

Humanitarian aspect:

Emergency power cuts are applied in 11 regions of Ukraine, and the situation in the power system remains difficult, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said in the Cabinet meeting. He stressed that most of the drones Russia had sent to Ukraine the previous day were shot down. Unfortunately, the high-voltage network was still hit. As of Tuesday morning, 8 units of nuclear plants and 10 thermal plants are operating in the power system. Shmyhal warned that Russia may again attack Ukraine's energy facilities in the near future so that Ukrainians start the year 2023 in the dark.

After the Monday attack, the situation with electricity in **Kyiv** remains difficult. Only 50% of the city's electricity needs are met. Its critical infrastructure, though, is steadily powered, and the city is mostly supplied with water and heat. For now, dispatchers are trying to ensure all districts have power, at least for a short time. Still, a number of homes have been without power since Monday morning, Serhiy Kovalenko, CEO of the electricity supplier Yasno, said.

Oleksiy Kuleba, the head of the **Kyiv Oblast** Military Administration (OMA), emphasized that the complexity and duration of repair work increase with each enemy shelling. He said that 80% of the Oblast residents are currently without electricity. The most difficult situation is in the Bucha, Vyshgorod, Obukhiv and partially Fastiv districts, more than 30 communities are affected.

Around two a.m. on December 20, the Russian military launched rocket attacks on the Izyum district of **Kharkiv Oblast**, setting fire to an oil refinery. As of 1 p.m., the fire was liquidated; however underground reserves were still on fire, Serhii Melnyk, head of the Kharkiv Garrison of the State Emergency Service, said.

Russian shelling of residential areas in Ukraine continues. Over the past day, **nine regions of Ukraine were shelled with various types of weapons**, namely Sumy, Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Mykolayiv, and Kherson Oblasts. Over the past day, on December 19, the Russian army killed five civilians in Ukraine and wounded another eight.

On December 19, the Russian forces killed 3 civilians in **Donetsk Oblast**, 2 in Bakhmut, and 1 in Zalizne. Another 5 people in the region were injured, the Head of Donetsk Oblast Military Administration, Pavlo Kyrylenko said. Thus, as of December 20, **the Russian invaders killed at least 1,271 and wounded at least 2,762 civilians in Donetsk Oblast**. The number is not final, however, since it's not possible to count the number of victims in Mariupol and Volnovakha.

According to the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, 200,000 residents, including many children, remain in **Donetsk Oblast**, including Bakhmut. Iryna Vereshchuk urged residents of the Oblast, specifically Bakhmut, to leave the area of active hostilities.

In the past day, the Russian forces 42 times opened fire in **Kherson Oblast**. In the city of Kherson, they hit a critical infrastructure object, 2 people died and 3 were injured under the shelling, the head of the Kherson OMA, Yaroslav Yanushevich, said.

In **Odesa**, according to the representative of the Odesa OMA, Serhiy Bratchuk, electric public transportation started running on December 20 after a long break due to the electricity shortage caused by the Russian attacks.

Occupied territories:

According to the National Resistance Center of the Ukrainian MOD, The Russian occupying authorities form so-called "youth movements" in the occupied territories of Ukraine and recruit teenagers to the "Yunarmiya (youth army)" militaristic organization analogous to the German Hitler Jugend. Among the movements that inculcate Ukrainian children is the National Resistance Center named "Young South" (the movement consists of youth brought to the temporarily occupied territory, which imitates local support for the occupation), "Movement of the First" (it is similar to the Soviet Komsomol and bears marks of a totalitarian cult).

In order to form an occupation government in the town of Bilovodsk (Luhansk Oblast), the Russian occupying forces brought 15 officials from Novosibirsk, Russia, because they could not find a sufficient number of those willing to collaborate with them, the National Resistance Center of the Ukrainian MOD reports. Now, these people have to imitate "people's power" and glorify the occupation on behalf of the community and set up a repressive machine in the town.

In a further attempt to integrate the recently annexed Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation, the so-called senators representing the occupied parts of Ukraine were appointed. Konstantin Basyuk and Dmitriy Voronov became illegitimate representatives of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya Oblasts in the Russian Federation Council, respectively. Alexandr Ananchenko was appointed to represent Donetsk Oblast, and Olga Bas was appointed to represent Luhansk Oblast. They should be considered as possible additions to the western sanctions lists.

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 19) developments)

It is the 300th 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 Russian military concentrates its efforts on offensive actions in the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions. It tried to restore the lost position in the Lyman area and is defending in other directions.

