
Snapshot of the day:

General, humanitarian:

- Ukrainian GDP declined by 30.4% in 2022, which is better than most forecasts at the start of the aggression.
- Russian forces continue shelling residential areas and civilian infrastructure, killing and injuring peaceful Ukrainian citizens.
- Russia continues to integrate occupied territories and restricts the freedom of movement of their residents.
- Crimea experiences fuel shortage.
- InformNapals volunteer OSINT community warns of possible Russia-organized explosions in Donetsk churches on Christmas morning.

Military:

- There is no significant change in the operational situation.
- The intensity of Russian missile strikes against Ukraine somewhat decreased as Russia cannot bring missiles into the Black Sea.
- 810 Russian servicemen were KIA in one day, bringing the number of dead occupiers to 109,720

International:

- Erdogan called on Putin for a unilateral ceasefire and a "vision of a just solution." Putin responded with the demand to recognize Russia's illegal annexation of the Ukrainian territories.
- Patriarch and former KGB officer Kirill (Gundyaev) petitioned Putin for a Christmas ceasefire. Putin ordered his invasion forces to institute the ceasefire. Ukraine dismissed the initiative as hypocrisy.
- The Orthodox Church of Ukraine will hold a Christmas liturgy at the holiest place in Ukraine for the first time in centuries.
- President Joe Biden talked to Senate's GOP majority leader Mitch McConnell about bipartisan support of Ukraine. The French President commits his support "Until victory until peace returns to Europe."
- Germany is about to announce a "qualitatively new step" in arms deliveries to Ukraine. Further support of Ukraine is discussed by the US Secretary of Defense and his Israeli counterpart, as well as between the foreign ministers of the UK and Germany.

Russia

- The first batch of Wagner PMC mercenaries recruited from prisons complete their contract and go home.
- Taiwan added 52 items to the list of high-tech goods not to be exported to Russia and Belarus.

Humanitarian aspect:

Russian attacks:

Due to the constant shelling, Bakhmut in **Donetsk Oblast** has been about 60% ruined, the head of the Donetsk Oblast Military Administration (OMA) said. According to him, Ukrainian troops managed to drive Russian occupiers out of the city, but because of the constant attacks, the city was getting ruined, and its residents were killed. Two women died on Wednesday, Kyrylenko reported.

The city of Nikopol, **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast**, was shelled with MLRS at least three times during the day. Several houses, commercial buildings, a social infrastructure facility, and power lines were damaged. The 64-year-old man severely injured by the Russian shelling yesterday died in a hospital.

The head of Kherson OMA, Yaroslav Yanushevich, reported that the Russian forces shelled **Kherson Oblast** 41 times over the past day, and 3 people were injured. They attacked Kherson 9 times, once again hitting the city's residential quarters. The downtown area of the city was attacked on January 5; a 20-year-old man died as a result. Another [Russian] strike today hit the town of Beryslav, killing the entire family of a 12-year-old boy and his parents.

Starting at 8:30 a.m. on January 5, there was a fairly long shelling of the Stepanivka community, **Zaporizhzhia Oblast**. The Head of Zaporizhzhia OMA, Oleksandr Starukh, reported that two people died and three were injured. He informed that employees of the village council who delivered firewood to people were among the wounded.

Energy

As of 11:00 a.m. on January 5, electricity consumption in Ukraine continues to rise due to lower temperatures and increased industry and business activity. Due to weather conditions, there is some damage to distribution networks in the central region of Ukraine, the press service of NEC "Ukrenergo" reported. It is also noted that power plants currently produce enough electricity to cover night consumption. The situation is difficult in the east [of Ukraine], where Russian shelling damaged an energy infrastructure object the night before.

Investigation of war crimes

Law enforcement officers identified the Russian soldiers who set up a combat position on Zhytomyr highway (M06) near **Kyiv** in March 2022 and shot cars with civilians. During the pre-trial investigation, it was established that the Russian military shot 10 vehicles from March 4 to 25, resulting in 13 civilians dying and six injured. There is also evidence of [Russian military] killing civilians in nearby villages and those who tried to walk past those combat positions. Operatives and investigators identified and created a photo database of 400 occupiers who took an active part in hostilities and committed war crimes in the Kyiv Oblast, the National Police said.

Culture

As a result of Russia's full-scale aggression, **1,189 cultural objects were damaged in Ukraine**, according to the data updated on December 25, 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy said. Moreover, almost a third of them, 446 objects, are currently completely destroyed. The Russian occupiers destroyed 155 and damaged 298 libraries, destroyed 22 and damaged 41

museums and galleries, destroyed 38 and damaged 54 artistic education institutions, and also destroyed and damaged 9 theaters and 9 philharmonic halls.

