

Humanitarian aspect:

7 Ukrainian Oblasts came under Russian shelling on December 23, according to the heads of Oblast Military Administrations (OMAs). Residential buildings and civilian infrastructure was hit. 22 people were injured in **Kherson Oblast**, 5 of them died in the city of Kherson, 17 people were given medical assistance, including 1 child aged 6. In **Donetsk Oblast**, 2 civilians died and 5 were injured.

One of the power plants stopped production on the morning of Saturday, December 24, due to shelling and equipment damage, and the power system has a significant electricity shortage. The situation is the most difficult in **Kyiv and in Kyiv Oblast** as well as in the east and south, the press service of Ukrenergo reported.

On December 24, the Russians shelled the city center of **Kherson**. The shells hit a busy downtown area on a Saturday morning. As a result of the morning shelling, 66 passenger cars caught fire; the fires were extinguished. By the end of the day, Kherson OMA reported 10 dead civilians and 68 injured.

On the morning of December 24, the Russian forces launched mortar attacks in the Kupyansk district, **Kharkiv Oblast**, hitting a private home in the village of Podoly. A 72-year-old man died. A 74-year-old woman received an explosive injury and a shrapnel wound, Oleg Sinegubov, the head of the OMA, reported.

In **Kropyvnytskyi**, the city residents collected money for a car for the military, handing 15 tons of Russian-language books over to waste paper collection points, the initiator of the collection, Yana Kovaleva, said. 15 tons were collected in about 4 months - from September to December.

Four Russian soldiers who tortured participants in the anti-terrorist operation were sentenced to 11 years in prison, the Prosecutor General's Office reports. Prosecutors proved in court that at the beginning of September of this year, during the capture of the village of Borova, Izyum district, Kharkiv Oblast, two Russian mercenaries of a private military company and two servicemen of the 16th separate special brigade of the main department of the general staff of the armed forces of the Russian Federation tortured three participants of the anti-terrorist operation.

Occupied territories:

The Russian occupiers moved their administrations from the occupied Svatove to **Luhansk**, Serhiy Haiday, head of Luhansk OMA reported. He said the Ukrainian troops are getting increasingly closer to Svatove, so traitors run away. "The Rashists already feel the approach of the Armed Forces, so they collect the loot and go to Luhansk," Haiday said.

Today in **Mariupol** and the Mariupol district, an abnormally intensive movement of military columns towards Zaporizhzhia Oblast (Berdyansk direction) is recorded. Russian armored personnel carriers, command posts, and manpower are moving, the advisor to the mayor of Mariupol, Petro Andryushchenko, said.

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 23) developments)

It is the 304th 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 3 missile strikes and 10 air strikes, particularly against civilian infrastructure in Donetsk Oblast and fired 62 MRLS rounds, damaging civilian objects in the city of Kherson. There are civilian victims. The Russian forces shelled Hirky in Sumy Oblast with mortars. The areas around Huryiv, Veteryarne, Kudiivka, Hoptivka, Starytsya, Ohirtseve, Vovchansk, Ambarne, Novomlynsk and Dvorichna in Kharkiv Oblast were subjected to tank, mortar and artillery shelling.

Units of the Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled Russian attacks in the areas of Andriivka of Luhansk Oblast and Yampolivka, Rozdolivka, Bakhmutske, Bakhmut, Severnye, New York, Krasnohorivka, Vodyane and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

During the past day, Ukrainian aviation made 13 strikes on areas of Russian personnel, weapons and military equipment concentration and a strike on a Russian anti-aircraft missile complex position. The downing of 9 Russian UAVs of various types is confirmed. In addition, units of the missile and artillery troops of the Ukrainian Defense Forces hit 2 enemy command and control posts, 2 ammunition depots and 11 areas of Russian personnel concentration.

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 carried out shelling from tanks, mortars and artillery of Kyselivka, Kotlyarivka, Tabaivka, Krokhmalne of Kharkiv Oblast and Novoselievka, Stelmakhivka, Myasozharivka, Makiivka, Ploshanka, Chervonpopivka, Terny and Dibrova of Luhansk Oblast.

Due to the significant losses of Russian troops, the occupation authorities continue repurposing Luhansk Oblast civilian hospitals into military ones. This is what happened to local medical facilities in Bilovodsk and Markivka. On December 19, in the city of Starobilsk, about 100 wounded Russian servicemen were brought to the surgical department of the district hospital, which is equipped as a military hospital.

Donetsk direction

- *Siversk - Maryinka section: approximate length of the combat line - 144 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 13-15, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 9.6 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 68th and 163rd tank regiments (TR), 102nd and 103rd motorized rifle regiments of the 150 motorized rifle division, 80th TR of the 90th tank division, 35th, 55th, and 74th separate motorized rifle brigades of the 41st Combined Arms Army, 51st and 31st separate airborne assault brigades, 61st separate marines brigade of the Joint Strategic Command "Northern Fleet," 336th separate marines brigade of Baltic Fleet, 1st, 3rd, 5th, 15th, and 100th separate motorized rifle brigades, 9th and 11th separate motorized rifle regiment of the 1st Army Corps of the so-called DPR, 6th motorized rifle regiment of the 2nd Army Corps of the so-called LPR, PMCs.*

The Russian military shelled the areas of twenty-five towns and villages with tanks, mortars, barrel and jet artillery, including Spirne, Berestove, Soledar, Bakhmut, Klishchiivka, Chasiv Yar, Stupochki, Bila Gora, Diliivka, Opytne, Kamianka, Avdiivka, Vesele, Vodyane, Pervomaiske, Nevelske, Krasnohorivka, Heorhiivka, Maryinka and Novomykhailivka of Donetsk Oblast. The Russian military launched an airstrike near Avdiivka.

