

**Humanitarian aspect:**

As of the morning of December 23, 2022, **the official number of child victims over the past day has not changed and comprises 450. The number of injured children has increased to 867**, the Prosecutor General's Office reports.

**The prosecutor's office launched 5,079 criminal investigations into the facts of torture and other inhuman treatment** as a result of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine. Also, 855 cases of war crimes against children are being investigated, 10 of which are based on facts of sexual violence, the Human Rights Center ZMINA reports, citing the response of the Prosecutor General's Office. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, law enforcement agencies have established 154 facts of sexual violence committed by Russian servicemen against women, children and men on the territory of Ukraine.

**Consequences of enemy shelling:**

In Ukraine on December 22, Russian troops shelled **8 Ukrainian Oblasts, killing five civilians and wounding another 18**, Deputy Head of the Office of the President Kyrylo Tymoshenko said.

- In Magdalinvka village of Komyshuva community, **Zaporizhzhya Oblast**, two children aged 3 and 15 sustained injuries and were hospitalized after a wall broken by a Russian missile fell on them, the head of the Oblast Military Administration Oleksandr Starukh said.
- The Russian forces shelled the territory of **Kherson Oblast** 61 times. They also shelled the city of Kherson 30 times, hitting the residential quarters. Russian shells hit educational institutions, private and apartment buildings. 1 person died; 2 residents of Kherson Oblast were injured to varying degrees of severity. On December 23, Russian forces used phosphorus munitions to shell Kherson, the Center of National Resistance at the Ukrainian MOD reported. The Geneva Convention prohibits their use near and inside populated areas, the Center of National Resistance at the Ukrainian MOD reported.

**Kyiv** City Military Administration informed that centralized water and heating supplies were restored throughout the city. The situation with electricity, however, remains difficult. First of all, critical infrastructure facilities, medical facilities, maternity homes, military hospitals are provided with electricity, Kyiv mayor Vitaliy Klychko said. City trams and electric buses stopped operation due to power outages.

**Occupied territories:**

In a continued effort to integrate the recently annexed Ukrainian territories, a court in **Donetsk** made a ruling under Russian law for the first time. It extended the arrest of 19 Azov soldiers who will remain in custody for another 2 months, the Russian government-owned TASS news agency reported, citing law enforcement agencies.

The occupation authorities of the parts of **Zaporizhzhia Oblast** claim that the construction of the Simferopol-Rostov highway will begin in January. It will pass through the territory of Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

An explosion occurred in the downtown of the occupied city of **Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Oblast**. A car belonging to a representative of the occupying authorities was blown up. According to preliminary information, a collaborator who managed one of the divisions of the "district police station" was injured, said the legally elected Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov.

According to Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov, this week, the Russian occupying forces completely blocked the exit from the occupied southern territories. Not a single person was allowed to leave. New crossing rules at the Vasylivka checkpoint were announced this morning: if you are on foot, you can pass, but there must be a reason. One has to walk 4-5 km to the gray zone, then 10 km through the gray zone. That is, one has to walk 10-15 km

According to the head of the Luhansk OMA, Serhii Gaidai, the Russian FSB organizes terror against the local population in **Luhansk Oblast**. Its officers select a populated place to carry out a so-called counter-subversive operation. Then they block exit routes with the help of militants from the pseudo-republic and organize a house-to-house search. The task is to find at least something suspicious in order to achieve higher performance indicators. They check documents and telephones and search apartments. In case they find what they were looking for, the person is detained without the possibility of contacting a lawyer. At best, people return home after two months of "education".

Dmytro Lubinets, the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the Russian occupying authorities demolished the remains of the Drama Theater in the temporarily occupied **Mariupol** in order to hide the traces of their crimes. As previously reported, on March 16, the Russian occupiers dropped aviaombs on the Mariupol Drama Theater, where hundreds of people were hiding and where the word "children" was written in letters large enough to be visible from the sky.

According to the StratCom Center of the Ukrainian Culture and Information Policy Ministry, occupied Mariupol is gradually turning into a military base. A direct confirmation is that the priority for the construction of all large objects is given to one of the Russian official military developers, the "Military Construction Company". According to StratCom, this company built a massive medical facility during the occupation of Mariupol, which was announced as a "multifunctional diagnostic center", but in fact, it is a large military hospital civilian patients do not have access to, except in special cases.

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### **Operational situation**

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 22) developments)

*It is the 303rd 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 24 hours, the Russian forces have launched 6 missile strikes and 6 air strikes, particularly against targets in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts and fired over 70 MRLS rounds. The Russian forces shelled the areas of Bleshnya in Chernihiv Oblast and Novovasylivka, Atynsk, Iskryskivshchyna, Pavlivka, Vodolahy and Krasnopillya in Sumy Oblast. The areas around Shevchenko, Strilecha, Nesuchne, Ternova, Starytsya, Vovchansk, Volokhivka and Stroivka in Kharkiv Oblast were subjected to tank, mortar and artillery shelling.

