

Humanitarian aspect:

In Ukraine on December 24, **Russian troops shelled 8 Ukrainian Oblasts, killing 16 civilians and wounding another 72**, Deputy Head of the Office of the President Kyrylo Tymoshenko reported in his Telegram channel, with reference to the data of the regional military administrations(OMAs).

Consequences of enemy shelling:

- The enemy continued shelling the Maryinka community of **Donetsk Oblast** during the night of December 24-25. The Maksymilianivka City Council [building] was damaged. In the morning, Orlivka and Avdiivka came under fire; the hospital was damaged. 1 person was injured and four houses were damaged in Predtechine. In Bakhmut, 5 civilians were wounded, 1 house was damaged. On December 24, Russian troops shelled Kramatorsk again. According to the head of the city's military administration, Oleksandr Honcharenk, three rockets hit the city's industrial zone.
- The Russians once again shelled houses and civil infrastructure in the Polohy, Zaporizhzhia, and Vasylivka districts of **Zaporizhzhia Oblast**. In Vasylivka, the [Russian] occupiers imposed a 24-hour curfew from December 28 to January 4.
- In **Kharkiv Oblast**, a 72-year-old man was killed during artillery shelling in Podoly village. His 74-year-old wife was injured.
- At night, the occupiers fired heavy artillery at Nikopol, **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast**. No victims were reported.
- The occupiers shelled the territory of **Kherson Oblast** 71 times; 16 people were killed, among them 3 employees of the State Emergency Service. Another 64 were injured. The enemy attacked Kherson city 41 times; industrial premises, medical facilities, private homes and apartment buildings were damaged. Yaroslav Yanushevich, head of the military administration of the Kherson Oblast, said that the Russian military is purposefully attacking medical facilities in the region. He posted a video of one of the explosions on Telegram. According to Yanushevich, on December 24, Russian troops attacked the territory of the Kherson Regional Clinical Hospital, as well as the regional psychiatric facility, where a doctor's office was destroyed.

People lined up at the blood donation center in **Kherson**, where at least 10 civilians were killed and dozens more injured due to Russian shelling on Christmas eve. Deputy Head of the Office of the President, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, published photos. "Lines of people to become donors and save the victims of yesterday's terror. People are ready to stand in line all day for the sake of salvation. This is the superpower of Ukrainians! Such Kherson cannot be broken, even by Russian terror!" Tymoshenko wrote.

During the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, **the National Police initiated more than 51,000 criminal proceedings on the facts of crimes committed by the Russian military and their accomplices.**

The head of the National Police, Ihor Klymenko, announced this in Telegram, Ukrinform reports.

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (December 24) developments)

It is the 305th 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").

Over the past 24 hours, the enemy launched 5 missile and air strikes and fired more than 90 MLRS rounds, particularly at civilian objects in Kherson, killing civilians. The Russian military shelled the civilian infrastructure in Vyntorivka, Ryzhivka and Vorozhba of Sumy Oblast. In addition, the areas of Guryiv Kozachok, Veterynarne, Kozacha Lopan, Kudiyivka, Hoptivka, Strilecha, Krasne, Ternova, Starytsia, Ohirtseve, Vovchansk, Nesterne, Zemlianki, Khatnie and Ambarne of Kharkiv Oblast were subjected to mortar and artillery fire.

The enemy is concentrating on conducting offensive operations in Lyman, Bakhmut, and Avdiivka areas and is continuing its efforts to improve the tactical position in the Kupiansk area.

Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled enemy attacks in the areas of Lyman Pershyi in Kharkiv Oblast; Stelmakhivka, Novoselivske, Ploschanka, Chervonopopivka in Luhansk Oblast; and Yakovlivka, Soledar, Bakhmut, Klishchiivka, Kurdyumivka, Pivdenne, Krasnohorivka, Vesele, and Maryinka in Donetsk Oblast.

