

## More territory retaken in week 6 of Ukraine's counteroffensive



UK Defence Intelligence update on the battlefield situation in Ukraine as of today.

While the attention of those concerned with Russia's war in Ukraine was focused last week on the two-day meeting of the leaders of the NATO member states in Vilnius, Ukraine's counteroffensive continued in its sixth week in eastern and southeastern Ukraine. And while the attention of the world was on the resolution of Turkey's objection to Sweden's accession to NATO and the continuing discussion about Ukraine's membership, back in the war the Ukrainian forces continued to make small advances and reclaim territory that had been taken by the Russian forces.

On Wednesday, Deputy Minister of Defense Hanna Maliar wrote on Telegram, "In the Bakhmut sector, today we advanced on the southern flank around Bakhmut. There are gains. Now our defenders are entrenching themselves on the achieved lines." She also said Ukraine's forces limited the advance of Russian troops in the Kupyansk, Lyman, Avdiivka, and Maryinka areas: "Successfully. The enemy has not advanced. Heavy fighting is going on." And she reported that offensive operations were continuing in southeastern Ukraine in the direction of Melitopol and Berdiansk, which, if taken, would cut Russia's "land bridge" to Crimea: "The military performs many tasks aimed at weakening the enemy and working out the situation before further actions. In recent weeks, our defenders in the south have significantly undermined the offensive and defensive capabilities of the enemy. Thus, due to the destruction of a large number of ammunition depots, the number of enemy shelling has now decreased."

On Thursday, Maliar reported that Ukrainian troops were engaged in heavy fighting both in the area to the east of Lyman and the area around Avdiivka: "Today, like yesterday, it's hot in the east. The enemy continued to attack in Kupyansk, Lyman,

Avdiivka, and Maryinka directions. Our defenders restrained the enemy with all their might and succeeded. Heavy battles are currently going on.” She also reported that Ukrainian troops were advancing, despite strong resistance, on the southern flank of Bakhmut and that Russian forces had attacked but failed to regain the positions they had lost on the northern flank of the city. And in the offensive operation underway in the direction of Melitopol and Berdiansk, she reported that Ukrainian forces had captured several settlements south of the town of Orikhiv “and now they gain a foothold on the achieved boundaries. The enemy redeploys units and uses all available reserves. Thanks to the fact that our fighters destroy enemy equipment depots every day, the intensity of enemy shelling has decreased somewhat.”

On Friday, Maliar reported that in the area around Bakhmut the Ukrainian forces continued to press forward on the southern flank of the city while the Russian forces unsuccessfully counterattacked on the northern flank of the city, which, although largely destroyed, is nevertheless important for both sides since it is the last significant obstacle (apart from the Ukrainian forces themselves) standing between the Russian forces and the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. Maliar also reported that Ukrainian forces had moved further southward in the direction of Melitopol and Berdiansk, had taken several more settlements, and “are now entrenched on the achieved frontiers. The enemy is now moving divisions and using all available reserves. Because our fighters destroy enemy equipment warehouses every day, enemy shelling has decreased somewhat.”

On Sunday, Maliar reported on Telegram that fighting in eastern Ukraine had “somewhat intensified” as Russian forces continued attacking in the direction of Lyman: “For two days in a row, the enemy has been actively conducting offensive actions in the Kharkiv region’s Kupyansk sector. We are holding defense. Fierce battles are underway, and positions of the parties change dynamically several times a day.” She also reported the forces continued to fight in the area around Bakhmut and that the Ukrainian forces are “gradually moving forward” near Bakhmut. “There is a daily advance on the southern flank around Bakhmut. On the northern flank, we are trying to hold our positions. The enemy is attacking. In Bakhmut itself, we are shelling the enemy, and the enemy is shelling us.” She said the Ukrainian forces were also blocking Russian advances near Avdiivka and Maryinka, both of which are near the city of Donetsk.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Ukrainian military’s southern command said Ukrainian forces have continued to advance in the direction of Berdiansk on the Sea of Azov: “In the Melitopol direction, the situation remained unchanged. But in the Berdiansk direction, we have advanced more than one kilometer deep into the enemy’s defense along a certain front line.... Heavy confrontations and maneuvers are now underway. Strike units are gaining footholds within the re-captured frontiers, conducting aerial reconnaissance, inflicting fire damage on the enemy, carrying out demining works and counterbattery activities.”

Today, Maliar reported that the situation in eastern Ukraine remains “tense.” “For two days in a row, the enemy has been actively conducting offensive actions in the Kharkiv region’s Kupyansk sector. We are holding defense. Fierce battles are underway, and the positions of the parties change dynamically several times a day.” In the Bakhmut area, she reported that Ukraine’s forces are “gradually advancing. In particular, there are daily advances on the southern flank around Bakhmut. On the northern flank, we are trying to hold the re-captured positions. The enemy is attacking. In Bakhmut itself, we fire at the enemy, and the enemy at us.” She also reported that in the vicinity of Avdiivka and Marinka, the Russian forces continue offensive actions and the Ukrainian forces hold them back: “Fierce battles are raging with no change in positions.”

Also today, summing up the results of the counteroffensive last week, Maliar said the Ukrainian forces had retaken 7 square kilometers of territory in the Bakhmut area, bringing the total of the territory retaken in that area over the six weeks since the counteroffensive began on June 4 to 31 square kilometers, or nearly 12 square miles. She said the Ukrainian forces had also taken back 11 square kilometers of territory in southeastern Ukraine last week, bringing the total of the territory retaken in that area over the six weeks of the counteroffensive to nearly 180 square kilometers, or nearly 70 square miles.

Speaking to journalists in Kyiv on Friday, Andriy Yermak, the head of the office of the president of Ukraine, said the counteroffensive is “hard work” and acknowledged “It’s not going that fast; it is slow.” He’s right; it is hard work and it’s not going that fast. But Ukraine has no choice but to continue the counteroffensive. And so week seven of the counteroffensive began yesterday.

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