

May 30th - June 12th, 2023
Ukraine Situation Report

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) have undertaken counteroffensive operations in several directions.** For example, in June at least 7 settlements on the administrative border of the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions were [liberated](#). Active warfare is taking place in the Donetsk region, with the AFU having [liberated](#) swathes of land around Bakhmut, Vuhledar and Avdiivka. **The pace of the counteroffensive in the Kherson region has slowed due to Russia blowing up the Kakhovska Dam.** In addition, the defense lines and ammunition depots of the Russian army located on the left bank of the Dnipro were affected. A substantial amount of ammunition and landmines were [washed river](#) to the Black Sea, where they are forming hazardous landfills and are at risk of explosion. **Aside from the Kakhovska dam,** dams in Chornozemne, Peremozhne, Annika and Vyazivka in Zaporizhzhia regions were also destroyed, with the aim of complicating Ukraine's counteroffensive.
- According to the Ukrainian government, the **overall losses of the Russian Federation** (Russia) already amount to over [216.000](#).
- **The Russian army continues to launch missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities.** On the night of 30 May, [31 kamikaze drones](#) were launched, with 29 of them downed, while on the night of 1 June Ukraine shot down all ten [Iskander](#) missiles launched on Kyiv. On the night of 4 June, 4 out of 6 cruise missiles and 6 out of 8 kamikaze drones were downed and on the night of 6 June, all 35 [cruise missiles](#), fired by Russia on Ukrainian cities, were shot down. On the night of 10 June, 2 out of 8 cruise missiles [were destroyed](#), as well as 20 out of 35 kamikaze drones were downed. On the night of 11 June, 6 kamikaze drones were destroyed.
- **For two weeks several cities including Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Balakliya, Slovyansk, Druzhkivka, Velyka Novosilka, Avdiivka, Kurakhove, Myrhorod, Uman, Huliaypole, Orikhiv, Nikopol** were subjected to air, missile and artillery strikes, as well as settlements located close to the Russian border in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions. Kherson and the settlements in the eponymous region face subjected to continuous shelling despite the rescue operation. Volunteers and aid points for those affected by the destruction of the dam have been repeatedly [shelled](#) the Kharkiv region, the Russian army shelled [an ammonia pipeline](#), which could have catastrophic consequences. For its part, the Ukrainian army continues to attack logistics objects and armories located in the occupied territories, in particular in Luhansk, Melitopol, Berdyansk, and other cities.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- According to the official [information provided by juvenile prosecutors](#), 487 children have been killed with over 1015 having been injured with various degree of severity. 19.501 children are believed to have been deported. As a result of a prisoners swap on 11 June, [95 people](#) returned to Ukraine, including soldiers of the AFU, the National Guard and Border Guard. Ukraine has also received the

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bodies of [79 Ukrainian defenders](#) killed in combat. The plan [Bring Kids Back UA](#) aimed at returning the children deported to Russia has started to be implemented. It is supported by the President of Ukraine.

- Around 500 people remain in the city of [Bakhmut](#), which is the epicenter of warfare. Prior to the full-scale invasion the city had a population of some 70.000 citizens. Since 24 February, 204 citizens have died there. Ukraine is controlling the outskirts of the city. On 12 June, the Ukrainian army managed to [advance](#) in the Bakhmut direction by almost 1 km.
- According to data presented by British intelligence agencies, in May Russia attacked Ukraine with [300 Shahed drones](#), the largest such attack since the beginning of the war. The aim was likely to “force Ukraine to squander valuable stocks of air defense missiles”. However, Ukraine neutralized 90% of the drones using mainly old and cheap air defense weapons.
- The situation vis-à-vis bomb shelters in Ukraine is precarious. Over [4800](#) of them have been checked. 282 shelters were closed, with 893 of them unsuitable for use.
- The illegal deportation of Ukrainian children continues. The Russian occupation authorities recognize Ukrainian children as “orphans” and send them to Russia for adoption. The procedure of recognizing Ukrainian children as children “without parental guardianship”, as well as requirements for foster parents have been [simplified](#). The search for children has become complicated for their relatives and guardians. The Russians are trying to send Ukrainian children to foster families as soon as possible since children’s homes and orphanages in many Russian regions are overcrowded. About 100 facilities are being used to accommodate deported children from Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories. According to the media outlet [Vazhnye Istorii](#), the biggest number of deported children are now in Rostov province, which borders Ukraine, and in Moscow. According to the Minister for Reintegration of Temporary Occupied Territories of Ukraine, Iryna Vereshchuk, the deported children have their names and dates and birth changed. According to Vereshchuk: “in all Russian regions they hide children, change their identity, names, surnames and date of birth. Everything is done to assimilate them, which is an act of genocide. They forcibly russify them, giving them so-called passports. They do everything to make these children forget their homeland”.
- On 6 June, 2023 Russia [blew up](#) the Kakhovska Dam, which contained 18 million cubic meters of water. The dam has been completely [destroyed](#) and cannot be restored. It is the largest man-made disaster in Europe since the Chernobyl tragedy. The height of the wave reached 4,8 meters, with over 80 settlements finding themselves at risk of flooding. Approximately 16.000 people found themselves in the “critical area”. 3.704 people have been evacuated, while [27 people](#) are missing. 30% of the natural reserve of Kherson region and more than 300 types of fauna and flora are in danger of [extinction](#). The Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Ruslan Strilets, estimates that the cost of the environmental damage amounts to [55 billion UAH](#).
- In a statement, the UN Under-Secretary-General, Martin Griffiths, [emphasized](#) that Russia failed to grant the UN access to the occupied territories of the Kherson region to help those impacted by the flooding. Karine Jean-Pierre, White House Press Secretary, [said](#) that the responsibility for destruction of the Kakhovska Dam fully lies with Russia, as it was occupied and controlled by its army.

