

## **Ukraine Monthly Situation Report July 25th - August 23rd, 2022**

### **CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS**

- During the war's sixth month, the Russian army continued to slowly advance in the Donetsk oblast. However, it failed to capture any major settlement. Still, all of the cities and settlements located along the front line, including Avdiivka, Kramatorsk, Kostyantynivka, Bakhmut, Slovyansk, Kurakhove, Krasnohorivka, Mariinka and others, are subjected to continuous missile, artillery and airstrikes. Civilians continue to be evacuated from the Donetsk oblast. Every day the number of civilian casualties increases due to shelling. What's more, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Marhanets, Nikopol and other cities, as well as territories in the Sumy, Kharkiv and Chernihiv oblasts located on the Russian border, have also been subjected to regular shelling. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior, for every strike on a military object, there are 73 strikes on [civilian](#) ones.
- In August explosions in temporarily occupied Crimea have become a regular event. Officially, Ukraine has not taken responsibility for the explosions, while the Russian Federation (hereinafter Russia) has not officially accused Ukraine of carrying out most of the strikes. The Kremlin claims that then explosions were accidents or sabotage. Despite the official positions adopted by both warring parties, Ukrainian society regards these explosions as a signal that its military is preparing to liberate both Crimea and Southern Ukraine. There is a strong sense that the Russian myth about the inviolability of Crimea has been debunked. The Russian population in Crimea views these explosions as evidence of the inability of the Russian air defense to guarantee their safety from shelling. Consequently, large scale panic has led to [a mass exodus](#) from Crimea, including the families of the Russian military and tourists. This effectively means that the war is now also taking place in the territories that Russia considers as its own. This causes dissonance between the messages spread by Russian propaganda and increasing panic among Crimea's residents. Ukrainian citizens living in Crimea (in particular Crimean Tatars) are also leaving the peninsula through Russia. They use their Ukrainian passports to travel to third countries where they are bidding their time until Crimea is liberated. Military airbases in Novofedorivka and Belbek as well as the General Staff of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol are among the military objects that have been subjected to strikes. In light of this on 23 August Ukraine held the second summit of the [Crimean Platform](#) online with the in-person participation of Polish President, Andrzej Duda.
- The Ukrainian army continues its counteroffensive in the Kherson oblast. Following airstrikes with high-precision weapons, all four bridges crossing the Dnipro in the Kherson oblast (which

were used for deliveries of weapons and military equipment) have been disabled. The latest [massive strike](#) on the Antonivskiy bridge in Kherson took place on 22 August. It is likely the strike took place when vehicles loaded with ammunition were crossing the bridge, which led to it sustaining considerable damage. As a result, the Russian army cannot guarantee continuous deliveries for its units located in the Kherson region. This development means the rapid deployment of these units to other front areas has become more difficult. At the same time, the previously announced advance on the Dnipro's right bank and the capture of Kherson has not happened. The Ukrainian army regularly destroys ammunition depots and bases of the Russian army and its mercenaries using high-precision weapons. For example, a large base of the Wagner paramilitary group has been destroyed in Popasna.

- According to the official data, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereinafter AFU) and other military units have lost approximately 9000 soldiers during the first six months of the war. Currently, the Ukrainian army loses up to 50 soldiers [daily](#), while Russian losses are a few [hundred](#) soldiers a day (including forcibly mobilized residents of the occupied territories who are deployed to dangerous areas of the front without previous training or the necessary weapons). According to the Ukrainian government, since the beginning of the invasion Russia has lost over 1000 officers, whilst its general losses have reached the mark of 45,500 soldiers.
- While Russia has failed to achieve its original goal of reaching the administrative borders of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, its troops continue to carry out offensive operations, waging a war of attrition on Ukraine. Thus, the expectations that the warring parties are close to approach the point of equilibrium in their confrontation have not been fulfilled. Preconditions for at least a temporary ceasefire may arise. However, according to President Zelenskyy, "for the time being negotiations seem to be out of the question". Russia was willing to sign the Istanbul agreements for only one reason - it urgently needs a ceasefire and the Kremlin considers that the "grain agreements" are a step towards this goal. Therefore, Ukrainian experts predict that Russia will violate these agreements as soon as the Kremlin realizes that ceasefire negotiations with Ukraine are not possible.

## **HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS**

- Preparation for the "referenda" on accession to Russia in the occupied territories of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv oblasts are now in limbo due to the inability of the occupation administrations to ensure their organisation. It seems likely that a "referendum" will be held in the Luhansk oblast, which is now fully controlled by Russia. Denis Pushylin, Head of the occupation administration in the Donetsk oblast, announced that the "referendum" would be [held](#) only after the entire Donetsk oblast was under the control of the Russian army.