At the same time, units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled Russian attacks in the areas of Vysoke in Sumy Oblast, Khatne in Kharkiv Oblast, Stelmakhivka, Andriyivka, Nadiya, Makiivka, Ploschanka, Chervonopopivka and Dibrova in Luhansk Oblast and Novoselyvka, Yampolivka, Yakovlivka, Bakhmutske, Bakhmut, Mayorsk, New York, Vodyane, Krasnohorivka and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

Russian units build up fortified defensive positions along the Krasnoperekopsk - Dzhankoy highway on the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea territory.

During the past day, Ukrainian aviation made eight strikes on Russian personnel, weapons and military equipment concentration areas. It destroyed 3 anti-aircraft missile complexes and one Russian UAV control center.

Units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces' missile and artillery troops hit 3 enemy command and command posts, 3 ammunition depots and 8 areas of Russian personnel concentration.

On the territory of the Republic of Belarus, military commissariats verify information on the registered personnel. Special attention is given to senior officers who are in reserve. A temporary restriction on entry, temporary stay and movement in the border zone within Loyiv, Braginsky and Khoynitsky districts of Gomel Oblast of the Republic of Belarus will be introduced starting December 22.

"Liga" mercenaries, divided into two groups of 80-90 people, arrived in Krupiyki village (Loyiv district, Gomel Oblast) to perform tasks within the framework of "Russian-Belorussian cooperation in the field of defense". They have lightly armored vehicles and trucks at their disposal. The groups are also reinforced by engineering units.

### **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 Russian military conducted shelling near Novomlynsk, Kupyansk, Krokhmalne and Berestove in Kharkiv Oblast and Makiivka, Ploshanka, Chervonopopivka, Dibrova, Novoselivske and Stelmakhivka in Luhansk Oblast.

The Russian military constantly attacked in the area of Berestove and Bilohorivka, trying to take under reliable control the section of the T1302 highway northeast of Yakovlivka.

#### **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 fired tanks and artillery at the areas of Verhnokamyanske, Bilohorivka, Bakhmut, Klishchiivka, Andriivka, Oleksandro-Shultine, Kurdyumivka, Ozaryanivka, New York, Kostyantynivka, Vodyane, Nevelske, Krasnohorivka, Georgiivka, Maryinka, and Novomykhailivka in Donetsk Oblast.

Fierce close-quarters fighting continues in the southeastern and eastern outskirts of Bakhmut. The Russian forces reached the low-rise construction blocks of Bakhmut, the pace of their advance dropped significantly, and in some areas, the Joint Forces managed to repulse the Russian military with counterattacks.

On the stretch from Pesky to Kashtanove villages (to the south of Avdiyivka) are trying to advance:

- units of the 11th separate motorized rifle regiment (1st and 2nd motorized rifle battalions of the regiment),
- separate assault battalion "Somali",
- 1st separate motorized rifle brigade (2nd and 3rd motorized rifle battalions, 1st motorized rifle battalion transferred to the Svatove direction),
- 185th separate motorized rifle brigade, separate SOF brigade "Pyatnashka",
- 2nd rifle battalion of the territorial troops,

- 9th motorized rifle regiment,
- 3rd separate SOF brigade.

In the second echelon, the 1117th and 1539th separate rifle battalions of the 1st Army Corps were deployed. The separate reconnaissance battalion "Sparta" and the "Storm" detachment were taken to resupply and rest after fierce battles in the Opytne and Vodiane areas. The Russian offensive is supported by artillery fire of the 238th artillery brigade.

### **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.*

Vremivka, Velyka Novosilka, Neskuchne, Vuhledar and Mykilske of Donetsk Oblast were affected by artillery fire.

The enemy strengthens its grouping of troops. During the last two days, the movement of tank and artillery units through Melitopol towards Tokmak and Vasylivka was recorded.

After several fairly long-range strikes [by Ukrainian Forces] on Russian targets in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions in the rear of the Russian forces (forward C2 point, command post, ammunition and weapons and military equipment storage sites), the Russian command concluded that "targeting and adjusting the means of defeating the enemy (i.e., Ukrainian Armed Forces) by Ukrainian terrorist-nationalist gang underground" had taken place. Therefore, in the area of Enerhodar – Velyka and Mala Bilozerka – Tokmak – Vasylivka – Dniproprudne, the Russian military intensifies the filtration regime.

Due to significant losses, the enemy set up a military hospital at one of the recreation bases in Berdyansk, Zaporizhzhia Oblast. In addition, several tourist camps in Berdyansk are used to accommodate servicemen of the occupation troops.

### **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.*

Marhanets 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 Russian fleet keeps only 8 surface ships at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There is one Kalibr cruise missile carrier at sea, namely a submarine with 4 missiles.