- The dam's destruction may leave Crimea without freshwater. It was constructed in 1958 exactly with the purpose of providing freshwater to the peninsula.
- According to [estimates](#) of the Ministry of Agricultural Policy and Food, the destruction of the Kakhovska Dam could lead to the fields in Southern Ukraine turning into deserts as soon as next year.
- [According](#) to Ukraine's Ministry of Defense there is an increased "risk of explosives" floating in the flood impact areas. Russian landmine fortifications have become submerged under water.
- Due to the destruction of the dam, the fishing industry will incur damages in the amount of [10,5 billion UAH](#). As of now, large-scale fish deaths have occurred in Maryanske. Over [850 kilograms](#) of fish have died. An investigation into an act of ecocide has been launched.
- Moreover, 150 tons of engine oil has [spilled](#) into the Dnipro. There is a risk of a further spillage of 300 tons. In the [Inhulets](#) river the permissible level of harmful and hazardous substances was recorded. There is an excess of the concentration of ammonium nitrogen, total iron and suspended substances.
- The [Kazkova Dibrova](#) Zoo has been flooded due to the disaster, killing about 300 animals. They were prevented from leaving the park, which was mined. All roads leading out the park were blocked, stopping their evacuation.
- During the evacuation measures taken by the Ukrainian government in Kherson, Russia continued to [shell](#) the city. Two policemen from Kherson were wounded due to landmine explosions, leaving them with multiple shrapnel wounds.
- According to the Center of National Resistance, the Russian occupiers are looting the flooded villages in the temporarily occupied territories on the left bank of the Kherson region. With water having started to drain away, people wish to return to their homes. However, the Russians have blocked the entry into these villages, and are looting houses. In the village of Velyka Kardashynka, which is located in the Skadovsky rayon, the Russians are even pillaging the houses where residents remain inside. It has also been reported that in Hola Prystan, the Russians have barred people from living in the premises of a local school, after they took their passports and forbade from returning to their homes. Evacuation from this city is only permitted upon receiving a [bribe](#). At the same time, the Russians are destroying passports, birth certificates and other IDs issued in Ukraine.

INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **Denying involvement in the explosion at the Kakhovska Dam. Information campaign "Kakhovska Bucha-2"**. Official Russian propaganda denies Russia's involvement in the explosion at the Kakhovska Dam. Russia rejects claims about its involvement in the tragedy, accusing Ukraine of [blowing up](#) the dam. Moscow claims that the Ukrainian missile complex "Vilkha" caused the destruction with its "[shelling](#)". All messages promoted by the official Russian media focus on Ukraine being guilty of the tragedy in Kherson region.