- Through the occupation administrations, Russia continues to send Ukrainian prisoners of war (hereinafter POWs) to trial, while also sentencing international fighters and the soldiers of some [volunteer](#) units to death. A major event will be a trial of the Azovstal steel plant defenders in Mariupol, whom the Kremlin accuses of terrorism. On 2 August Russia's Supreme Court recognised the fighters of the Azov regiment as [terrorists](#). Moscow also accuses a woman, who (according to Russia) served in the regiment, of killing Russian propagandist, Daria Dugina on 20 August. These measures are aimed at preparing Russian public opinion for the trial. On 28 July, a penal colony in Olenivka was [blown up](#), claiming the lives of over 50 Ukrainian POWs. Russia accused Ukraine of carrying out the explosion. However, it is more likely that Russia themselves did it, in order to coverup evidence of torture and extrajudicial executions of prisoners (videos of such torture have been uploaded on the internet by Russians themselves).
- On 9 August another exchange of the bodies of fallen soldiers took place. However, no exchange of POWs was carried out. It seems likely that Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (who continues to play the role of an intermediary between Ukraine and Russia) is involved in the preparation of such an exchange. According to a statement made by President Zelenskyy, Ukraine would reject any negotiations related to the shameful "trial" of the defenders of Mariupol.
- According to Ukraine's Ministry of Health, between 3 to 4 million Ukrainians will require medication to cope with mental health issues caused by the war. Another 15 million Ukrainians will require psychological support.
- Discussions continue concerning online and offline education formats in Ukraine's educational facilities. No major decisions have yet been taken in many Ukrainian regions, despite the fact that the school year begins on 1 September. As a result of Russian aggression, at least 1094 children have been affected over the last six months. 373 children have been killed with 721 injured.
- The range of goods in Ukrainian shops is decreasing. Some brands are abandoning the Ukrainian market which will impact jobs in the retail trade. The facilitated process of food products deliveries from Poland is having a detrimental effect on Ukrainian producers which are trying to resume their operations after the disastrous spring.
- In destroyed Ukrainian cities those inhabitants which have the financial means, are beginning to reconstruct their homes. However, the steps taken so far by the Ukrainian government, aimed at reconstructing homes, are insufficient. With the heating season due start relatively soon, the potential shelling of critical infrastructure objects by Russia, is likely. In the settlements located on the front line the best option is evacuation. Ukraine will be unable to manage the heating season in at least the Donetsk oblast with hostilities still raging.

## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

- Russia continues to use nuclear blackmail. However, in August the Kremlin switched from issuing nuclear threats to shelling the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (the largest nuclear power station in Europe) which it subsequently blamed on Ukraine. The amount of military equipment stored on the plant's premises is increasing. President Zelenskyy has called on the international community to recognize the plant's shelling as preparation for some sort of a [nuclear strike](#), since a potential disaster on the plant would lead to such an outcome. In August Russia has twice requested a meeting of the UN Security Council in order to accuse Ukraine of shelling the Zaporizhzhia Plant. However, Moscow does not allow international investigative institutions or the IAEA visit the plant's premises.
- During a meeting of the government on 9 August, Ukrainian Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, announced that the army and security would be the priorities for the 2023 state budget. According to Shmyhal, the government will not cut social programs. Rather it will restructure Ukraine's external debt of 6 billion of USD. The government is planning to establish an operative recovery fund within the framework of the budget. Ukrainian and world economists are calling on the government to switch to the war economy mode for the sake of flexibility and resilience.
- Ukrainian grain continues to be exported via sea through Turkey. On 31 July a representative of one of Ukraine's largest agrarian enterprises, Oleksiy Vadatursky, was killed by a [high-precision](#) missile, which hit his home in Mykolayiv. Given that he and his company "Nibulon" had actively been promoting the export of Ukrainian grain, it could be assumed that his murder was not [coincidental](#). It was an act of terror against a civilian or a public execution.
- The confrontation between the teams of the incumbent and former president of Ukraine is becoming more intense. It often manifests itself in political scandals, which lead to increased turbulence in Ukrainian politics. A number of oppositional political forces are trying to compare the Office of the President with the Commander-in-Chief of the AFU, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, by castigating the former while not criticising the latter. Accordingly, the team of the incumbent president tries to claim credit for the achievements of the military. At the same time, a survey conducted in August has shown that 98% of Ukrainians believe in victory and support the AFU, which attests to the fact that the idea of surrender or peace at any cost is currently not popular in Ukraine.
- Criticism targeting Zelenskyy by the Ukrainian opposition is becoming increasingly fierce, in particular, following his [interview](#) for The Washington Post. Zelenskyy is being blamed for failing to effectively prepare the country for war. This topic is likely to infiltrate Ukrainian politics, particularly ahead of new elections.

- A statement issued by the human rights organisation, Amnesty International, about the Ukrainian military allegedly exposing civilians to danger has created a scandal. Ukrainian [politicians](#) and civil society have unanimously supported the AFU. Amnesty International has been accused of [vindicating](#) Russian war criminals. The Head of Amnesty's Ukrainian representative office has been forced to resign.
- Rumors about a large government reshuffle have not been substantiated. However, President Zelenskyy initiated a number of personnel changes last month. The Head of the security service of Ukraine, Ivan Bakanov, General Prosecutor, Iryna Venedictova, first deputy secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Ruslan Demchenko, and the Minister of Social Policy, Marina Lazebna, were all removed. On the whole, experts believe these changes affirm the increasing influence of the head of the Office of the President, Andriy Yermak. Still, it would be premature to draw final conclusions about the new power configuration and the nature of the rejigged political regime in the country.

