it initiates the procedure for declaring France a state sponsor of terrorism, as well as conducting a thorough investigation of

the terrorist methods of France and its Western allies, the United States and others," Putin's mercenary-in-chief said. Wagner's mercenaries have been active in CAR for quite some time. Dmitry Syty is one of the founders of "Lobaye Invest" company that engaged in diamonds extraction, a bloody business Yevgeny Prigozhin is heavily involved in, according to the Dossier Centre, an independent Russian organization. Three independent Russian journalists were killed in CAR in 2018 while investigating the illegal activities of the Wagner mercenaries.

Russia will "enrich" Serbia with its culture through Wagner's opening of its office in the Russian-Serbian Cultural and Information Centre of Friendship and Cooperation in the Serbian capital. Damnjan Knežević, one of the leaders of the right-wing organization People's Patrol from Serbia, himself visited Wagner Centre in Russia at the end of November. After returning home, he warned the supporters to be "ready to go to Jarinje and try to free that passage." Jarinje is a village in northern Kosovo and has a border crossing with Serbia.

The tensions between Serbia and the breakaway province have been gradually rising this year. In a protest to the introduction of license plates, ethnic Serbs of northern Kosovo blocked roads. There were reports of the shooting. In September, the leader of the Serbian Right, Misa Vacic, called to begin the "denazification of the Balkans," a language Vladimir Putin used to justify his brutal invasion of Ukraine. The EU-mediated deal calmed down the situation a bit, but after the arrest of a former Serb police officer on December 10, the unrest has resumed. It was reported that the local police exchanged fire with unknown groups. So, it's likely that Wagner mercenaries might take part in a possible conflict. It will serve both – ideological aims (far-right and Pan-Slavic) and a destabilization of the situation in the Balkans that would negatively impact the EU and NATO.

It is worth mentioning that Yevgeny Primakov of the "Rossotrudnichestvo" is the son of a former Russian Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Director of Foreign Intelligence of Russia, and Head of Intelligence directorate of the KGB. The Primakov Doctrine, unofficially named after Primakov senior, has been defining Russia's foreign and security policy for two decades. There're five pillars of the Doctrine where Russia: see itself as an indispensable (great) power in world politics; carries out a vision of a multipolar world (end of the US hegemony); dominates over the former Soviet republics in Eurasia; opposes NATO expansion; partners with China (counterbalance the US).

The doctrine was outlined after the NATO campaign against Serbia in 1999. It was a psychological trauma Russia is trying to recover from, including by invading Ukraine. It was a turning point for degrading Russia's nuclear posture checks. Russia's political and military elites were worrying that its brutal Chechen war could have been used as a justification for the "Responsibility to Protect" humanitarian operation, and Russia wasn't able to cope with that by conventional means. A decade and a half later, the Kremlin tried to portray its illegal annexation as a will of people under the threat of genocide from the "Kiev regime," as they call the democratically elected Ukrainian government, referring to the recognition of the independence of Kosovo by the West.

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