Over the past day, units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces have repelled Russian attacks in the areas of Stelmakhivka, Chervonopopivka and Serebryanske in Luhansk Oblast and Verkhokamyanske, Pidhorodne, Bakhmut, Opytne, Kurdyumivka, Krasnohorivka and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

During the past 24 hours, the Russian forces have launched 4 missile strikes and 60 air strikes and fired over 80 MRLS rounds. Civilian infrastructure and the civilian population were affected as a result of these strikes. Tymonovychi, Karpovychi and Kostobobriv villages of Chernihiv Oblast and Novovasylivka, Kindrativka, Vodolahi, Zapsillia and Yzdetske in Sumy Oblast were hit by mortar fire. In addition, the Russian military carried out mortar and artillery attacks on Ukrainian troops' positions in Strilecha, Hlyboke, Starytsia, Vovchansk, Volokhivka, Chuhunivka and Dvorichna in Kharkiv Oblast.

The threat of Russian air and missile strikes on critical infrastructure facilities persists throughout the territory of Ukraine.

During the past day, Ukrainian aviation made 16 strikes on areas of Russian personnel, weapons and military equipment concentration and 6 strikes on the positions of the Russian anti-aircraft missile systems.

Two Russian helicopters were shot down by air defense forces the day before. Units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces missile and artillery troops hit one enemy ammunition depot, 3 command posts, and 3 areas of Russian personnel concentration.

Last night, the Russian forces dealt the biggest blow of the entire war, using only Iranian-made Shahed-131/136 UAVs. At least 33-35 UAVs were launched, all from the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov; one flew directly over the South Ukrainian NPP. 30 were shot down by manned fighter planes and ground-based air defense. 5 UAVs that escaped the Ukrainian anti-aircraft defense system hit infrastructure facilities in Kyiv Oblast.

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 Russian military fired tanks, mortars, barrel and jet artillery on the areas of Kotlyarivka, Krokhmalne, Berestove of Kharkiv Oblast and Novoselivske, Stelmakhivka, Makiivka, Ploshanka, Chervonopopivka and Dibrova of Luhansk Oblast.

The Ukrainian defense forces complete securing the perimeter at Pershotravneve, Sofiivka and Vilshanka. They have repelled a Russian attack on their positions in the Chervonopopivka area, and pushed back the units of the 30th separate motorized rifle brigade of the Russian Armed Forces and the 20th BARS detachment to Holykove.

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 continues to conduct assaults. It fired from tanks, mortars and rocket artillery at Ukrainian positions in the areas of thirty towns and villages, in particular Verkhokamyanske, Berestove, Yakovlivka, Soledar, Hryhorivka, Bakhmut, Chasiv Yar, Klishchiivka, Andriivka, Kurdyumivka, Avdiyivka, Krasnohorivka, Maryinka, and Novomykhailivka of Donetsk Oblast.

The Russian forces managed to capture the southern part of Yakovlivka. The garrison of the Ukrainian 10th separate mountain assault brigade continues its defense in the northern part of the village. The defense of the Joint Forces in this area was reinforced by units of the 109th territorial defense brigade and 128th separate mountain assault brigade.

The enemy unsuccessfully stormed Pidgorodne. East of Bakhmut, the 71st separate mountain assault brigade pushed back units of the "Wagner" PMC further east along Maksimenko Street towards the Industrial zone; other Russian units retreated from the garbage dump.

Units of the Joint Forces knocked the Russian military out of Opytne. Regardless of this, the "Wagner" PMC tried to advance west from Zelenopillya, Kurdyumivka and Ozaryanivka. However, considering that the defense is being conducted by the units of the 52nd separate mechanized brigade and 62nd separate mechanized brigade, a breakthrough is practically impossible.

Most of the Joint Force's available M142 HIMARS and M270 MLRS, located somewhere in the Bakhmut area, hit four Russian ammunition depots, several troop concentration areas, and two checkpoints.

Russian units unsuccessfully attacked Vodiane, Pervomaiske and Nevelske.

To the south of Maryinka, the Russian military attacked in the direction of Pobyeda, but units of the 79th separate airborne assault brigade repulsed the enemy.

The situation is similar in Novomykhalivka and Vuhledar districts.

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 continue shelling the positions of Ukrainian troops and civilian infrastructure along the right bank of the Dnipro River with artillery. The areas of Temyrivka, Chervone, Mali Shcherbaky and Plavni villages of Zaporizhzhya Oblast were affected.