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.*

Vuhledar, Prechistivka and Velyka Novosilka in Donetsk Oblast, Vremivka, Malynivka, Dorozhnyanka, and Mala Tokmachka in Zaporizhzhia Oblast came under artillery fire.

On December 22, the Ukrainian Defense Forces destroyed 2 artillery systems with ammunition. More than 70 Russian servicemen were wounded.

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.*

Kherson, Havrylivka, Novodmytrivka, Burhunka, Inzhenerne and Chornobivka were shelled by 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 11 surface ships and submarines at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There are three Kalibr cruise missile carriers among them, namely a submarine with 4 missiles and 2 surface ships carrying 8 missiles each. The total number could be up to 20 missiles.

"Kalibr" are Russian cruise missiles, represented by the 3M54 family of anti-ship missiles and the 3M14 family of surface-to-surface missiles, according to the NATO classification, SS-N-27 "Sizzler" and SS-N-30, respectively. There are two main launch platforms: for submarines and for surface ships.

Missiles of the Kalibr-PL complex are launched from standard submarine torpedo tubes of 533 mm caliber from a depth of (30-40) m. The Kalibr-NK complex is launched from under-deck unified vertical launchers 3C-14 or inclined deck launchers ZS-14P.

The tactical and technical characteristics of the Kalibr family of missiles deployed by the Russian Armed Forces are unknown. But according to reports from open sources dating to 2012, the firing range of Kalibr missiles at sea targets is 375 km, and at land targets, the range is 2,600 km.

In general, the following configurations/modifications of missiles for the Russian army are known (the list may not be complete):

- 3M54K is an anti-ship variant for the Russian Navy, for arming submarines. It has a length of 8.22 m and a penetrating high-explosive warhead weighing 200 kg. Combat radius within (440-660) km. It moves above the surface of the water (at the height of up to 5 m) at a speed of 0.8 Mach number (M) and reaches the speed of 2.9 M in the final section of the flight;
- 3M54T is an anti-ship variant for the Russian Navy, for arming surface ships with a vertical launcher and an accelerator with a controlled thrust vector. Its warhead is identical to the 3M-54K;
- 3M14K is a variant of a high-precision cruise missile for arming submarines to destroy ground targets. It has a length of 6.2 m and a warhead (high-explosive fragmentation or penetrating high-explosive) weighing 450 kg. The combat radius is about 2,500 km. The speed at the final part of the trajectory is 0.8 M;
- 3M14T is an option for arming surface ships to hit ground targets. It has a length of 8.9 m and a warhead identical to the 3M14K. Exactly 26 missiles of this modification were launched from four ships from the Caspian Sea at targets in Syria on October 7, 2015.

Control of cruise missiles of the 3M54 type on the march is carried out using an inertial navigation system. ARG5-54 type radar homing system detects and accurately guides cruise missiles to a surface target at the end of the missile flight path. The missile guidance system of the 3M14 family is mixed: inertial in the initial and middle sections of the flight with the possibility of trajectory correction based on GLONAS data and the use of the ARG5-14 type radar homing system in the final section of the flight for accurate targeting of ground targets in countermeasures, which achieves hits of high accuracy (5 -7) m.

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

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 24.12.22

Personnel - almost 101,430 people (+480);

Tanks 3,006 (+1)

Armored combat vehicles – 5,994 (+8);

Artillery systems – 1,988 (+4);

Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 418 (+4);

Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 212 (0);

Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,627 (+5);

Aircraft - 283 (0);

Helicopters – 267 (0);

UAV operational and tactical level – 1,706 (+8);

Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);
Boats/ships - 16 (0).

Ukraine, general news

The Ukrainian government has launched a new survey in the Diya application, where Ukrainians can vote on which date, December 25 or January 7, they celebrate Christmas. The survey was proposed by the Minister of Culture and Information Policy, Oleksandr Tkachenko. According to him, more and more Ukrainians recently celebrate Christmas on December 25, as most of the world does. At the same time, the Church continues to live according to the old Julian calendar. "We decided to conduct a survey, which date of celebration you actually prefer," Tkachenko said. He also noted that for Ukraine, the observance of the Julian calendar is a kind of "legacy of the Russian Empire", which refused to switch to the Gregorian calendar.

The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Sviatoslav, and the Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Epiphany held a meeting today. In the meeting, they paid special attention to coordinating their positions on reforming the church calendar - an issue that became increasingly acute before the Christmas and Easter holidays. As a result, a working group to study the issue in detail was set up.