Russian forces currently lack the necessary reserves of artillery ammunition to support large-scale offensive operations. Maintaining defensive operations along the long front line in Ukraine requires Russian military expenditures to consume a significant number of shells and missiles daily, which are also in short supply.

During the past day, Ukrainian Defence Forces' aircraft made 4 strikes on areas of the enemy concentration. The Ukrainian missile and artillery forces hit 4 enemy command and control points, 3 areas of the enemy's manpower concentration, the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system and 3 more important military targets.

Kyrylo Budanov, the chief of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine, stated that Yevgeny Prigozhin concluded an alliance with the commander of the Russian Defense Forces in Ukraine, Army General Surovikin, saying that both Prigozhin and Surovikin are rivals of the Russian Defense Minister Shoigu, and that Prigozhin is [about to] use the alliance in his own interests. He seeks to receive heavy weapons from the Russian Armed Forces for the "Wagner" PMC.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense deputy, Hanna Malyar, reported that many Russian servicemen die while waiting for medical help due to the lack of specialists, necessary medical equipment and medication. She said that the Russian troops installed metal bars on the windows

of hospitals to prevent Russian servicemen with minor injuries from deserting from the Russian Armed Forces. The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation previously stated that 92% of deaths in the Russian military occur due to failure to provide first aid.

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 fired tanks and artillery at Novomlynsk, Dvorichna, Kupyansk, Kyslivka, Tabaivka, Kotlyarivka and Krokhmalne in Kharkiv Oblast; Novoselivske, Stelmakhivka, Myasozharivka, Makiivka, Ploschanka, Chervonopopivka, Dibrova of Luhansk Oblast; and Terny of the Donetsk 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 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 enemy shelled the areas of Spirne, Zvanivka, Berestovka, Bilohorivka, Vesele, Yakovlivka, Soledar, Paraskoviivka, Pidgorodnie, Bakhmut, Chasiv Yar, Opytne, Stupochki, Klishchiivka, Andriivka, Bila Hora, Aleksandro-Shultine, Diliivka, Kleban-Byk, Ozaryanivka, Pivnichne, New York, Vesele, Kamianka, Avdiivka, Vodyane, Pervomaiske, Nevelske, Georgiivka, Maryinka and Novomykhailivka of Donetsk Oblast.

The Russian military continued offensive actions around Bakhmut. Ukraine's Joint Forces repelled Russian attacks near Bakhmut, in the area of Rozdolivka and Bakhmutske, near Pivnichne and New York. Intense fighting is taking place to the northeast of Bakhmut near Pidgorodnie, where Russian troops have captured the strongholds of the Ukrainian forces. Russian forces also

captured new positions along the Rozdolivka - Yampolivka line. On the eastern outskirts of Bakhmut, intense battles occur between Ukrainian troops and units of the "Wagner" PMC. The enemy attacked in the Andriyivka area; battles continued near Opytne, Klishchiivka and Dyliivka.

The enemy continued offensive actions in the Avdiivka area. The Joint Forces repelled enemy attacks in the Krasnohorivka, Vodyane, and Maryinka areas. Ukrainian Forces' command is accumulating forces on the western outskirts of Maryinka due to the rapid deterioration of the tactical situation.

Units of the 11th motorized rifle regiment of the so-called "Peoples' Militia of DPR" conducted a reconnaissance in the direction of Pervomaiske and concentrated on its outskirts.

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 positions of Ukrainian troops near Bohoyavlenka, Vuhledar, Prechistivka, Novoukrainka, Velyka Novosilka and Vremivka of Donetsk Oblast.

Areas of Malynivka, Chervone, Dorozhnyanka, Charivne, Bilohirya, Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, Orihiv, Mali Shcherbaki, Stepove, Kamianske in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and Marganets and Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast were affected by the [enemy] artillery fire.

