

September 2024
Ukraine Monthly Situation Report

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) have prioritized launching attacks in the Donetsk province. At the end of September, they managed to capture the ruins of Vuhledar (a city located to the south of Pokrovsk), while continuing to mount pressure on the town of Pokrovsk. Active warfare in the current climate zone can be held until October-November, after which heavy equipment starts to move at a much slower pace as wet weather sets in. Therefore, Russian military commanders aim to seize as much territory of Donetsk province as possible, despite the huge losses they are suffering. As of the end of September, the total losses incurred by Russian troops, according to Ukrainian government, amounted to over [654.000](#) soldiers killed.
- For its part, the Ukrainian army continues to exert control over several settlements in Russia's Kursk province. Russia's counteroffensive has failed to expel the Ukrainian forces. Due to these developments, the AFRF have been forced to transfer reserves from other areas of the front. In some cases they have even had to retreat (e.g. in Kupyansk direction), where Ukrainian units have managed to [regain control of](#) the Vovchansk aggregate plant. Russian military infrastructure continues to be subjected to shelling. On 18th September, a strategic weapons arsenal at [Toropets](#) (Tver province) was destroyed. On 21st September, a major ammunition depot at [Tikhoretsk](#) (Krasnodar Krai) was attacked. On 29 September, the same fate befell an arsenal at [Kotluban](#) (Volgograd province). These attacks have significantly reduced the AFRF attacking potential. Furthermore, throughout September a number of large-scale cyberattacks targeted Russian government and banking resources, leaving some incapacitated for a long time.
- The AFRF continue to conduct strikes on Ukrainian settlements and strategic energy facilities, using cruise missiles and kamikaze drones (over 1300 of the latter were launched in [September](#) alone, with 1100 shot down). In September, the cities of [Kyiv](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#) (in the last ten days of September the city was subjected to strikes with precision guided bombs almost every night), [Kharkiv](#), [Ivano-Frankivsk](#), [Lviv](#), [Poltava](#), [Kherson](#), [Sumy](#) (on 19th September, a geriatric facility was hit by missiles), [Odesa](#), [Dnipro](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), [Starokostyantyniv](#), [Pokrovsk](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Kostyantynivka](#), [Izmail](#), [Konotop](#), [Pavlohrad](#) were attacked by air, as well as other settlements. Apart from military facilities, critical facilities are also subjected to air strikes, such as hospitals, residential buildings, educational and other civilian facilities.
- On 13th and 14th September, two prisoners of war (PoWs) swaps took place. On the first day, [49 people](#) returned to Ukraine and on the following day [103](#). For the first time in a while the military personnel from the Special Operations Azov Brigade were swapped. Their captivity had actively been exploited by Russian propaganda. Also, in September, 12 Ukrainian children, who had previously been deported to Russia, [returned](#) to Ukraine, along with a 20-year-old man.
- At the same time, new cases of Russia executing Ukrainian POWs have surfaced. On 17th September, a photo of a POW with tied hands was [released](#). He was killed by a sword being stabbed through his chest. New evidence of Ukrainian POWs being executed by the Russian occupiers has also emerged.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- **According to the official information provided by juvenile prosecutors, since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, 577 children have [died](#) while over 1522 have sustained wounds of various degrees of severity.**
- 144,362 war crimes and crimes of aggression, as well as 19,315 crimes against national security have been [registered](#). According to official data, the number of deported or forcibly relocated children [stands](#) at 19,456. However, the exact number cannot be identified. 1,5 million Ukrainian children find themselves in the occupied territories, fearing deportation. As of 19th September 2024, 1,957 children were [considered](#) to be missing in Ukraine.
- **Russian aggression continues to inflict devastating damage on Ukraine's cultural heritage and creative potential.** During the night of 3rd September, 2024, a Russian missile attack on Lviv [damaged](#) 188 buildings. At least 19 of the objects struck are on the list of local historical landmarks. 154 residential buildings and 7 educational facilities were damaged, as well as a cultural institution, a sports and healthcare facility. All the buildings that were damaged are located in the buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. It has been part of the World Heritage in Danger List since 2023 and the World Heritage List of objects that are under enhanced protection. The Russian occupiers have [stolen](#) over 10,000 artifacts from the Kherson Museum of Art. A total of 2,044 cultural infrastructure facilities [have either been damaged](#) or ruined due to Russian aggression. Also, the total number of damaged cultural heritage landmarks in Ukrainian regions has grown by 51, now [amounting](#) to 1147. The forcible relocation of people from the occupied territories also [poses a threat](#) as it can result in the loss of the cultural uniqueness of the territories currently occupied by Russia. The deaths of the representatives of Ukrainian culture, such as the musician [Pavlo Dmytrash](#), the painter [Veronika Kozhushko](#) and the poet [Taras Illia](#), testify to the fact that the war is destroying an important stratum of Ukraine's intellectual and creative potential. Already 123 artists have been [killed](#), which has caused irreparable damage to social resilience and cohesion in Ukraine.
- **Russian aggression is also causing severe damage to Ukraine's environment which will have a negative long-term impact.** In the Mykolayiv province soil contaminated with heavy metals on demined territories was discovered. In the Cherkasy and Kirovohrad provinces three cases of fire [have been registered](#) due to Russian shelling, which has destroyed large swathes of forest. In the Kherson province sappers [continue](#) to demine territories, clearing the water area in the Beryslav rayon. Following a missile strike on Zaporizhzhia, the contamination of soil in an area of over 1300 square meters has been [documented](#). In the Kharkiv province, 347 hectares were [demined](#) within a week, with 1300 shells neutralized. As a result of the regular air defense work in Kyiv and its province, the regions animals are [exposed](#) to stress, which leads to them losing orientation and the inability to control their movements. In Donetsk province a massive fire [took](#) some time to be extinguished in the Lyman forestry. The decreasing quality of water in the Seym river has been [registered](#) due to organic contamination following shelling. A forest fire in Sumy province [spread over](#) 50 hectares. It was caused by Russian igniting shells. The right bank of Kherson province continues to be demined. 53% of its territory has already been [cleared](#) of mines. The demining process is expected to end by 2025. As a result of Russian actions, the environment of Luhansk province has [sustained](#) damage amounting to over half a trillion UAH (*approximately 11 billion EUR - translator's note*).

