

Ukraine Situation Report September 12th - September 19th, 2022

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- Russian troops continue to advance in the Bakhmut direction in the Donetsk oblast with shelling taking place in [Bakhmut](#) and other settlements located along the front line, including Kramatorsk, [Sloviansk](#), [Kostyantynivka](#), Avdiivka and [Myrnohrad](#). Fresh drone [footage](#) shows that the fate of Mariupol and other destroyed cities in Eastern Ukraine could befall the city of Bakhmut. Cities located in other Ukrainian regions have also been subjected to regular shelling, including Mykolayiv, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Chuhuiv, Kryvyi Rih, Marhanets, Nikopol and other settlements in the Sumy region, located on the Russian border.
- The Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereinafter: AFU) continue their counteroffensive in the Kharkiv and Kherson oblasts. A counteroffensive has also been launched in the Luhansk oblast. The village of Bilohorivka (located close to Lysychansk) has been liberated along with (the city of Svyatohirsk and the villages of Bohorodychne, Shchurove, Krymky, Yarova and others (located on the outskirts of Lyman) in the Donetsk oblast.
- In parallel to liberating territory, Ukraine continues documenting war crimes committed by Russians during the occupation. Ukrainian law enforcement units have already acquired valuable experience in dealing with such cases in Kyiv oblast. Therefore, the documenting work is now conducted on a more systematic basis. For example, following the liberation of Izyum, [a mass grave](#) of some 460 bodies was unearthed. Some of the bodies had signs of torture.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- The humanitarian situation in both the occupied territories and in the settlements located along the front line remains catastrophic. There is a shortage of water, gas, energy and medicines. Preparations for the heating season in the occupied territories, the newly liberated territories and settlements located along the front line are insufficient. It will be [virtually](#) impossible to complete preparations in those cities destroyed by the war. Therefore, the evacuation of people residing along the front line continues. According to the civil and military administration in the [Donetsk](#) oblast, about 75% of residents in the Ukrainian government-controlled areas have already abandoned their homes.
- In the village of Strilecha, located in the Kharkiv oblast, a psychiatric [hospital](#) was shelled from Russian territory during the evacuation of its patients. Six people were killed.
- On 19 September another explosion took place on the premises of the Olenivka prison where Ukrainian prisoners of war are detained. The Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia) again reported dead and wounded, without having granted international missions access to the colony.

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- There have been reports of numerous outbreaks of violence and crimes committed against locals in the occupied settlements. For example, in the Kherson oblast armed individuals [abducted](#) school teacher, Tamila Malyshchuk and her husband. Representatives of the occupation administrations are also being subjected to violence (this could be explained by activities of underground groups or conflict between different interest groups). On 16 September, Oleh Boiko, Deputy Head of the Occupation Administration, and his wife were killed in Berdyansk. The so-called “General Prosecutor” of the “Luhansk People’s Republic”, Serhii Horenko, was killed in Luhansk. On 19 September, Denys Stefankov, one of the policemen collaborating with the local occupation administration, was murdered.
- The Ukrainian government is trying to quickly restore its [operations](#) in the newly liberated territories. For example, by appointing heads of local military administrations whose task it is to establish a functioning government apparatus, provide services for citizens and ensure security.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- The Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, and the former Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, have [presented](#) a new paper on security guarantees for Ukraine. The paper is being actively discussed in both Ukrainian and Russian political circles and among experts.
- Not only are Ukrainian objects of civilian infrastructure being subjected to shelling, critical infrastructure that provides energy and therefore are critically important for civilian life is also under attack. On 12 September, [large-scale](#) missile strikes hit objects of energy infrastructure in the Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk oblasts, which led to a full or partial blackout that lasted for several hours. On 15 September, [the Karachunivsk Dam](#) on the Inhulets river in Kryvyi Rih was shelled several times. This led to parts of the city being flooded. The Russians may have resorted to this in order to slow down the pace of the Ukrainian counteroffensive in the Kharkiv oblast). On 17-18 September, a thermal power station in Slovyansk was shelled. On the night of 19 September, the Russian army launched a missile attack on the industrial zone at the [South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant](#) located in the Mykolayiv oblast. A powerful explosion took place 300 meters from the plant’s reactor. The shockwave damaged the plant’s building, smashing windows and disabling some of its equipment.
- In 2023 a [fund](#) with a budget of at least 19 billion UAH will be set up in Ukraine for the purpose of dealing with the consequences of Russian aggression. According to Ukrainian Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, the fund is expected to operate with money that will be confiscated from Russia and its citizens, as well as with international aid allocated for Ukraine’s quick recovery.

INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- In general, Russian political discourse is dominated by narratives about confronting all those who do not approve of the “special military operation”. Whereas previous narratives promoted the idea of support for this operation, today the focus has shifted to explaining the need for total support and unification of Russian society in order to stand up to Western countries that pose a threat to Russia. For example, messages from the Russian Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights are being [spread](#), which back the aggression and condemn anyone who doubts the necessity of Putin’s actions. Russian pop diva, Alla Pugacheva, is being chastised for not supporting the special operation. Her recent condemnation of the special military operation is widely discussed on Telegram channels.
- Initiatives of the Ukrainian government and experts related to security guarantees are being criticised. For example, Russian narratives justify the escalation of the special operation due to such initiatives (especially those that do not imply “the neutral status” of Ukraine), including those developed in the group headed by Yermak and Rasmussen.
- Following the defeat of the Russian army in the Kharkiv oblast, the Kremlin started to promote a narrative claiming that Russia is not fighting with Ukraine but with the West. The killing of civilians in Izyum is [rejected](#). The Kremlin claims that the West has faked another “Bucha”.
- Openly far-right messages [justifying](#) a genocide of the Ukrainian people with weapons of mass destruction are circulating in Russia. Such messages claim that nuclear war is better than a Ukrainian victory: – “we will have to defeat and destroy Ukraine even if we (which is unlikely) are unable to restore a single life, even if we have to destroy all plants, even if we are not able to restore fertile black soil, even if we have to destroy our economy and take the lives of thousands of Russian young men”. Such texts, written by far-right groups, are being actively disseminated and transmitted by the Russian media as justification to destroy Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. This has led to Ukrainians being increasingly dehumanised in Russia.
- Russia continues to [announce](#) the potential annexation of Ukrainian territories including the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics. The Kremlin claims that the “referendum” could take place in the fall or even earlier. However, Russian semi-official institutions have [refrained](#) from commenting on such statements.
- Russia continues to accuse the West (the EU and US in particular), of causing a global energy and economic crisis. It also claims that the ultimate goal of Kyiv and the West is the disintegration of Russia – a trend (according to Moscow) that has existed since the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Russian President, Vladimir Putin’s participation in the summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SHO) is depicted in Russia as a [victory](#). Moscow claims that Russian actions enjoy support and that its economy will thrive because most of the world’s population lives in SHO “partner countries”. Putin also spoke about resolving the situation in Ukraine, accusing Kyiv of a lack of willingness to conduct peace negotiations. On 16 September Putin [reiterated](#) that the goals of the special military operation in Ukraine had not changed. He said that the Russian General Staff

- makes prompt decisions in the field. According to Putin, the main goal of the operation is the liberation of the entire territory of Donbas. According to him, this goal is being achieved despite the counter-offensives undertaken by Ukraine. However, the issue of the “denazification” of Ukraine was not publicly addressed at the summit. Nevertheless, Russian internal discourse is effectively tolerating messages (broadcast on Russian TV channels) calling for the genocide of Ukrainians.
- Russian officials have spoken about potential peace negotiations from a position of strength, emphasising the need to achieve all the goals of the special military operation. On 12 September, Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Head of the Security Council of Russia [said](#) that Russia’s current negotiation position on Ukraine was “merely a warm-up before future demands for the total surrender of the Kyiv regime”. Putin’s Press Secretary, Dmitry Peskov, has [said](#) that “as of now the Kremlin does not see a negotiating prospect with Ukraine and confirmed the absence of any prerequisites for such negotiations”.
 - While admitting the usefulness of the proposal put forward by Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, related to the organisation of negotiations between the Russian and Ukrainian Presidents, Peskov emphasised that “there are no preconditions for such a scenario”.
 - Russia has accused Ukraine of resorting to sabotage and acts of terrorism in the occupied territories. It is claimed that Russian secret services have [put an end](#) to the acts of sabotage and terror aimed at representatives of the military and civil administration in the Kherson oblast and Crimea, which were being implemented by the Security Service of Ukraine.
 - Russia dismisses information related to losses incurred by the Russian army as well as its retreat from Ukraine. Russia’s leadership claims that the president is fully in control of the situation. Putin is constantly [updated](#) on developments in the special military operation “including the reorganization of Russian troops”. Peskov [emphasized](#) that “the special military operation is going well and will continue until all its goals are achieved”. Peskov failed to clarify the full list of goals. Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, has [said](#) that the goals of the special military operation would be achieved despite the large amount of aid delivered by the West to the Ukrainian regime and the unprecedented sanctions pressure exerted on Russia. Dmitry Peskov also [said](#) that Russia would carry out the special military operation until all of its initial goals were reached.
 - Russia is promoting narratives about “Ukraine fatigue” and about the West being [unable](#) to respond to global challenges and deal with international cooperation because of the war in Ukraine. In parallel, Russians are [circulating](#) information about a social and economic crisis in Ukraine, including growing social protests and the increasing numbers of people who do not share the views of the Ukrainian President.
 - Moscow continues to take both hidden and unhidden mobilisation measures. There have been numerous messages about private military companies being established. [Assistance](#) is being provided for those students in Russian universities who could potentially participate in the special military operation. Russia has again resorted to the practice of engaging “regional battalions” in combat zones. At the same time, representatives of Russian political circles have [responded](#) with

restraint to the proposal formulated by Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov about the “self-mobilization of Russian regions”. Russian governors are [reporting](#) about the participation of regional battalions from Bashkortostan in the special military operation. North Ossetia and [Voronezh](#) province have announced the [creation](#) of an additional battalion that was due to participate in the special military operation by the end of September. Following Kadyrov’s proposal, Russian officials in temporarily occupied Crimea have [spoken](#) about “volunteers” that were going to fight in the military operation.

- In a semi-official manner, Russia is accusing Ukraine of shelling Belgorod province. However, Russia’s political leadership has not officially reacted to these accusations. At the same time, officers of the Russian Investigative Committee are [opening](#) criminal proceedings concerning the case of the “shelling of 17 September”.