The Russian forces continued strengthening the policing-administrative regime in the temporarily occupied territories. In Vasylivka, the [Russian] occupiers introduced a curfew from December 28, 2022, to January 4, 2023. Emergency service workers are issued special passes, and other local residents are prohibited from leaving their homes and moving around the town.

Russian troops are transporting an unusually large number of armored personnel carriers and convoys of trucks through Mariupol in the direction of Berdyansk to strengthen their grouping in the Melitopol area.

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 enemy continues to shell the civilian infrastructure of Chervonohryhorivka of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and Burgunka, Antonivka and Kherson.

The sabotage-reconnaissance groups (SRG) from the 22nd separate SOF brigade are scouting the Dnipro delta to study Ukrainian defense on the right bank of Kherson Oblast. Thus, on December 23, the SRG landed on Velykiy Potemkin Island. Russian troops have not changed their tactics in the south of Ukraine and continue to use SRGs for reconnaissance of the Dnipro islands, studying the ability of the Ukrainian Defense Forces to repel Russian attacks.

Russian troops repelled attempts of Ukrainian forces to land on the Kinburn spit.

On December 24, the Ukrainian Defense Forces attacked an oil refinery in the Nizhnyohirsky district of the Crimean Autonomous Republic using UAVs. Russian occupiers in Gornostaevka introduced a 24-hour curfew for residents from December 25 to January 3.

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 14 surface ships and submarines at sea. They are located along the southwestern coast of Crimea. There are four cruise missile "Kalibr" carriers among them, namely a submarine with 4 missiles and two surface ships with 8 missiles each. The full salvo might reach up to 24 missiles.

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

Enemy aviation continues to fly from the Crimean airfields of Belbek, Saki, Dzhankoy and Gvardiyske over the northwestern part of the Black Sea. Currently, there are at least 140 combat

aircraft (mostly at Belbek) and 90 enemy helicopters (mostly at Dzhankoy) at the airfields of the occupied Crimea. Over the past day, 22 combat aircraft from Belbek and Saki airfields were deployed.

Last week, the dismantling of the road spans of the second branch (direction to Taman) of the Crimean bridge, attacked on October 8, 2022, began. 2 spans with a length of 64 meters have already been dismantled. During the repair period (tentatively until the end of the first quarter of 2023), car traffic on the bridge will be limited. After that, two sections of the damaged railway track will be replaced, which are much larger than automobile sections in terms of dimensions and weight characteristics. Thus, the restoration of traffic on the bridge is possible by the third quarter of 2023, which will hinder the logistical supplies of enemy groups in Crimea and the occupied territories of southern Ukraine.

According to the Ministry of Transport of Turkey, from the middle of November 2022, the Russian Federation banned passage through the Kerch Strait to all vessels whose loading took place outside the borders of the Russian Federation. This probably happened as part of the plan to strengthen the security of the Crimean bridge after the attack on October 8, 2022.

Russian operational losses from 24.02 to 25.12.22

Personnel - almost 102,050 people (+620);

Tanks - 3,011 (+5)

Armored combat vehicles – 6,010 (+16);

Artillery systems – 1,991 (+3);

Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 418 (0);

Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 212 (0);

Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,635 (+8);

Aircraft - 283 (0);

Helicopters – 267 (0);

UAV operational and tactical level – 1,706 (0);

Intercepted cruise missiles - 653 (0);

Boats/ships - 16 (0).

International diplomatic aspect

"It is with pain that we must state that while the Prince of Peace has been given to us, the cold winds of war continue to blow over humanity... May our gaze be filled with the faces of Ukrainian brothers and sisters who are experiencing this Christmas in the dark, cold, and far from their homes due to the destruction caused by ten months of the war. May the Lord make us ready for concrete gestures of solidarity to help those who are suffering and enlighten the minds of those in power to silence the weapons and immediately put an end to this insane war!" stated Pope Francis in his Christmas address.