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 shelling the positions of Ukrainian troops and civilian infrastructure along the right bank of the Dnipro River with artillery. The areas around Chornobayivka, Antonivka, Kherson, Mykilske, Tokarivka and Mylove in Kherson Oblast were affected.

The Russian forces continue to suffer losses. It was confirmed that a Russian permanent deployment point in the Chaplynka area was hit on December 18.

Azov-Black Sea Maritime Operational Area:

Russia's main efforts focus on maintaining a favorable operational regime and blocking civilian shipping in the northwestern part of the Black Sea. There were 8 Russian ships on combat duty along the southwestern coast of Crimea; no cruise missile carriers were among them.

Note: Due to the power outage in Kyiv Oblast, only a short update is available today. A more detailed update on the situation at sea will be provided in future digests.

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 19.12.22

Personnel - almost 99,230 people (+430);
Tanks -2,995 (+7)
Armored combat vehicles – 5,974 (+5);
Artillery systems – 1,960 (+7);
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 410 (0);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 212 (0);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,599 (+7);
Aircraft - 281 (0);
Helicopters – 266 (+2);
UAV operational and tactical level – 1,680 (+23);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);
Boats/ships - 16 (0).

Ukraine, general news

President Zelensky made an unannounced working trip to Donetsk Oblast, where he met with Ukrainian military personnel who defend the city of Bakhmut, the President's press secretary, Serhiy Nikiforov, said. The President presented the servicemen of mechanized, motorized infantry, mountain assault, tank, artillery and airmobile units with state awards. The President visited the advanced positions of one of the mechanized brigades, the personnel of which fights the Russian troops on the approach to the city. Media and Russian Telegram channels contrast Zelensky's visit with the award ceremony Russian president Putin held in the Kremlin today where he presented awards to the "heads" of the annexed Ukrainian regions and his propagandists. Those comparing the two ceremonies stress President Zelensky's courage.

In 11 months of the year, the ports of the Danube region almost tripled the transshipment of cargo and increased the export of agricultural products by 42 times, reports the press service of the Administration of Sea Ports of Ukraine. According to the Department of Ports Organization, in 11 months of the current year, the ports of the Danube region (Izmail, Reni, Ust-Dunaisk) handled 14.5 million tons of cargo.

Russia occupies the seat of a permanent member of the UN Security Council without proper legal grounds due to a blatantly fraudulent scheme that occurred 31 years ago, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "Ukraine is now preparing for official steps that will prove Russia's illegal presence in the UN Security Council and launch a political process that should lead to its removal from this seat," Kuleba told an online briefing today.

The publication "The Economist" named Ukraine the country of the year in 2022 for the heroism of its people and resistance to the aggressor. According to the authors of the rating, four qualities of Ukrainians stand out: heroism, ingenuity, resilience and inspiration.

Ukraine calls on the world to immediately recognize the Russian PMC "Wagner" as a terrorist organization for its criminal activities in Ukraine and in West Africa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba said.

International diplomatic aspect

While President Volodymyr Zelensky visited the Ukrainian troops in Bakhmut (today's "Verdun"), and Vladimir Putin paid his visit to Minsk. The first Putin's voyage to Belarus in three and a half years (Lukashenko visited Russia seven times this year) was aimed at propping up the self-proclaimed Belarusian President and coordinating their joint war efforts against Ukraine. Lukashenko thanked him for receiving Iskander ballistic missile system and S-400 air defense system. Putin talked about creating a "unified defensive space" and hinted that some Belarusian military aircraft had been re-equipped so that they might carry nuclear missiles. For this move, Lukashenko held a shame referendum this February that removed the Constitution's non-nuclear provision.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea and other territories have been a massive blow to the rules-based order. It's not just a violation of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 on aggressive war and territorial integrity clauses. It's even more damaging to nuclear non-proliferation. Ukraine gave up its vast nuclear arsenal, and its security and territorial integrity greatly suffered. Being outside the nuclear umbrella of NATO or the US, Ukraine can't guarantee its security from major nuclear power. So, other nations in various corners of the globe are learning this lesson and might decide to develop their means of nuclear deterrence. Teheran and Pyongyang were reluctant to stop their nuclear programs before, but now it would make no sense for them to give it up. That's why there should be a firm Western response to Belarus' deployment or possession of nuclear arms delivery means. The Kremlin is testing the Western response. Despite recently mitigated nuclear rhetoric, there is still a risk it might deploy nuclear weapons if it considers the reaction weak. Besides public political and diplomatic response, there should be relevant military planning and messaging to Moscow that if it doesn't back down (take back those aircraft and allow verification), the US and their allies will deploy their own means to the CEE. Putin elaborated on the Americans "intentions" to deploy nuclear missiles to Europe many times. Status quo ante bellum is the only way to restore and secure rules-based order and non-proliferation; therefore, any ideas of compromising Crimea should be ruled out.

