

Humanitarian aspect:

Dmytro Lubinets, the human rights Ombudsman of the Ukrainian Parliament, said that although the exact number of Ukrainian children deported to Russia is unknown, the [preliminary] data indicate that **the number of forcibly deported children amounts to hundreds of thousands**. Lubinets stated that the Ukrainian authorities have currently verified more than **13,000 children** were deported to the Russian Federation. That is - knowing where these children were taken from, their location and status in the Russian Federation, and what is happening to them.

Consequences of enemy shelling:

During the past day, December 21, the Russian Federation troops shelled eight Oblasts of Ukraine; 1 civilian was killed, and another 14 were injured, according to the morning round-up of the Oblast Military Administrations (OMAs) of Ukraine.

- After midnight, the enemy dropped explosives from a quadcopter on the border communities of Krasnopilsk, **Sumy Oblast**.
- During the day, the Russians shelled the Kupyansk, Kharkiv, Chuhuyiv and Bogoduhiv districts of **Kharkiv Oblast**. In Kupyansk, as a result of enemy shelling, a fire broke out in the administrative building of a civilian enterprise.
- During the past day, law enforcement officers documented 49 consequences of enemy attacks on houses and civilian infrastructure in the Polohy and Vasylivka districts of **Zaporizhzhia Oblast**.
- The Russian military shelled the territory of the **Kherson Oblast** 60 times on December 21. 1 person was killed and 6 wounded. In Kherson, a shipbuilding plant, private homes and apartment buildings were shelled.
- The Russians shelled two communities of the Nikopol district of **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast** all night. An 8-year-old girl was injured in Marhanets. Up to twenty private houses and commercial buildings, several cars and four power lines were damaged. In the Chervonogryhorivka community, one house was destroyed, and twenty were damaged. Dozens of farm buildings and vehicles were broken, and six power lines were cut.
- The enemy attacked the port area and Ochakiv district of **Mykolayiv Oblast**. 3 people were wounded, one of whom is a 10-year-old boy. 16 residential buildings were damaged.
- The Russians shelled Pokrovsk in **Donetsk Oblast** on December 21. They hit the territory of the enterprise. 3 houses were damaged in Vuhledar. 1 person was injured in Bakhmut, 1 house was damaged. A school was damaged in Kostyantynivka. On December 22, the enemy shelled Chasiv Yar, Kramatorsk and Kurakhove, reported the head of Donetsk OMA Pavlo Kyrylenko. 1 person was killed and 2 were injured; houses were damaged in Chasiv Yar. In Kramatorsk, the Russians targeted the territory of the enterprise and the boarding school.

Energy system:

NCP Ukrenergo reported that the most challenging situation remains in the central region and Kyiv, as well as in the frontline regions in the east and south of the country. Repair work continues

around the clock, but the damage to generation facilities and main networks is complex and large-scale, and their restoration requires a significant amount of time.

In **Kyiv**, the situation with the energy supply remains difficult. Currently, emergency power outages are applied in the capital, the duration of which cannot be regulated.

The situation in the most affected communities of **Kyiv Oblast**, where there was no light for more than 48 hours, is gradually improving. Electricity is already being restored there, and additional measures are being taken to meet the regular outage schedule.

According to the calculations of energy experts, in case of a complete blackout, if everything is broken at all, the output will take from 7 to 10 days, said Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal in an interview with the Interfax-Ukraine agency. He noted that Ukraine has a sufficiently diversified generation system, at least six types - nuclear power, thermal coal, hydro generation, small hydroelectric power plants and small thermal power plants, the main task of which is the production of heat, but they can also produce electricity. In addition, there are renewable sources of energy: wind, sun, and other alternative sources. In the event of a blackout, they can work in "islands"; energy companies will take electricity from individual "islands" and begin to "knit" it into a single system.

Shmyhal said that because of missile attacks on the energy system, more than 50 substations of various voltage classes and more than 50 high-voltage power lines were damaged. Due to such damage, the energy companies take two days on average [after each shelling] to restore the network capacity. In particular, the power industry currently has two problems: a shortage of generating capacity and network capacity.

Occupied and liberated territories:

The Associated Press reports that at least 10,000 new graves have appeared in **Mariupol** since the start of the Russian invasion, most of them in the Stariy Krym cemetery.

36 more graves were discovered at the cemetery in the geologists' settlement in **Kherson** after liberation from the [Russian] invaders, the First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Yevgeny Yenin informed. He noted that earlier in Pravdyno village, the burial of several people with traces of torture and gunshot wounds was discovered. They were exhumed and sent for forensic examination. Work is currently underway to quickly collect DNA samples from relatives to identify the victims.