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

**"The Grain initiative":** another ship with Ukrainian grain was sent to African Libya. The bulk carrier BRAVE M with 27.5 thousand tons of agricultural products for Libya joined the caravan of 5 other vessels that exported 244 thousand tons of agricultural products from the ports of Greater Odesa to Asia and Europe. Currently, more than 1 million tons of Ukrainian agricultural products are loaded in the ports on 27 ships. Another 4 ships are moving along the "grain corridor" toward Ukrainian ports. A stable queue of 90 vessels is maintained in the Bosphorus, as 5-7 inspections are carried out daily while a minimum of 12 per day are needed. Since August 1, 580 ships have left the ports of Greater Odesa, which exported 15 million tons of Ukrainian food to the countries of Asia, Europe and Africa.

**Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 23.12.22**

Personnel - almost 100,950 people (+550);

Tanks 3,005 (+2)

Armored combat vehicles – 5,986 (+5);

Artillery systems – 1,984 (+6);

Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 414 (0);  
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 212 (0);  
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,622 (+7);  
Aircraft - 283 (0);  
Helicopters – 267 (0);  
UAV operational and tactical level – 1,698 (+5);  
Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);  
Boats/ships - 16 (0).

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### **Ukraine, general news**

Ukraine withdrew from 4 agreements with Belarus, particularly the agreement on air communication, regarding the supply of weapons and military equipment, as well as joint research and development work in this field, the representative of the Ukrainian government in the Verkhovna Rada Taras Melnichuk informed.

As of December 23, 2022, Ukrainian farmers harvested 46.6 million tons of grain and leguminous crops, or 90% of the total sown area, the press service of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine reported.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyi set the priority tasks for Ukrainian diplomats at the annual Conference of Ambassadors of Ukraine in 2023. Among them is the beginning of negotiations on joining the EU, preparations for the NATO summit, ensuring the defense needs and reconstruction of Ukraine, sanctions against the Russian Federation, the creation of a special tribunal and the confiscation of Russian assets.

"With the approaching holiday season, Russian terrorists may become active again. They despise Christian values and any values in general," President Zelenskiy warned Ukrainians and urged them not to ignore air raid alerts.

### **International diplomatic aspect**

President Joe Biden signed the \$1.7 trillion spending bill that includes almost \$45 billion in assistance for Ukraine in the 2023 financial year. It's vital that there was bipartisan support for the aid. Senate has passed the Graham-Whitehouse amendment that "will enable proceeds from recovered Russian oligarch assets to be sent directly to Ukraine for defense, reconstruction, and reparation. It's a matter of basic justice that Russian criminals linked to Putin should pay for this brutal, illegal, and unprovoked war against Ukraine," the joint statement of Congressmen and Senators reads.

The US Secretary of State has shared his reading of a possible end state after the talks between the US and Ukrainian leaders. "We have the same objectives, the same goals: a free, an independent, a prosperous and democratic Ukraine, one that demonstrates that the principles of the United Nations Charter are being upheld, including on territorial integrity and sovereignty and independence," Antony Blinken said. He mentioned that Ukraine's efforts at the current moment are focused on liberating territories seized since February. "But that doesn't prejudge in

any way where this goes, where it settles," he said. The State Secretary explained that just and durable peace means unrolling the territorial conquest and securing that it won't happen again in the future. Such a reading is the only acceptable formula of peace that serves the interests of Ukraine and the international community that supports rules-based order.

Eighty-four percent of Russians worry about Ukraine's situation, while fourteen percent are not, according to a Levada Centre poll. It's a four percent increase in those worrying since November and a five percent decrease in those not. The support for the Russian Army's actions in Ukraine decreased by three percent since November to seventy-one percent. The highest level of support was registered in March (eighty percent). Meanwhile, the opposition to the war has been around twenty percent, with the highest figure in February (twenty-three percent) and the lowest in March (fourteen percent). Half of Russians support "peace talks," while forty percent prefer the continuation of the war. Though all polls in Russia should be taken with a grain of salt, the party of war constitutes the majority, and their willingness to negotiate depends on bad news from the Western front.

Contrary to the common wisdom that (TV) propaganda plays a crucial role, those who use the Internet and social networks (less controlled by the state) are almost equally supportive of the war. Among those who trust TV the most, eighty-six percent support the war, while the figure for those who trust social networks the most, sixty-five percent, support the war. The most significant number of Russians who oppose the war (thirty percent) use Telegram as their source of information.

The US and Israel held a bilateral Strategic Consultative Group virtual meeting. The national security advisors discussed "Iran's growing military relationship with Russia, including the transfer of weapons the Kremlin is deploying against Ukraine, targeting its civilian infrastructure, and Russia's provision of military technology to Iran in return." Germany has suspended export credit and investment guarantees for business in Iran in the wake of authorities' crackdown on protests. Since there's a slim chance of a new JCPOA agreement and Iran is acting brutally at home and props up Russia in its aggressive war abroad, the sanction measures, particularly hunting schemes of their circumvention, must be tightened.

### **Russia, relevant news**

In the continued efforts to militarize Russian society, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation announced that a course on the basics of military training would be introduced in Russian universities. Courses mandated by the Ministry are obligatory.

Drafts of new school history textbooks will be presented in January-February 2023. They will have additional chapters on the "special operation", referendums and sanctions, the Russian Minister of Education Sergei Kravtsov said.

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