### **INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS**

- Anti-western narratives continue to be widely spread in Russia, in particular, regarding the increasingly hostile confrontation between Russia and the West. Messages [about](#) EU countries reneging on military aid for Ukraine (Ukraine fatigue) have also been circulating. [Arms deliveries](#) to Ukraine are being condemned, with claims that they “will lead to an extended geography of the war in Ukraine” and that western arms deliveries may also “prolong the military operation”. Sergei Shoigu, Russian Minister of defence, [claims](#) that western arms (in particular HIMARS) have not influenced the special military operation in Ukraine. Russia also continues to spread information about Ukraine's losses of western weapons.
- Anti-Ukrainian narratives dehumanising Ukrainians continue to be spread. However, the West is now being accused being behind the current situation. Sergei Kirienko, deputy head of the administration of President Putin, stated that Russia is [confronting](#) NATO in Ukraine until “the last Ukrainian standing”, and “western nations are happy to see Ukrainians die as long as it serves their interests”.
- Leonid Slutsky, member of the Russian Duma, has said that the military operation “has passed the point of no return”. Messages are being shared about Russia being ready for negotiations but that its position is going to be “tough”. While the Kremlin continues to emphasise that the goals of its special military mission remain “unchanged”. it is also increasingly emphasising its goals regarding the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. On 15 August, Russian President, Vladimir Putin [said](#) that the Russian army was gradually completing the task of liberating Donbas

- Russia denies that its army has incurred any losses. The war is usually represented in the Russian information space not only as “the special operation”, but also as a war against the “collective West”. Hidden mobilization in Russia continues. For example, volunteer battalions (at least 40 of them) are being formed across the country to be sent to fight in Ukraine. Bonuses and other financial perks are promised for those who achieve success on the battlefield.
- Endless measures are being taken to facilitate the integration of the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblast into Russia. The Kremlin is attempting to annex these territories. In the Zaporizhzhia oblast a decree has been issued ordering a referendum to be held on the unification with Russia. Russian officials have visited the occupied territories of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. Deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, visited the occupied territories of the Luhansk oblast. During the visit he had a security meeting at Putin’s behest. The speaker of the Russian State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, also visited the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic. Russia has been sharing messages stressing the necessity of aligning the legislation of the DPR and LPR with that of Russia. In the Kherson oblast Russian standards in education, management, transport and banking are being introduced. Russian police are starting to operate in the region. The scale of reprisals carried out against the local Ukrainian population who speak out against the occupation is increasing. Russian passports are being issued to Ukrainian citizens living in the newly occupied territories. **Arrangements are being made for the show trial of Ukrainian POWs from the Azov regiment in Mariupol.**
- Russia is discrediting the AFU by spreading narratives and widely drawing on the report published by Amnesty International. Hundreds of articles in Russian media and on social networks have been quoting the report, pointing out that that it is the AFU who are committing crimes against civilians. Russia is legitimising its aggression as “the liberation” of Ukraine. Narratives have also been spread claiming the AFU uses poisonous substances.
- Ukraine’s leadership and the AFU are being discredited by Russia. Moscow accuses Ukraine of shelling the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, assigning responsibility to Ukraine for a potential environmental disaster.
- The scope of reprisals taken against those who disagree with the “special operation” is gathering steam. Nevertheless, Russian society does support this operation. In a recent survey, 60% of respondents backed the decision taken by Putin to “launch a new offensive on Kyiv”. At the same time, 65% would support a decision to terminate the operation and sign a peace agreement. 41% of respondents have admitted to feeling “tired of the news coming from the special operation in Ukraine” while 56% claim the opposite. Narratives are being disseminated about Russia’s economic achievements and its citizens’ positive expectations for economic progress



inside the country despite the sanctions. At the beginning of spring 2022, the economic mood of Russians markedly improved, which has been corroborated by a [survey](#) conducted by the Foundation “Public Opinion” (FPO).

- Officially, Russia has not acknowledged the attacks launched by Ukraine on its military infrastructure in Crimea. Instead, the Kremlin is spreading information about Ukraine shelling Russian settlements located on the Ukrainian border. Publicly, Russia does not acknowledge any threats posed by the Ukrainian army to Russian military units stationed in Crimea.
- Russia is going out of its way to highlight its humanitarian mission in Ukraine. The evacuation is referred to as the deportation of Ukrainian citizens to Russian [territories](#) “without the involvement of the Ukrainian government”. The Kremlin claims that it complies with “the grain agreements”.
- In August, narratives regarding peace negotiations were different. At the beginning of August Russia’s leadership [claimed](#) that there were no grounds for holding peace negotiations with Ukraine. These statements were made concurrently with threats of “shelling of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant” and the escalation in East and South Ukraine. However, in the first part of August the Kremlin [said](#) that negotiations were in fact possible, but that Russia’s position would be “tough”. According to Russia, peace talks were “frozen” by Ukraine.