Yenin informed about the results of the exhumation of bodies in **Izyum**, Kharkiv region. Among more than 450 bodies removed from the burial sites, some died from gunshot wounds and explosive injuries. Signs of torture were found in at least 40 bodies. Law enforcement officers are investigating to identify the bodies, establish the circumstances of their death and identify those responsible for these war crimes.

The regional authorities are urging residents of the Ostriv neighborhood of **Kherson** to evacuate, as it is a zone of increased danger. Yaroslav Yanushevich, head of the Kherson regional military administration, wrote on his Telegram that this neighborhood is a high-danger zone due to enemy strikes. Kherson OMA helps everyone who wants to leave.

The towns and villages of **Mykolaiv Oblast**, liberated by the Ukrainian Defense Forces, are gradually being restored. Humanitarian aid is being delivered, banks, pharmacies, and shops have started working, reported the Deputy Head of the Office of the President Kyrylo Tymoshenko after his working trip to Mykolaiv Oblast. In recent weeks, more than 50,000 residents have returned to Mykolaiv.

POWs:

Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Dmytro Lubinets stated that the Russians take Ukrainian prisoners out of the places of detention allegedly for exchange and then return them to the colonies and say that Ukraine refuses to exchange them. "We consider it a form of torture. We emphasize that Ukraine has not refused a single person offered by the Russian side for exchange," the official writes. In addition, Lubinets informed that Ukraine constantly raises issues regarding the treatment of Ukrainian POWs at the international level. "Thanks to this pressure, detention conditions have recently improved. Those who returned from captivity testify to this. The coordination headquarters is working to return every Ukrainian home".

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 21) developments)

It is the 302nd 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").

During the past day, the enemy launched 6 missile strikes and 15 air strikes, including on civilian objects in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and carried out 64 MLRS rounds. Over the past day, Ukrainian Forces repelled Russian attacks in the areas of Novoselivske, Stelmakhivka, Ploshanka and Chervonopopivka in Luhansk Oblast and Berestove, Yakovlivka, Soledar, Bakhmut, Opytne, Kurdyumivka, Ozaryanivka, Mayorsk, New York, Krasnohorivka, Nevelske and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

The enemy shelled the Zarutske area in Sumy Oblast with rocket launchers and shelled with tank and artillery the areas of Chervona Zorya, Kozacha Lopan, Vesele, Varvarivka, Starytsia, Vovchansk, Vilcha, Chernyakiv, Chugunivka and Ambarne of Kharkiv Oblast.

During the past 24 hours, the Air Force of the Defense Forces carried out 14 strikes on the areas of concentration of enemy personnel, weapons and military equipment. Ukrainian defenders shot down the enemy UAV "Forpost" and two UAVs "Lancet-3".

Ukrainian rocket and artillery troops hit three enemy command and control points and two areas of the enemy's manpower concentration.

The local authorities of Belgorod Oblast (Russia) announced the recruitment of volunteers with a monetary reward for the construction of trenches and the installation of concrete cones in order to build fortifications in the Belgorod region.

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 enemy shelled Novomlynsk, Kupyansk, Kyslivka, Kotlyarivka, Krokhmalne and Berestove in Kharkiv Oblast and Novoselivske, Stelmakhivka, Makiivka, Ploshanka, Nevske, Chervonpopivka and Dibrova in Luhansk Oblast.

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.*

The enemy fired from tanks and the entire spectrum of artillery in the areas of Verkhokamianske, Spirne, Bilohorivka, Yakovlivka, Soledar, Bakhmutske, Pidgorodne, Bakhmut, Opytne, Klishchiivka, Andriivka, Oleksandro-Shultine, Kurdyumivka, Diliivka, Ozaryanivka, Druzhba, Severny, Mayorsk, Zalizne and New York of Donetsk Oblast.

In the Avdiivka direction region, the enemy shelled Krasnohorivka, Vesele, Vodyane, Pervomaiske, Nevelske, Maryinka and Novomykhailivka of Donetsk Oblast.

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 enemy fired tanks and artillery at the areas of Vuhledar, Prechystivka, Novoukrainka and Velyka Novosilka of Donetsk Oblast.

The Russian troops are intensively setting up several lines along the Vasylivka - Tokmak - Chernihivka frontier at once. They consist of a system of separate tactical defensive position areas. The Russian military is strengthening its grouping in the Melitopol and Berdyansk areas by deploying additional forces and means and creating tactical and operational reserves. They continue the replacement and rotation of military units with reduced combat capability. During the last two days, there was a rotation of units from the 42nd motorized rifle division and 136th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 58th Army, several units of the 121st rifle regiment and 1152nd motorized rifle regiment of the Territorial Troops. 9k58 "Smerch" and 2c3 "Akatsiya" anti-aircraft missile units are being moved to the Melitopol area, and 152mm 2a65 "Msta-B" guns are being moved to the Vasylivka area. The combat capability of the 291st artillery brigade is being restored.