Alexander Lukashenko secured \$1.6 billion in economic assistance and assurances over cheap and stable gas prices in the coming year. Given the loss of the European market and the inability to physically redirect gas exports, Russia is happy to sell its gas for peanuts. After cutting off Germany, Finland, and other European customers at the beginning of this year, the Russian gas plant near the border with Finland was burning an estimated \$10m worth of gas daily. Though unlikely, there might be more burning gas after the EU introduced the price cap on gas that would take effect on February 15. The cap will be triggered if prices exceed €180 per megawatt hour for three days on the Dutch Title Transfer Facility gas hub's front-month contract. If the European authorities "want that there is no gas in Europe, it is transported to other markets, then they introduce ceiling restrictions," stated Russia's Vice-Prime-Minister Alexander Novak though, saying that he needs to study the whole package of documents that isn't in his possession yet.

It's highly likely that part of the cash Lukashenko secured from his senior partner will go to defense enterprises to produce, repair, and maintain weapons and equipment Russia plans to

employ against Ukraine. "The capacity of the Russian military, even reinforced by elements of the Belarusian armed forces, to prepare and conduct effective large-scale mechanized offensive operations in the next few months remains questionable," the Institute for the Study of War writes. However, there has been some movement of the Russian heavy armaments and troops closer to the Ukrainian border. The UAF are ready to repel a new invasion from Belarusian territory. And it's highly likely that all activities of Belarusian and Russian troops are aimed at distracting scarce Ukrainian resources from other directions of this war. It's not in the interest of Lukashenko to send his troops into the war. His weak legitimacy would be severely damaged with the first body bags returning from Ukraine. The Belarusians would not tolerate their country's further involvement because they're different from the Russians. He has been masterfully withstanding Putin's pressure, and it seems he succeeded this time as well.

"I am not optimistic about the possibility of effective peace talks in the immediate future," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. He believes that the military confrontation will go on, and a "moment in which serious negotiations for peace will be possible" isn't on the immediate horizon."

While the Ukrainian Jewish community was celebrating Hanukkah and the Christian community enjoyed Saint Nicholas Day, Russia made an Iranian-made drone strike causing a blackout in Kyiv. "These are "Shaheds" from the new party that Russia received from Iran. Two hundred and fifty pieces - that's how many "Shaheds" have now been received by the terrorist state," the Ukrainian President said. "We are disappointed that the Secretariat, apparently yielding to Russian threats, has not carried out the investigatory mandate this council has given it," US Deputy UN Ambassador Robert Wood said, criticizing the UN Secretary-General for not moving to "carry out a normal investigation of this reported violation [Iran's supply of drones to Russia]." "We encourage the Secretary-General to examine and report any evidence of transfers of items, materials, equipment, goods, and technology or related services inconsistent with UNSCR 2231," stated UK Permanent Representative Dame Barbara Woodward. The Iranian Ambassador demanded the "misinformation" campaign and "baseless" accusations leveled against his country to stop. He said that the Iranian government is in talks with the Ukrainian government over "existing misunderstandings" caused by the fact that Iran transferred a number of UAVs to Russia "before," not after the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Russia, relevant news

According to the Russian Ministry of Health, the number of rural residents addicted to alcohol increased by 7% this year. The number of mental disorders due to addiction also increased by 6%, and the incidence of alcoholism among women in villages increased by 7%. In addition, the Ministry of Health noted that the overall mortality from alcoholism in Russia has increased.

The Polish refinery Orlen will not renew the long-term contract for oil supply from Rosneft after it expires in 2023. It will continue to buy raw materials from Tatneft and is ready to stop once sanctions are imposed on such supplies, Edita Olkovich, the company's press secretary, told reporters. Thanks to the ongoing diversification of supplies, "70% of the oil in all refineries of the

Orlen Group in Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania comes from sources alternative to Russia, and in 2015 almost 100% was supplied to the Orlen refinery oil from Russia.

Germany does not plan to buy Russian oil in 2023, Bloomberg quotes the press service of the German Ministry of Economy.

LNG supplies from Russia to China increased by 39% from January to November of this year, the Chinese customs report.

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