Occupied territories

Forced integration of temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories into the legal framework of the Russian Federation continues, Ukrainian General Staff reports. In Horlivka, **Donetsk Oblast**, the term for issuing Russian-style passports has been shortened from 30 to 10 days. In addition, the Russian Federation's license plates and driver's licenses are issued in the region.

Only one person was allowed to leave the occupied part of **Zaporizhzhia Oblast** to come to the territory controlled by Ukraine in the last two weeks, the Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said. He reported that this was a manager of one of the educational institutions who refused to collaborate with the occupying administration. He was taken into a car and driven out of his city towards Vasylivka, where he was released and forced to walk 15 km until he reached the Ukrainian checkpoint.

Deputy Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine to the Autonomous Republic of **Crimea** Denys Chystikov said that prices for gasoline, food, and medicine have risen in Crimea because private carriers refuse to use the "land corridor to Crimea", which is in the zone affected by the armed forces. Crimean Telegram channels report that Crimea and Sevastopol have been experiencing gasoline shortages for several days.

According to the National Resistance Center of the Ukrainian MOD, the presence of military equipment at the Crimean Titan plant (Armyansk, north of the Crimean Peninsula), as well as units of the radiation, chemical and biological defense forces of the Russian Federation, was recorded. The Center noted that, at the moment, it is unclear how the presence of these troops at the seized enterprise is justified. It also added that the presence of the military at the chemical industry facilities violates the norms of international humanitarian law.

International volunteer OSINT community InformNapalm reports that according to two InformNapalm HUMINT sources close to the so-called "DPR" militants, there is a high probability that several Orthodox churches in Donetsk and places in the territories occupied by Russia may be mined and blown up during the festive morning service on January 7 [Orthodox Christmas] to film propaganda scenes for the domestic Russian audience and thus initiate a new wave of mobilization.

Operational situation

(Please note that this section of the Brief is mainly on the previous day's (January 4) developments)

It is the 316th day of the strategic air-ground offensive operation of the Russian Armed Forces against Ukraine (in the official terminology of the Russian Federation – "operation to protect Donbas"). The Russian forces continue to concentrate their efforts on offensive actions in the Bakhmut direction. The Russian military is actively defending in the Novopavlivka, Zaporizhzhia

and Kherson directions. They shell positions of the Ukrainian troops and civilian objects along the line of contact. The Russian military had no success after offensive actions in Avdiivka and Kupyansk directions.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian military launched 3 missile strikes, 13 air strikes and fired 68 MRLS rounds, particularly hitting civilian infrastructure in Bakhmut, Kostantynivka and Kurakhove of Donetsk Oblast; Nikopol of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and Kherson. There are injured, heavily wounded and dead among the civilian population.

There are no signs that Russian offensive groupings are being formed in the Volyn, Polissya, Siversk and Slobozhanskiy directions.

Aviation of the Ukrainian Defense Forces made 20 strikes on the Russian troops' concentration areas and 5 strikes on the position of their anti-aircraft missile systems.

Anti-aircraft missile units of the Air Force destroyed a Russian Su-25 attack aircraft, a Ka-52 attack helicopter and an Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicle.

Ukrainian missile and artillery troops hit 3 enemy control posts, 4 areas of Russian manpower and military equipment concentration, and 2 ammunition depots.

The threat of Russian air and missile strikes persists throughout the territory of Ukraine.

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 is trying to improve its tactical position in the Kupyansk and Lyman directions. For this purpose, they attacked the Stelmakhivka and Ploshanka areas to stop the advance of the Ukrainian Defense Forces on Kreminna in the Dibrova.

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 Russian forces continue to focus their efforts on offensive actions in the Bakhmut area and try to improve their tactical position in the Avdiyivka area. The Russian command persistently tries to surround Bakhmut. For this purpose, they attacked the Ukrainian Joint Forces' positions in the Bilohorivka, Soledar, Krasna Gora, Vyimka, Pidhorodne, Bakhmut, Kurdyumivka, Mayorsk, Pivnichne, Vodyane, Krasnohorivka, Vesele, Maryinka and Pobieda.

Zaporizhzhia direction

- *Maryinka – Vasylivka section: approximate length of the line of combat - 200 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 17, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 11.7 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs: 36th separate motorized rifle brigade (SMRBr) of the 29th Combined Arms (CA) Army, 38th and 64th SMRBr, 69th separate cover brigade of the 35th CA Army, 5th separate tank brigade, 135th, 429th, 503rd and 693rd motorized rifle regiments (MRR) of the 19th motorized rifle division (MRD) of the 58th CA Army, 70th, 71st and 291st MRRs of the 42nd MRD of the 58th CA Army, 136th SMRB of the 58 CA Army, 46th and 49th machine gun artillery regiments of the 18th machine gun artillery division of the 68th Army Corps (AC), 39th SMRB of the 68th AC, 83th separate airborne assault brigade, 40th and 155th separate marines brigades, 22nd separate SOF brigade, 1st AC of the so-called DPR, and 2nd AC of the so-called LPR, PMCs.*

The Russian military defends previously occupied frontiers, concentrates efforts on restraining the units of Ukrainian Defense Forces, and fires at the positions of Ukrainian troops and civilian objects along the entire line of contact.