- **Russian aggression continues to inflict considerable damage on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, economy, and social sector, which compounds the country's recovery and aggravates humanitarian and financial losses.** Russian attacks on energy infrastructure have [caused](#) damage amounting to over 1 billion USD. Over 50 Russian attacks on Ukraine's sea port infrastructure have [destroyed](#) and damaged over 280 facilities. 523 sports facilities have either been demolished or [damaged](#). Ukraine [loses](#) 11,2 billion USD a year due to mined areas. Russia has [dropped](#) a precise guided bomb on a higher education institution in Sumy. In Donetsk province 512 agricultural enterprises are active, 353 of which (or 69%) have [sustained](#) damage and destruction due to Russia's invasion. In Kirovohrad province, the area of demolished agricultural land due to Russian shelling now amounts to around 130 hectares, having [incurred](#) damages amounting to 5,1 million UAH. Furthermore, the damage caused by Russia stealing Ukrainian grain [amounts](#) to over 30 billion UAH, and could be even higher as these data are not final. Since the full-scale invasion, 48 medical facilities have been [damaged](#) in the Zaporizhzhia province, with 8 medical facilities destroyed.
- **Forcible evacuation in some Ukrainian regions continue due to Russian attacks. The forcible evacuation of children and their facilities is continuing** in 16 settlements in Donetsk province. 1437 of these children are under the age of 18. The largest number of children exposed to danger reside in the city of Kostyantynivka. As of 17th September, 995 children were still residing in the city. In 90 settlements of 7 territorial communities of Sumy rayon, the forcible evacuation of children with their parents and legal guardians was [announced](#).
- **Ukraine is actively returning its citizens from Russian captivity in the occupied territories.** On 13th September, 49 Ukrainians were [returned](#) to Ukraine, among them were defenders of the Azovstal plant. On 14th September, another 103 Ukrainian military servicemen [returned](#) to Ukraine. This prisoners swap was brokered by the United Arab Emirates. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has managed to [return](#) 3,672 of its citizens. As of 12th September, 931 children were [brought back](#) to the Ukrainian controlled territories.
- **Russia continues to pose a threat to both Ukrainian and global security.** Ukrainian intelligence has [warned](#) the government about Russia's upcoming strikes on the country's critical nuclear energy facilities, which may result in a nuclear incident. Ukraine has already flagged this information to its international partners and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), calling on them to rapidly expand their mission to better control the situation. Armed people and military equipment are present on the premises of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) which is currently occupied by Russia. They [prevent](#) the IAEA mission from accessing the ZNPP, while landmines are planted between the internal and external fences surrounding the plant.
- **Activities undertaken by the Russian occupiers in the temporarily occupied territories lead to the systematic destruction of infrastructure, which not only compounds the process of restoring the enterprises, but also exacerbates the economic and social crises in the region.** In the temporarily occupied territories of Luhansk province the Russian occupiers are [removing](#) high-voltage cables that were previously used to transmit electricity to closed coal mines. This seems to signal that Russia does not intend to restore the coal industry, which would gradually eliminate the cities that used to depend on those coal mines.