Russian military started to withdraw all units of the Russian Guard from the operational zone to the territory of the Russian Federation and replace them with army units.

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.*

Chervonogryhorivka of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and the city of Kherson were shelled by rocket and barrel artillery.

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 has 12 surface ships at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There are no Kalibr cruise missile carriers at 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, 17 combat aircraft from Belbek and Saki airfields were deployed.

On the night of December 22, Ukrainian air defense shot down over Mykolaiv Oblast the Kh-59MK2 guided air missile launched by enemy Su-35 aircraft from the Black Sea. This [missile](#) is designed to destroy military targets on land, including coastal missile batteries.

The enemy continues shelling the ports of Kherson and Ochakiv, using artillery and MLRS for this purpose.

The enemy tried to take control of the islands in the Dnipro river delta but to no avail. Units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine pushed out the enemy.

The military of the Russian Federation in occupied Crimea continues training operators of Iranian-made Mojaher-6 drones. The [drone](#) can be used for both reconnaissance and strike missions, carrying four explosive charges. It is likely that later they will be used together with the Geran-2 UAVs on the territory of Ukraine.

"Grain initiative": Ukraine has already exported 14.6 million tons of agricultural products through the "grain corridor". As reported, within the framework of the "grain initiative", 5 ships with 221,000 tons of agricultural products for Africa and Asia left the ports of Great Odesa in two days. Among them is the bulk carrier SEA BRIDLE, with 25,000 tons of agricultural products for Libya. Since the start of the grain corridor, the ports have sent 12 ships with 305,000 tons of Ukrainian grain to this African country.

Currently, 29 ships are being processed in the ports of Great Odesa. More than 1 million tons of Ukrainian agricultural products are loaded onto them. Two ships are moving along the "grain corridor" to load 89,000 tons of agricultural products.

In the Bosphorus, 92 vessels are waiting for their turn to be inspected by the JCC. Yesterday, 7 ships received approval for further movement after inspection. However, for uninterrupted movement along the grain corridor, at least 12 inspections per day must take place, the Ministry of Infrastructure said.

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 22.12.22

Personnel - almost 100,400 people (+660);

Tanks -3,003 (+1)

Armored combat vehicles – 5,981 (+2);

Artillery systems – 1,978 (+6);

Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 413 (+1);

Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 212 (0);

Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,615 (+7);

Aircraft - 283 (+1);

Helicopters – 267 (0);

UAV operational and tactical level – 1,693 (+5);

Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);

Boats/ships - 16 (0).

Ukraine, general news

Pessimistic macro-forecasts that predicted a drop in the Ukrainian economy by 45% or more, related to terrorist attacks by Russians on the energy infrastructure, did not come true, said Prime Minister Denys Shmygal in an interview with Interfax-Ukraine. According to him, as a result of 9 months, the GDP decreased by 30%. He said a possible fall in GDP in 2022 is up to 35%, but not more.

The shelling of energy infrastructure will not significantly impact consumer price dynamics. Still, the shift of business to generators could cause inflation to increase by 1-2 percentage points in 2023, said Yuliya Svyridenko, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Ukraine, during the briefing. "When our energy infrastructure collapses, the cost of production also increases due to the shift from centralized sources of supply to generators. The resilience of people and businesses at the micro level and the government's rapid response to solve problems create reasons to hope that the change in Russia's aggression towards energy infrastructure will not have a decisive impact on the dynamics of consumer market prices. However, we predict that this transition of the business to diesel and generators may cause an increase in inflation by 1-2 percentage points in 2023".

International diplomatic aspect

The Ukrainian President delivered a powerful speech at the joint session of the US Congress. Here it is the five takes.

Firstly, Volodymyr Zelensky stated that "Ukraine did not fall. Ukraine is alive and kicking." It wasn't evident for many politicians, military brass, and experts before and right after the start of the all-out invasion. Ukraine's success so far has been possible because of the will of Ukrainians to defend their freedom, military leadership to outmaneuver the overwhelming force, and political one to secure national unity and international partners' support. The role of the US was and still is paramount.