Tavriysk direction

- *Vasylivka – Sofiyivka section: approximate length of the battle line – 296 km, the number of BTGs of the RF Armed Forces - 39, the average width of the combat area of one BTG - 7,5 km;*
- *Deployed BTGs of: the 8th and 49th Combined Arms (CA) Armies; 11th, 103rd, 109th, and 127th rifle regiments of the mobilization reserve of the 1st Army Corps (AC); 35th and 36th CA Armies; 3rd AC; 90th tank division; the 22nd AC of the Coastal Forces; the 810th separate marines brigade of the Black Sea Fleet; the 7th and the 98th airborne division, and the 11th and 83rd separate airborne assault brigades of the Airborne Forces, 10th separate SOF brigade.*

The Russian military is regrouping troops to form the new operational grouping of troops "Dnieper". They also conduct defense and shell the Ukrainian Defence Forces' positions and civilian objects along the contact line.

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 storm continues at sea. There is no change regarding the number of ships. The Russian fleet keep 2 ships in the sea, and none of them was a Kalibr missile carrier. But at the same time, the Russian Navy maintains ships and submarines in Sevastopol, which can have up to 32 Kalibr missiles, ready to go to sea in 2-4 hours.

In the Sea of Azov, on the approach to the Mariupol and Berdiansk seaports, 2 patrol boats are located with the purpose of blocking the Azov coast.

Russian aviation continues to fly from the Crimean airfields of Belbek and Hvardiyske over the northwestern part of the Black Sea. During the day, about 10 sorties of Russian aircraft over the Black Sea were recorded, including the area along the "grain corridor".

In 2022, the Russian aggressor country fired hundreds of missiles at civilian infrastructure and residential buildings in Odesa Oblast. The Russian military carried out the most destructive missile strikes from April to August. Starting in October, it switched to attempts to destroy the energy infrastructure to leave Ukrainians without electricity before the New Year. This shelling will forever go down in history as the most destructive and deadly in the first year of full-scale war. Recently, Russia has increased the number of missile launches from the Caspian Sea due to the inability to deliver ammunition to the Black Sea. In general, the intensity of strikes on Ukraine has somewhat decreased.

During January 3-4, explosions and the operation of Russian air defense systems were noted in Crimea. In particular, the attacks were directed at the Belbek airfield (up to 70 aircraft of various types) and the Kozacha bay (the base of the 810th marine brigade) in Sevastopol. The [Russian] occupation authorities claimed that drones were used. The Russian Federation continues the construction of fortifications in the north and west of Crimea and transfers new troops to the northern part of the peninsula.

Russian operational losses from 24.02.2022 to 05.01.23

Personnel - almost 109,720 people (+810);

Tanks - 3,041 (+3)

Armored combat vehicles – 6,108 (+2);

Artillery systems – 2,051 (+12);
Multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) - 426 (+2);
Anti-aircraft warfare systems - 215 (0);
Vehicles and fuel tanks – 4,759 (+14);
Aircraft - 284 (+1);
Helicopters – 271 (+1);
UAV operational and tactical level – 1,844 (+2);
Intercepted cruise missiles - 723 (0);
Boats/ships – 16 (0).

Ukraine, general news

The Ministry of Economy has preliminarily estimated the drop in Ukraine's GDP by the end of 2022 at 30.4%, with a 2% margin of error. This is a better indicator than was predicted by previous forecasts. "This is objectively the worst result since independence, but better than most experts expected at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, when estimates ranged from a 40-50% fall in GDP and deeper," the Economy Ministry emphasized.

International diplomatic aspect

Vladimir Putin expressed to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Russia's "openness" for a dialogue about Ukraine [this traditionally ambivalent expression means avoiding calling Vladimir Zelensky by name and rather signals to the US that Russia is waiting for the Americans to make a first step in resolving the Ukrainian "issue"]. Putin blamed the West for the "destructive role in pumping the Kyiv regime with weapons and military equipment." And put forward the "only" precondition for talks, which is Ukraine's acceptance of the "realities on the ground" [giving up rightful demands to return the illegally annexed territories]. The Turkish President called on the Russian colleague to introduce a unilateral ceasefire and came up with a "vision of a just solution."