- The interpretation of the tragedy is also presented as the West being cautious about accusing Russia of the tragedy. In parallel, Russia insists that Ukraine staged the tragedy in Bucha, is responsible for the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, as well as on “Ukraine failing to exploit the tragedy in Kakhovka”. Moscow has introduced [narratives](#), that claim western politicians to do not unequivocally support Ukraine’s claims about Russia’s involvement in the incident.
- **Russian humanitarian mission in Kherson region.** Moscow is constantly circulating messages about Russia offering help to the residents of Kherson region, to restore normal life in the wake of the catastrophe ([restoring mobile connection](#), [evacuation](#) of citizens, [vaccination](#), etc.)
- **Western threat to the security of Russia. Sanctions on Russia will kill the EU’s economy. Russia throws off the yoke of the West.** Russian official media continue to promote the [narratives](#) about the strong Russian economy and the inefficiency of western economic sanctions claiming that the sanctions affect western countries rather than Russian economy. Russia also continues promoting “intellectual analysis” about changes in the world since the start of the war including the goals of Russia, particularly weakening countries in the West that now have to yield to Asian countries and China. The Kremlin emphasizes the need for Russia to further move towards the East.
- **Most countries support Russia.** Moscow constantly [promotes](#) the narratives (shared by allegedly American experts) that most countries in the world (countries in Africa and Asia) support Russia’s actions in Ukraine, about “a confrontation with the West”. Russia claims that Ukraine turns down [peace initiatives](#) coming from Asian countries, “inciting war in Europe”.
- **Shebekino receives aid.** Developments in the Belgorod Region are repeatedly [portrayed](#) as a Ukrainian attack which the Russian military successfully repels. [Narratives](#) in official Russian media focus on “the aid offered to people who have been evacuated from Shebekino due to shelling”. The military angle to the developments has rarely been mentioned. The Russian media mainly covers the assistance provided to the local residents.
- **Our cause is just. Russian victory in the conflict with Ukraine is imminent.** Russia’s official media continues to promote messages about the need for a strong Russia which will not be brought to its knees by anyone. Moscow [speaks](#) about “the potential” of Russia and “a strong civil society” that backs the idea of an invincible and resilient Russia. Putin continuously promotes mobilization narratives about “[heroism of Russian soldiers](#)” who prevent the Ukrainian offensive. Russia continues to hand out [awards](#) to the “[heroes](#)” of the so-called special military operation (SMO). The official media write about a united Russian society that “has been protecting” Russia for many centuries ([a statement made by Putin](#)). Moscow claims that the SMO is important as it has strengthened the Russian state ([Putin again](#)). Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia, has referred to Independence Square in Kyiv as a future Russian square.
- **Shelling Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. The Ukrainian government is guilty.** Russia’s official media [claim](#) that conflicts within the Ukrainian government and political rivalry are to blame for casualties in Kyiv as a result of shelling. Moscow claims that the Ukrainian government does a bad job of taking care of bomb shelters. At the same time, Russian messages do not mention the fact

that it is Russia who launches cruise missiles at Kyiv. Instead, Russia blames the Ukrainian government for casualties in Ukrainian cities due to Ukraine's inadequate preparation, rivalry in the government and political strife.

- **“What kind of Ukraine do we need? We do not need it at all.” Denying Ukraine’s identity and statehood. There is no reason to negotiate.** Russia continues to [spread](#) official narratives about the need to liquidate Ukraine as it pursues “Russophobia”. Moscow rejects the possibility of negotiations. “What kind of Ukraine do we need? We do not need it at all. While the current regime in Kyiv is in power, negotiations are impossible”. Kremlin Spokesman, Dmitry [Peskov](#) has spoken about “the absence of any reason for peace talks”.
- **Discrediting Ukraine and the Ukrainian government. “Jealous terrorists”.** The Ukrainian government is permanently [accused](#) of blowing up the Kakhovska Dam and continuing the war. It is claimed that Ukrainians are fighting “because they are jealous of Russian standards of living”. At the same time, Moscow fails to mention the goals of the so-called SMO. The goal of the Russian media is to lay responsibility for the war on Ukraine.
- **The Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed. Discrediting the Ukrainian army.** According to Russian [messages](#), the Ukrainian counteroffensive, which purportedly began on [June 4](#), has failed. Moscow claims that the AFU has sustained significant losses. Narratives abound about vain hopes of the West on getting the upper hand over Russia “during the botched Ukrainian offensive” and about “[western investment](#)” in Ukraine being futile and inefficient. Russia claims that in some directions in the [Zaporizhzhia province](#) the Ukrainians have failed due to “strong Russian positions”.
- **About victories and achievements of the Russian army and the losses incurred by the AFU.** As usual the Russian media is full of stories about the [achievements](#) of the Russian army, and the elimination of Ukrainian soldiers and equipment. Russia insists that the Ukrainian offensive will fail due to the strong Russian army that is successfully [fighting off](#) Ukrainian attacks. Last week, the Russian media did not quote representatives of the paramilitary Wagner group, choosing to focus instead on the creation of new Chechen battalions that are being sent to the SMO ([a statement made by Kadyrov](#)). The media have written about “[40 volunteer battalions](#)” that are supposed to reflect the unity in Russian society. The number of [contract](#) soldiers joining the ranks of the Russian army has allegedly risen. Mobilization narratives are spread about the Russian Ministry of Defense controlling the situation on the front and beefing up troop numbers. The goal is to demonstrate heroism and strength of the army. At the same time, Russian channels on Telegram are discussing the issue of further positioning of Prigozhyn and his conflict with the Ministry of Defense. Significant activity in the information space has been observed by the Ministry of Defense that is offering comments on the current developments and “awarding” representatives of the Russian military.