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

- **Ukraine's 2025 [budget](#) has modest expectations vis a vis international aid.** It is also more realistic about 'the length of the war'. 1,746.5 billion UAH of external debt is planned to be raised in 2025. At the exchange rate of 45 UAH per dollar the debt will amount to 38,8 billion USD. The sources of external funds will primarily be the European Union (within the framework of the Ukraine Facility), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other official creditors. However, the problem is that half of this sum is guaranteed. As of now, about 15-16 billion USD of loans (12,5 billion EUR from the EU and 1,8 billion USD from the IMF) have been confirmed. During her recent visit, European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, announced a new loan of 35 billion EUR, which is effectively a substitute for grant financing. However, no further precise conditions for this financing have been announced.
- **Forecasts for business in 2025 ([survey](#) conducted by the European Business Association of Ukraine).** Slightly more than fifty percent of companies (53%) expect positive dynamics in their businesses developing in 2025. Last year, 58% of heads of companies shared similar expectations. A third of the respondents (33%) hope to keep their business indicators at the level of the previous year in 2025, while 14% of them expect negative dynamics (there were 13% of heads of companies last year who concurred with such an assessment).
- **Experts from *DiXi Group* have outlined** an optimistic and a pessimistic [scenario](#) of the situation around energy in the wintertime. According to the former, power outages are possible during peak hours, i.e., in the mornings (from 8 to 10 am), and in the evenings (from 5 to 8-9 pm). Some households will not have electricity in the mornings, whilst others will not have it in the evenings. There will be no cases of people being without electricity in both the mornings and evenings. Thus, power outages are expected to last for 3-4 hours. The negative scenario implies new strikes by Russia and minus one gigawatt of energy capacities. In this case, the duration of power outages will increase, with Ukrainians having access to electricity for just 3-4 hours a night.
- **Ukraine remains a leader in producing and exporting agricultural produce.** According to the [Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine](#), since the beginning of the 2024-2025 marketing year, Ukraine has managed to export 10,053 million tons of grain crops and legumes. The Ministry has also said that as of 27 September, in the 2024/2025 marketing year Ukraine already exported 5,802 million tons of grain (in 2023 the number stood at 3,115 million), 1,253 million tons of barley (603.000 tons the previous year), 7.500 tons of rye (0,7 thousand previous year) and 2,734 million tons of corn (2,599 million previous year).
- **The Ukrainian government has [launched](#) the process of establishing certified private schools where drone operators will be taught.** Since the start of the war tens of private teaching centers for operators of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) sprang up in Ukraine. However, there has been no single system to cover this sector. The government has issued a decree that will lead to the certification of private UAV schools. These educational institutions will be able to obtain a certificate and offer official teaching services for would-be operators who will be offered the position of UAV operators at any military units of the Forces of Security and the Defence Forces of Ukraine after passing the necessary exams.

INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **‘Nuclear threats’.** Against the backdrop of consultations held by Ukraine’s partners regarding the permission to use medium-range missiles to strike military facilities on Russian soil, a number of Russia’s political elites resumed spreading narratives about nuclear threats. For example, messages about the revision of Russia’s nuclear doctrine have proliferated. Political analyst, Sergey Karaganov, declared that ‘the [current nuclear](#) doctrine falls short of performing the function of containment’. Russian officials say that the work on renewing the nuclear doctrine (‘The Foundations of the Russian Federation’s State Policy in the Area of Nuclear Containment’) is in its advanced stage. At a public meeting of Russia’s Security Council on 25th September, Russian President, Vladimir Putin [spoke](#) about how the Russian nuclear doctrine was about to be changed. Purportedly, the category of states and military alliances was expanded, towards which the nuclear containment is to be deployed. The list of military threats that are to be neutralized through the means of nuclear containment was expanded. It was [proposed](#) to deem an aggression on the part of any non-nuclear state (aided by a nuclear state or with its direct participation) as a joint attack on Russia. Kremlin Spokesman, Dmitry [Peskov](#) said that Russian President’s statements regarding Russia’s nuclear doctrine not only could, but also should be viewed as a signal to the West. At the same time, [Peskov refused](#) to comment about the Kremlin testing intercontinental ballistic missile *Sarmat*, referring the question to the Russian Ministry of Defence. The militarization of Russia continues apace. The AFRF are being expanded, nuclear tests are being carried out, consultations are being held about military innovations (UAVs) against the backdrop of Western countries reflecting on the need to hold negotiations with Russia and reach a potential compromise to achieve ceasefire, etc.
- **About ‘peaceful negotiations’.** In early September, Putin [claimed](#) that Russia had never rejected the idea of negotiating with Ukraine, but that Moscow expected that negotiations be based on the agreements [reached](#) in Istanbul in 2022. He spoke about Ukraine’s permanent neutrality, territorial concessions, etc. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov had previously [said](#) that negotiations were out of the question, something Putin has also emphasized on numerous occasions. Lavrov has also said that Russia would never hold negotiations about its ‘own territories’. Russian propaganda is spreading [narratives](#) through its official channels about the West having resigned itself to the fact that Russia cannot be defeated and that dreams about ‘restoring territorial integrity of Ukraine’ must end. Lavrov has [criticized](#) the peace initiatives (Peace Formula) proposed by Kyiv. On 24th September, Peskov [said](#) that there were no alternatives to Russia achieving its goals ([demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine](#), its neutral status and the acknowledgement of the developments on the ground). [Sergey Lavrov](#) has also mentioned the risks of Ukraine joining NATO and the ‘human rights’ that Russia is allegedly defending through its aggression against Ukraine.
- **About the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the policy of Russian assimilation of Ukrainians.** Russia continues to purposely pursue a policy of assimilating Ukrainians living in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine (Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, plus Crimea). The Russian government has [adopted](#) a new 2030 Strategy for National Cultural Policy to ensure a single cultural space of Russia that would also cover Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The goal of the policy is to introduce traditional values, support families, create a single common space, and assert Russian identity. On 30th September, Putin addressed Russian citizens. It was timed to coincide with the so-called Day of Reunion of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, as well as of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces with Russia. The Russian President also

