

Small advances in east & southeast in week 10 of Ukraine counteroffensive



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

Yesterday, as on previous Mondays since mid-June, Ukraine Deputy Minister of Defense Hanna Maliar summarized developments in the previous week of Ukraine’s counteroffensive in eastern and southeastern Ukraine. In most weeks, although not last week, she also provided an estimate of the amount of territory retaken by the Ukrainian forces in each area in the previous week. The amounts retaken each week ranged from 2 to 9 square kilometers in eastern Ukraine and 10 to 28 square kilometers in southeastern Ukraine. As of two weeks ago, the Ukrainian forces had taken back a total of 37 square kilometers (14 square miles) in eastern Ukraine and 205 square kilometers (79 square miles) in southeastern Ukraine since the counteroffensive began in early June.

Yesterday, in reporting on developments in week 10 of the counteroffensive, Maliar said, “In the Bakhmut sector, three square kilometers (1.2 square miles) were liberated last week. In total, 40 square kilometers [15.4 square miles] have been liberated on the southern flank of the Bakhmut sector.” She didn’t give a precise estimate of the amount of territory retaken over the past week in southeastern Ukraine. But she did say that Ukrainian forces continue to push toward Melitopol and Berdiansk: “Hostilities are taking place in the vicinity of Urozhaine and the fight is for this particular locality. There is some success on the southern and southeast axes in the vicinity of Staromaiorske.” Urozhaine and Staromaiorske are adjacent settlements about 25 miles west of Vuhledar. The Ukrainian General Staff also reported that Ukrainian forces had also retaken some territory to the west, near Robotyne, which is about 8 miles south of Orikhiv. (See map above.)

But Maliiar acknowledged that the Ukrainian forces are facing very strong resistance in their effort to move southward toward Melitopol and Berdiansk: “The Armed Forces are facing complete mining of the territory, cement fortifications on the key heights, constant mortar and artillery shelling. Additionally, the Russians are densely using aviation.” Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov, speaking recently of the extensive minefields created by the Russian forces, said, “Today, Ukraine is the most mined country in the world. Hundreds of square kilometers of minefields, millions of explosive devices, in some areas of the front up to five mines per square meter. We have qualified sappers and modern equipment, but this is absolutely not enough for the front, which stretches for hundreds of kilometers in the east and south of Ukraine.”

Meanwhile, as the Ukrainian forces push eastward in the Bakhmut area and southeastward toward Berdiansk and Melitopol, the Russian forces are conducting their own offensive in the Kupyansk area in northeastern Ukraine. Kupyansk is northeast of Izium and Lyman and just inside the eastern boundary of Kharkiv region, about 25 miles south of the Russian border and about 50 miles east of the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city with a pre-war population of 1.4 million. Kupyansk, which had a pre-war population of about 30,000, is a major rail hub where five lines converge, making it an important hub for the movement of supplies for the forces in the area. Last Thursday, Maliiar said, “The main focus of the Ukrainian army is the south, and the Russians are focused on the east,” where they are trying to retake the territory they previously held in Kharkiv region prior to Ukraine taking it back last fall: “The ongoing clashes have been most concentrated in the Kupyansk sector. The enemy tried to regain the positions lost there last fall.” Major General Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of Ukraine’s ground forces, likewise said the main area where the Russians were attacking in eastern Ukraine was in the direction of Kupyansk: “In this region, there’s intense fighting happening, and some important spots have switched hands multiple times due to the ongoing battles. The enemy’s goal is to break through the defenses of our troops and advance directly to Kupyansk. The fighting is now extremely intensive. Some positions have changed hands several times these past days.”

Today, a spokesman for the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on a news telethon, “The defense forces continue their offensive, in particular, in the Melitopol and Berdiansk directions. They achieved success in the area of Urozhaine.” And with that, Ukraine continues, slowly and at great cost, to take back its country.

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