On December 23, the first session of the Kherson Oblast Council took place after the liberation of the right bank of Kherson Oblast. In total, the council members adopted 12 out of 13 items on the agenda, said the chairman of the Kherson Oblast Council Oleksandr Samoilenko. Among other things, the council adopted a decision to deprive two of its members, who collaborated with the Russian occupation forces, of the right to speak and participate in council meetings.

43% of Ukrainian startups will remain in Ukraine or return to it after the victory, a study on the impact of war on startups by the Polish-Ukrainian Startup Bridge team, the Warsaw Stock Exchange, and the Ukrainian Startup Fund found out. Almost all respondents noted the war's unequivocally negative impact on the country's possibility of doing business. The majority of startup managers rated the current situation as bad. 12% of surveyed companies closed their operations after the Russian invasion.

International diplomatic aspect

"Stop saying that the war in Ukraine is being waged by Russia and the Russian people. It's a war of Putin and his regime. The narrative that Russia as a whole is at war benefits Putin and is not true," Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a Russian opposition figure, tweeted. Estonian President Alar Karis echoed this notion with the caveat, "I still believe that this is Putin's war, but with one addition: the Russian people must also choose a side. They cannot stand by and just watch what is happening. Here's a little addition. But it is clear that the Russian people did not start this war, it is the Putin administration, after all, and it is responsible for it."

Even Ambassador Michael McFaul, who routinely expresses his love to Russia and Russians, admitted, "this is not just Putin's war. This is Russians' war." Though he backed down a bit just a week after by saying, "it's Putin's war supported by many Russians, not all. Our goal should be to

reduce that support by all means necessary." Evidently, President Karis and Ambassador McFaul would like to encourage Russians to do something about the war, but Russians had more than enough time. The Russian war on Ukraine has already lasted eight years and more than three hundred days.

According to a Levada Centre poll, two-thirds of Russians are happy with the direction their country is heading. Just a quarter believes it's going the wrong way. Astonishing eighty-one percent support Vladimir Putin, while only eighteen percent do not. Seventy-one percent support the Russian Army's actions in Ukraine. In addition, Russians supported the illegal annexation of Crimea with 88 and 84 percent in 2014-2021. The highest number of those who opposed was only eleven percent.

However, it is difficult to rely on opinion polls in a state with de facto signs of fascist ideology; one could hardly find any indications of resistance to the war machinery. Even the liberal TV channel Dozhd got into trouble in Latvia with its doubtful messaging and support of "their boys" (Russian mobilized to kill Ukrainians).

The Russians may express dissatisfaction with the mobilization and poor training and equipment, but not the war per se. Though it seems too late, it is still important for Western observers to accept the grim reality that Russian society is a failed one in this regard. Even the anti-Putin part of it still denies responsibility for constant failure at home (Putin has been in power for more than two decades) and abroad (the Chechen war, the Georgian war, the war against Ukraine, and the illegal annexation of Crimea). Part of the problem is the deep-seated imperial worldview of Russian society, which only a few intellectuals have addressed. This baggage is one of the key reasons the neighboring countries, particularly the Baltic states and Poland, don't welcome Russians. It's the reason why those countries criticize old Europe, particularly Germany, for their willingness to remain open to just another wave of Russian escapees.

Russia's Ministry of Digital Development says that eighty percent of 100,000 IT specialists that fled abroad are working for Russia. Though it doesn't mean that 80,000 intellectually support the war, they do it financially by paying taxes. And indeed, they help to keep running state-owned corporations and other companies either directly (defense enterprises) or indirectly (energy corporations, state banks) involved in war efforts.

Russia's Ministry of Justice demanded the Moscow city's court shut down the Moscow Helsinki Group, the oldest human rights organization operating since 1976. Only a handful of activists will likely try to support the Group and protest its potential closure.

Meanwhile, the Economist stated, "Our country of the year for 2022 can only be Ukraine." There're four reasons the newspaper has picked Ukraine. It's the heroism of people repelling the aggression of their larger neighbor; the ingenuity of the way how the asymmetric war is being fought; the resilience of the whole society that fights for its freedom; inspiration for freedom-loving nations across the globe.

Russia, relevant news

Continuing its long-term false narrative, the Russian Ministry of Defense said that the United States is moving the research that was carried out in bio laboratories on the territory of Ukraine to Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

The World Curling Federation (WCF) extended sanctions that suspended Russian and Belarusian athletes from international competitions until the end of the 2022/2023 season. The sanctions were extended due to the ongoing war on the territory of Ukraine.

Centre for Defence Strategies (CDS) is a Ukrainian security think tank. We operate since 2020 We publish this brief daily. If you would like to subscribe, please send us an email at cds.dailybrief@gmail.com

Please note, that we subscribe only verified persons and can decline or cancel the subscription at our own discretion

We are an independent, non-government, non-partisan, and non-profit organisation. More at www.defence.org.ua

Our Twitter (in English) - https://twitter.com/defence_centre

Our Facebook (in Ukrainian) - <https://www.facebook.com/cds.UA>
Our brief is for information only and we verify our information to the best possible extent