"We have prevented the spread of the fire in our region with the balanced and fair policies we have been pursuing in the Russia-Ukraine war, which not only disrupts the global economy's functioning but also threatens peace," Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said to his fellow party members. He went on by criticizing either Russia or the United States, "The crisis, which has escalated due to the Russia-Ukraine war, has once again proven that so-called developed countries care about nothing but their own security and prosperity and that they can resort to any kind of method to protect them."

"We cannot but worry about the ongoing military events that darken the holy Christmas celebration," the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) shamefacedly avoided words as "war" or "military aggression." The ROC archpriest called on his Kremlin's chief to introduce a ceasefire for Christmas (Moscow Church celebrates it on the 7 January). Putin has met Gundyayev's petition and ordered a 36-hours ceasefire. "Based on the fact that a large number of citizens professing Orthodoxy live in the areas of hostilities, we call on the Ukrainian side to declare a ceasefire and give them the opportunity to attend services on Christmas Eve, as well as on the Day of the Nativity of Christ," Putin wrote also avoiding the word "war".

"There will be no talks with them" about a ceasefire, said the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council. "The Russian Federation must leave the occupied territories; only then will it have a 'temporary truce'...Keep hypocrisy to yourself," Ukraine President's Adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted in response. Such a response is based on eight years' experience of Russia dishonoring ceasefire agreements in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, unwillingness to provide invaders with an opportunity to regroup, constant repression of religious groups on the illegally occupied territories, and destruction of religious buildings.

Russian invading forces destroyed 270 religious' buildings (five belonged to Muslim and five to Jewish communities, and the rest belonged to Christian communities). More than half of the destroyed buildings (136) belong to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. There were significant losses of Jehovah's Witnesses (66 buildings), Protestant communities (30), the Orthodox Church of Ukraine Moscow Patriarchate (21), the Roman Catholic Church (4), and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (3).

Meanwhile, Epiphany, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, will hold a Christmas liturgy (on 7 January, according to the Julian calendar) at the Assumption Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. It's a historical return of the rightful Ukrainian Church to the Lavra that, since 1051 for centuries, has been the spiritual center of Kyivan Rus and later Ukraine. The architectural ensemble is also a UNSECO heritage since 1994.

After the Soviet period of religious repressions, the premises were handed over to the Russian Orthodox Church because there were no other officially recognized Churches. Since 2016, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, de facto the ROC, rented the major buildings. The rent expired in December 2022. Now, the Ukrainian government (the landlord) allowed the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, restored by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, to hold religious services in the Lavra.

"We talked about foreign policy, about Ukraine, about keeping everybody together — not in the Congress, but just internationally," President Joe Biden said after the meeting with the Senate's GOP leader Senator Mitch McConnell. "Until victory, until peace returns to Europe, our support for Ukraine will not weaken. I confirmed it to President Zelensky: France will provide light combat tanks and continue its support in terms of air defense," Emmanuel Macron tweeted.

After the French decision to send heavy combat vehicles (AMX-10RC), the Germans are about to announce a "qualitatively new step" in arms deliveries to Ukraine. Though there are yet to be any details, this likely will mean delivery of Marder, but given the pressure of coalition partners on the Chancellor, Leopard tanks should not be ruled out. In addition, the Biden Administration is considering sending Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

Assistance to Ukraine was on the agenda of the telephone conversation between the US Secretary of Defense and the Israeli Minister of Defense and the first-ever UK-Germany annual Dialogue at the Foreign Ministers level. Norway has sent 10,000 artillery shells to Ukraine.

Russia, relevant news

Russian media reported that the Latvian intelligence services had detained Marat Kasem, the editor-in-chief of the Russian government-owned propaganda outlet Sputnik, in Riga on suspicion of violating sanctions and espionage.

The first group of former prisoners who participated in the Russian-Ukrainian war as volunteers of the "Wagner" PMC completed their six-month contract, and all criminal records were cleared from them, PMC founder Yevgeny Prigozhin told RIA Novosti. As a result, they have been released and allowed to go home. In the parting word, Prigozhin told the former criminals, "don't get drunk a lot, don't use drugs, don't rape women."

Trying to keep the tension up, the border committee of Belarus accused Ukraine of periodic provocations. According to the State Border Committee, the latest incident occurred at the simplified-procedure checkpoint Poddobryanka where Ukrainian border guards reportedly pointed weapons at Belarussian border guards and made threatening gestures. Russian media report the accusations widely.

Taiwan has expanded restrictions on the export of high-tech goods to Russia and Belarus, according to a press release from the Taiwan Ministry of Economy. The press release notes that Taiwan expanded the list to prevent using high-tech goods for military purposes. As a result, 52 titles have been added to the list.

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