

Another week of small advances in week 14 of the counteroffensive



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

Today, as she has on previous Mondays, Ukraine Deputy Minister of Defense Hanna Maliar reported, in both a post on Telegram and comments on television, on developments in the previous week of Ukraine’s counteroffensive in eastern and southeastern Ukraine. In the continuing battle on the northern and southern flanks of the largely-destroyed city of Bakhmut in Donetsk region, one of the two regions in eastern Ukraine – Luhansk is the other – that comprise the Donbas, Maliar reported that “the enemy is trying to hamper Ukraine’s advance” on the southern flank and, for that purpose, tried – unsuccessfully – to break through Ukrainian defenses in several areas. She reported that “over the past week, 2 square kilometers [0.77 square miles] were liberated in the Bakhmut direction,” bringing the total amount of territory retaken in the Bakhmut area since the counteroffensive began in early June to about 49 square kilometers [18.9 square miles]

Maliar also noted that the offensive in Zaporizhzhia and southern Donetsk regions that is directed toward Melitopol and Berdiansk and, if successful, will sever Russia’s “land bridge” in southeastern Ukraine between Russian-held territory in the Donbas and Crimea, continued – and continued to take back territory taken by the Russian forces: “Over the past week, 4.8 square kilometers [1.9 square miles] of territory was liberated,” she reported, “bringing the total amount of territory taken back since the counteroffensive began in early June to 256.5 square kilometers” [99 square miles]. Noting that the offensive in the Melitopol direction continues, she said the Ukrainian forces are seeing success south of the village of Robotyne and west of the village of Verbove, which are, respectively, 8-10 miles south and southeast Orikhiv. If one compares the UK Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine from

a month ago with the most recent one (above), the most dramatic change is a significant increase in control by Ukrainian forces of a stretch of territory almost 80 miles long to the east, north, and west of the city of Orikhiv that, a month ago, was contested by the Russian forces and is now controlled by the Ukrainian forces, which continue to push southward despite extensive minefields, trenches, “dragon teeth” barriers, and other fortifications in several lines of defense that are supported by extensive Russian artillery and air cover. Indeed, today Gen. Oleksandr Tarnavskyi, the commander of the Ukrainian forces moving toward Melitopol, wrote on Telegram that “We are moving forward! The Defense Forces have advanced by more than one kilometer.”

Last week was another week of small advances. But small advances are nevertheless advances – especially when gained at the expense of Russian forces that have extensive minefields, trenches, dragon teeth and other fortifications, tanks, artillery, and air support. And small advances, if continued long enough, eventually accumulate into significant advances. But there are nevertheless concerns about the pace of the counteroffensive, especially given the prospect that the rains and snows in the weeks and months ahead will make it more difficult for Ukraine to sustain the counteroffensive at its current pace. Indeed, in an interview with the BBC yesterday, U.S. Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while acknowledging that the counteroffensive has gone more slowly than expected, said, “There’s still heavy fighting going on and the Ukrainians are still plugging away with steady progress....and are progressing at a very steady pace through the Russian front lines.” But, he said, “There’s still a reasonable amount of time, probably about 30 to 45 days’ worth of fighting weather left, so the Ukrainians aren’t done.”

And so begins week 15 of the counteroffensive.

David R. Cameron
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