[mentioned](#) the so-called Novorossiia (comprising 9 regions of Ukraine) and the alleged ‘protection’ of Ukrainian provinces from the influence of Western countries.

- **‘Resource threats’ issued by Russia against the West.** In Russia restrictions may be imposed on supplying certain types of resources abroad, should be detrimental to Russian economy. This proposal was put forward by Vladimir Putin during his [meeting](#) with government officials. Narratives are being [circulated](#) in Russia, claiming that restrictions on exporting nuclear fuel and other materials will undermine the energy security of Western countries.
- **Strengthening the Russian army, military innovations, mobilisation resources, military losses.** On 16th September, Putin signed a decree to [increase](#) the number of military personnel in the AFRF by 180.000 people, having raised the bar to 1,5 million personnel. According to this document, the number of AFRF personnel is set to remain at the level of 2,389,130 people, including 1,500,000 servicemen. According to the previous decree, which was in force since 1st December 2023, the number of the personnel was 2,209,130 people, including 1,320,000 servicemen. The increase in the number of personnel of the AFRF to 2,39 million is related to the need to equip the servicemen of new military districts, that of Leningrad and of Moscow, according to Putin. On 19th September, he also [held](#) a meeting of the Russian Military and Industrial Commission dedicated to the issue of developing unmanned aviation systems for special purposes, the increase in the potential of Russian military and industrial sector (a new center has been opened in the Republic of Sakha). On 24th September, the State Duma [passed](#) a bill in the second and third reading that would allow the convicted to sign a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defence, while their case is being considered in court or after they are acquitted. This step is aimed to increase manpower in the army.
- For 2025 a few priorities have been set in Russian budget, namely, defence, security and the needs for the ‘special military operation’. Russia intends to [increase](#) security related expenses to 13,2 trillion rubles in 2025. In 2024 the level of these expenses was 10,4 trillion rubles. Therefore, the growth will come out at 26,9%. The expenses will cover technological leadership, and measures aimed at expanding the infrastructure, federal projects on producing new tanks, new materials, and chemicals, as well as unmanned aviation systems.
- **About victories and achievements by the Russian army and losses incurred by the Armed forces of Ukraine.** Russian propaganda continues to spread messages about the achievements of the Russian army in Kursk, strikes launched at Ukrainian infrastructure, including Ukraine’s [military](#) and energy infrastructure facilities.
- **‘Destruction of Ukraine’s energy sector is a top priority’. Denying the facts of the destruction of Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure.** Russian propaganda channels [dismiss](#) the fact of the AFRF striking Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure, residential buildings (in Zaporizhzhia), claiming that the AFRF only target military facilities (in Zaporizhzhia). In parallel, Russian official propaganda [is spreading](#) messages about Russia needing to dismantle the entire energy generation system of Ukraine, naming it its top priority (this message was put forward in the magazine *National Defence* by Igor Korotchenko).
- **Discrediting Ukraine’s political leadership.** [Narratives](#) about the ‘anti-democrat’ Zelenskyy, usurpation of power and the preparation of some coups in Ukraine.