

## **Ukraine Situation Report September 6th - September 11th, 2022**

### **CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS**

- Russian troops continue their [counteroffensive](#) in the Donetsk oblast. In parallel, they are shelling settlements located along the front line, including [Kramatorsk](#), Pokrovsk, Bakhmut, [Sloviansk](#), [Kurakhove](#), Soledar and others. Other Ukrainian cities ([Mykolayiv](#), [Kharkiv](#), [Dnipro](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), Voznesensk, Marhanets, Nikopol and other settlements in the Sumy oblast situated on the Russian border), located in different regions, have been regularly subjected to airstrikes. According to estimates by the Ukrainian government, the Russian army launched 35 cruise missiles and almost 50 guided air missiles on Ukraine last week. Generally, there is a trend of for lower intensity shelling. This could be explained by a shortage of high-precision weapons at the Russian army's disposal. This may be the reason why shelling is carried out from S300 air missile systems.
- During their counteroffensive in the Kherson oblast, the Ukrainian army pulled off a major breakthrough, breaking through Russian defenses. This has effectively led to the withdrawal of Russian troops from the oblast's territory (at least to the west of the river Oskil, which has served as a new natural barrier, just like the river of Siverskyi Donets). The largest settlements to have been liberated (since April), include Kupyansk, Izyum, Vovchansk, Velykyi Burluk and others. In some directions Ukrainian troops have managed to [reach](#) Ukraine's state border, while in other areas of the front they have come very close. Russian military bases and ammunition depots that are located on Ukrainian territory (currently controlled by Russia) continue to be shelled. The Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia), is also preparing [offensives](#) in both South and East Ukraine. However, the task of shelling Kharkiv with artillery has become more challenging for Russian troops.
- Outbreaks of violence continue to occur in the temporarily occupied territories, including the representatives of the occupation administrations. For example, on 5 September Artem Bardyn [commandant](#) of Berdyansk was blown up in his car. He died from his wounds later in hospital. It is not yet clear who is behind his assassination: Ukrainian partisans or rival representatives of the Russian administration. Mass graves continue to be unearthed in the occupied settlements, as well as documents attesting to the seizure of Ukrainian books.
- On 8 September the fifth meeting of the [Rammstein](#) Contact Group took place, a day after an article written by Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Lieutenant-General, Mykhailo Zabrodskyi was published. Among other things, the two Ukrainian generals admitted Ukraine carried out the airstrikes on Crimea, something that the Ukrainian government had not acknowledged before.

## HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- The humanitarian situation in both the occupied territories and along the front line remains critical. The shortage of water, gas, energy and medications is taking its toll on the population. In parallel, a spell of cold weather has set in, in Ukraine. In some regions the temperature at night is just a few degrees above zero. However, preparations for a new heating season in the occupied territories and along the front-line leave much to be desired. Arrangements are being made in the liberated territories of the Kharkiv oblast, to prepare for the heating season.
- Operations of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant have been completely suspended. On the night of 11 September, the sixth energy block was cut off from the power grid. Moreover, despite the presence of representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the plant, the Russian military continues to use the plant as a storehouse for military equipment, making it vulnerable to their provocations.
- On 6 September a further [exchange](#) of the bodies of fallen soldiers took place. The bodies of 25 more soldiers were returned to Ukraine. The Russians also returned the body of a British volunteer fighter, Paul Urey, who died after being tortured in Russian [captivity](#). The Kremlin had previously claimed that his death was due to “stress”. Russia has not [allowed](#) the mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross to inspect the location of the explosion in Olenivka, where Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed in July 2022.
- Preparations for the so-called “referenda” in the occupied territories continues. Russia has announced that 4 November (Unity Day in Russia) is the new date for the referenda. Nevertheless, the escalation in the hostilities and the loss of territories previously controlled by Russia in the Kharkiv oblast, have foiled these efforts. Instead, those people who had agreed to cooperate with occupation administrations to prepare these referenda are abandoning the front line areas to avoid being prosecuted by the Ukrainian government for wartime collaboration, once the territories are liberated. The “referendum” in the Kherson oblast has also been [postponed](#).

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- Ukraine has fulfilled one of the [requirements](#) to begin accession negotiations with the EU. Ukraine's parliament has adopted laws regarding simplifying the process of providing the information required to conduct financial monitoring. According to Ukrainian Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine is capable of complying with all requirements to join the EU within [two years](#).
- Last month Ukraine received a record-breaking volume of international aid, which has helped the country increase its foreign exchange reserves by 13,6%. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is also expected to provide a further [subsidized loan](#) of 530 million USD that will help Ukraine ensure resilience of the state management.

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- [Food inflation](#) in Ukraine reached 23,8% in August. This situation is expected to deteriorate. Growing prices will lead to the increased poverty in the country.
- Ukraine has effectively finished harvesting cereal grain crops and rapeseed. [The harvest](#) is 40% lower than last year due to smaller harvest areas, whereas this year's crop yield is only 12% lower than that of 2021.
- In August the volume Ukraine's [exports](#) grew by 13,9%. However, this is still 44% lower than at the start of the year.

## INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- Russia continues to spread narratives about victories and the strength of the Russian army. Crises and losses are not covered by the Russian media. On 8 September the Kremlin dismissed messages about Russia having lost control over settlements such as Balakliya and Shevchenkove located in the Kharkiv oblast. Only by the noon of 9 September did the announcements begin to appear acknowledging the loss of control over Balakliya and other settlements. Since the morning of 9 September Russian officials have not commented on the Ukrainian Armed Forces offensive. Instead, the Russian information space is saturated with news of advancing Russian troops and military units in the Kharkiv oblast as well as their control over strategically important logistics hubs (Kupyansk).
- On 9 September, Putin's press-secretary, Dmitry Peskov, [refused to comment](#) on the situation in the Kharkiv oblast. Russian propagandist, [Margarita Simonyan](#), began to call for the unification of Ukrainians and Russians on her Twitter and Telegram accounts. She also mentioned "the great retreat of 1915" against a backdrop of Ukraine's counteroffensive in the Kharkiv oblast.
- On 10 September, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, participated in the Moscow Day celebrations. However, there have been no messages in Russia about losses incurred by the Russian army in the Kharkiv oblast, except for sporadic references to the Russian military "fighting for a peaceful life in Donbas".
- On the evening of 10 October, the Russian Ministry of Defense stated that "Russian troops are stationed in the Balakliya and Izyum rayons. They have regrouped and been sent to strengthen Russian forces in the Donetsk area", which is purportedly aimed at reaching equilibrium on the front. Managers of the Russian government's (the Ministry of Defense) official accounts on social media disabled the option of live comments on 10-11 September. Russian official narratives remain the same, namely "the heroism of the Russian army" the increasing number of Ukrainian prisoners of war and destroyed weapons belonging to "Ukrainian nationalists".
- Moscow has again raised the topic of negotiations with Ukraine. The Kremlin's stance remains the same - negotiations are possible but on Russian terms. On 11 September, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov said that Russia would not refuse to negotiate with Ukraine, but that the escalation in hostilities initiated by Ukraine would make it difficult to reach an agreement with Moscow. According to Lavrov, Ukraine believes that negotiations will only start after "Russia withdraws from

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Ukraine's territory. Ukrainians will be ready for a dialogue by imposing their terms". The Kremlin continues to issue military threats. Lavrov continued, saying that "if that is their choice, we know how to reach the goals set by the President".

- In light of Russian failures on the front, messages are being circulated in Russia about the [need](#) to exterminate as many Ukrainians as possible, and to destroy Ukrainian civilian infrastructure because "Ukrainians have gone berserk".
- Russia maintains that its army is destroying the weapons delivered to Ukraine by its western partners. These messages are being spread in the Kherson oblast, where the news about the Ukrainian offensive is being rejected. However, on 8 September, Russians stated that Ukraine's offensive failed and that "the counteroffensive launched by the Ukrainian army would mean suicide for its soldiers".
- Those loyal to Putin's regime, i.e. representatives of Russian far-right groups, have begun voicing alternative ideas on Telegram channels. Russia's leadership is being criticised as well a top Russian military officers, who have failed to save Russian soldiers, kept the number of casualties under wraps and shared untrustworthy information from the front. It is rumoured that "the inhabitants of the Belgorod oblast learned about the approaching front lines from bloggers on Telegram". Far-right groups are criticizing Putin by default. "Russian generals" are losing their credibility.
- The Kremlin continues to spread narratives about the "right and legitimate" nature of Russian aggression in Ukraine. On 7 September, President Putin participated in a plenary session at the Eastern Economic Forum. Some observers claim that Putin spoke "the language of final warnings". He said that "Russia has not lost anything" and that "in terms of gains... our main gain is our strengthened sovereignty, which is directly connected to current developments". Putin accused the USA and the EU of taking reckless steps that are leading to the collapse of the world economy as a result of their "obsession with illusory political ideas" which disregard the welfare of their own citizens. He also claimed that the EU countries were to blame for its gas crisis. At the same time, the speaker of the State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, [said](#) that the USA "is bringing famine to Europe", whereas Russia is challenging American hegemony.
- Russians (Putin, MPs and Lavrov) have started to speak more often about the weak implementation of the "grain agreements". The Kremlin has expressed doubts about their prolongation in November. Moscow claims that the grain is not being delivered to the beneficiaries of countries envisaged by Russia. This was first voiced on 7 September by Putin. On 9 September [similar narratives](#) were promoted by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Russians are still pursuing the goal of disseminating narratives about the destructive actions taken by the Ukrainian army regarding the security of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (landing of paratroopers, shelling, etc.). On 11 September Russia suspended operations at the plant.
- In light of the current military situation, the Russian media are spreading [narratives](#) about Russia's humanitarian mission in Ukraine. They claim that the Russian government is looking into possibility introducing a visa regime for Ukrainian citizens. The Russian media claims that this would complicate the lives of those Ukrainians who travel to Russia for humanitarian reasons. The Armed Forces of

Ukraine are [accused](#) of committing war crimes (80 criminal proceedings have been initiated by the Investigative Committee of Russia). Against the backdrop of Ukraine's counteroffensive in the Kharkiv oblast, the Russians are spreading messages about a camp of Ukrainian refugees located on Russian territory. However, according to the Russian media, the number of such camps in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" has decreased. Moscow has also reported "a growing [number](#)" of Ukrainian prisoners of war.