The Pontiff also used the term "third world war", which is popular among Russian geopolitics proponents who believe that the West wants to destroy Russia and is heading to the hot phase

after the Cold War. He said, "Our time feels a great hunger for peace also in other regions, in other theaters of this third world war."

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew addressed the Ukrainian people in a separate message. "The Holy Great Church of Christ - which brought the Christian faith and Byzantine civilization to your homeland, Kyivan Rus, at the end of the 10th century - continues to admire the courage, bravery, and prowess of the Ukrainian people, who demonstrate to the whole world true devotion and boundless love for their country."

The Patriarch spoke about the war in unequivocal language. "This war, provoked by the aggression of the Russian Federation last February, constitutes the worst European geopolitical and humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War, with a negative impact on the environment and society worldwide."

The Patriarch of the Primus inter pares Orthodox Church named the aggressor and condemned the deformation of the Gospel by the Moscow Church, which backed the aggressive war. "Any distortion of the Gospel message for political purposes, trying to find a theological reason for war and violence, thus trying to justify the unjustifiable, turns out to be not only a caricature of the Gospel but also and above all a blasphemy against the God of mercy and the Prince of Peace", Bartholomew said.

As if the Patriarch of Moscow Church, Kirill Gundyayev, wanted to confirm the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch, he talked to the Diocesan Assembly of Moscow with very geopolitical justifications for the war. He blamed Kyiv for following the "instructions" to sow enmity among the "united" people of Holy Rus. By the instructors, Gundyayev meant the West in general and the US mainly, and by talking about "united people," he once again rejected the very existence of a separate from Russians Ukrainian nation.

Gundyayev made just exactly what Patriarch Bartholomew condemned him for – he elaborated on geopolitical justifications for the aggression against Ukraine. He claimed this war was just another manifestation of "an irrational hatred of peoples professing Orthodoxy."

Metropolitan Epiphanius, head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and Metropolitan Svyatoslav, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, have agreed to consider revising their religious calendars. Currently, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church celebrates Christmas on December 25, while the Orthodox Church of Ukraine [most Ukrainians go to] on January 7. However, most Orthodox Churches worldwide (nine out of fifteen), including three out of four old Patriarchates, celebrate on December 25.

The difference is due to the employment of either the Julian or the Gregorian calendars. Moscow tries to keep the other Churches subordinated to its rule or to be significantly influenced by it in the single Julian calendar (Ukrainian, Georgian, Polish and Serbian). Since the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's canonic autocephalous status (illegally abused by Moscow in 1686) was restored in 2019

by the Mother Church in Constantinople, it makes perfect sense to synchronize its Church calendar with the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

"Diya" (Action), Ukraine's e-government service poll, showed that two-thirds of respondents (more than 636 thousand users) prefer December 25 for the Christmas celebration, while a quarter of surveyed Ukrainians would like to stick to the old date and observe it on January 7. Of course, the poll is not representative because of the number of respondents and their status (overall, the "Diya" government app users are young and modern-minded people). But it indicates the general mood of Ukrainians' reaction to the aggressive Russian war and the destructive role of the Moscow Church in it.

Meanwhile, the Russian propaganda machine keeps pushing poorly-made "anti-Christmas" and "freezing Europe without Russia" messages to the European audience. "Russia Today", a Russian state-owned TV channel, has broadcasted a "Merry Anti-Russian Christmas" advertisement, showing a European family in a cold and dark living room celebrating Christmas and eating a hamster pet in soup. In contrast to the inhumane creativity, the Downing 10 posted a video of a different kind. A British girl had listened to the news about the war in Ukraine and sent a Christmas led garland to a girl in Ukraine, so she switched the lights on a Christmas tree in a dark living room somewhere in Ukraine.

Russia, relevant news

The State Duma is developing a bill to increase tax rates for Russians who have departed Russian Federation, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin wrote on his Telegram channel. Volodin was indignant that many who left are still working in Russian companies remotely and enjoying all the legal benefits.

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