Secondly, Ukraine "defeated Russia in the battle for minds of the world." It's essential that the international community sides with Ukraine more decisively than eight years ago. And even more importantly, Ukraine showed that Russia could be beaten despite the previous unwillingness of many to test such a possibility. It's rather fear than calculus has been on the way to stopping Russia's aggressive policies before it was too late.

Thirdly, Ukraine's President asked for further defense assistance. "Ukraine never asked the American soldiers to fight on our land instead of us. I assure you that Ukrainian soldiers can perfectly operate American tanks and planes themselves." The security assistance is crucial for saving civilian and military lives, checking Russia from further land grabs, and accumulating resources for counteroffensive operations to restore Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

Fourthly, Volodymyr Zelensky appealed to the American public and those who doubted the necessity of the assistance. "Your money is not charity. It's an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way," he said. Timothy Ash, an Associate Fellow at Chatham House, argues that the cost-benefit analysis of US support for Ukraine is producing wins at almost every level. With the assistance representing 5.6% of total US defense spending, Ukraine has eroded a threat value of \$100-150 billion, which is a two-to-three-time return. It's quite a challenge for Russia, the US top tier rival, to regenerate its forces, given sanctions and export control restrictions and the dire straits of the Russian economy. "In cold, geopolitical terms, this war provides a prime opportunity for the US to erode and degrade Russia's conventional defense capability, with no boots on the ground and little risk to US lives," he writes.

Finally, the President defined victory as the only outcome Ukraine accepts. "Ukraine holds its lines and will never surrender! Millions of Ukrainians wish the same – victory. Only victory." It's not a maximalist goal, given the genocidal nature of the war and no sign of compromise Russia is willing to make. The Kremlin repeats its goals incompatible with the existence of an independent Ukrainian state within its internationally recognized borders and Ukrainian nation, utterly separate from Russia. So, the will to keep calm and carry on is crucial for this fight.

"So far, we can state with regret the fact that neither Biden nor Zelensky has spoken any words that can be perceived as a potential willingness to listen to Russia's concerns," the Kremlin's

spokesperson said, adding that "there were no real calls for peace." Dmitriy Peskov ignored Volodymyr Zelensky's calls for peace and his "just peace" plan. It's hardly comprehensible what "concerns" Moscow has on the territory of a sovereign state, given Russia's illegal annexations, war crimes, and stated goals of subjugating the whole of Ukraine.

Emmanuel Macron is the only leader who doesn't give up an idea of an agreement that would accommodate Moscow's concerns. "Ukraine's entry into NATO would be seen by Russia as confrontational. You can't imagine it with Russia as it is," he said. The French President said, "whether or not Ukraine joins NATO – and this is not the most likely scenario – it will have to be given stronger security guarantees because it's been attacked by Russia." He didn't explain what guarantees are hypothetically possible beyond NATO, given that Russia is a major nuclear superpower. "We need to think about an architecture of security and stability that guarantees, first and foremost, the security and stability of Ukraine, but also of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. And the question will also be asked tomorrow: with Belarus," Emmanuel Macron stated.

"Practical steps towards the speedy integration of Sweden and Finland into the alliance testify that, under a far-fetched threat from Russia, Washington is trying to bring the NATO bloc as close as possible to our borders by involving new satellites," Russian Chief of the General Staff told to foreign defense attaches. So, if Moscow considers its major war in Europe and constant nuclear saber-rattling as a "far-fetched threat," then what are the chances of President Macron's good intentions to come true?

"Russia found an Ally in its genocidal policy – Iran. Iranian deadly drones, sent to Russia in hundreds, became a threat to our critical infrastructure. That is how one terrorist has found the other. It is just a matter of time – when they will strike against your other allies if we do not stop them now," Volodymyr Zelensky called on the US to take action. It triggered an odd reaction from the regime lying about its involvement. "Mr. Zelensky should know that Iran's strategic patience for baseless accusations is limited," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

Alexander Lukashenko, a masterful deceiver as well, denied the "conspiracy" of Belarus entering the war. "We have been having and are having exercises. Now they are more extensive because of the current situation and threats. Therefore, we are conducting exercises on our territory," the self-proclaimed President said. Ukrainian intelligence sees no immediate threat of the invasion from the Belarusian side but, as General Valery Zaluzhny, head of Ukraine's armed forces, said, "I have no doubt they will have another go at Kyiv." The joint Russia-Belarus maneuvers stretch Ukrainian forces that could have been employed elsewhere.

North Korea, another member of the "terrorist international," started supporting Russia's war of aggression. "We can confirm that North Korea has completed an initial arms delivery to Wagner, which paid for that equipment. Last month, North Korea delivered infantry rockets and missiles into Russia for use by Wagner," a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council, John Kirby, said.

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