

Counteroffensive continues with little change along the contact line



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

Ukraine's counteroffensive against the Russian forces holding much of eastern and southeastern Ukraine began in early June. Last week, week 24 of the counteroffensive, the Ukrainian forces continued to attack the Russian forces, as the latest British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation (above) indicates, in the area south of the largely destroyed city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and continued their effort to advance from territory just south of Orikhiv toward Melitopol in southeastern Ukraine – an effort that, if successful, might enable them to cut Russia's "land bridge" to Crimea. And several days ago, they established several footholds on the east bank of the Dnipro River in the southeastern region of Kherson and began moving troops and equipment to the east bank. Meanwhile, the Russian forces continued their effort to advance toward Kupiansk, near the border between Kharkiv region and Luhansk region in northeastern Ukraine, and toward Avdiivka and Marinka, which are, respectively, just to the north and the west of Donetsk city in eastern Ukraine.

On Sunday evening, as week 25 of the counteroffensive began, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported that the operational situation remained challenging in both eastern and southern Ukraine and that forty-five combat engagements had taken place that day. It reported that the Ukrainian forces had repelled all of the Russian attacks at various points along the long contact line between the forces. It said the Russian forces at the northernmost portion of the contact line that are attempting to move westward toward Kupiansk launched seven attacks, accompanied by air and artillery strikes, all of which were repelled by the Ukrainian forces. It reported the Russian forces had carried out eleven attacks near Klishchiivka and Andriivka, which

are a few miles south of the largely destroyed city of Bakhmut, and all of those attacks were likewise repelled by the Ukrainian forces.

Over the past several weeks, the Russian forces, in a reprise of their prolonged and exceptionally costly effort last spring to take Bakhmut, have conducted an unrelenting series of attacks in recent weeks against the Ukrainian forces holding the small city of Avdiivka, which is about 10 miles north of the large city of Donetsk. Sunday evening the General Staff reported the Russian forces had launched nine attacks on that city, which is noteworthy primarily for its large coke plant, and said the Ukrainian forces had repelled all of them. It also reported the Russian forces had conducted 13 attacks against the Ukrainian forces holding the small city of Marinka, a few miles west of the city of Donetsk, and the Ukrainian forces had repelled all of those attacks as well.

This evening the General Staff reported that the Russian forces had conducted 10 attacks in the direction of Kupiansk yesterday, all of which were repelled by the Ukrainian forces. In the Bakhmut area, it reported the Russian forces had launched 20 attacks near Klishchiivka and other small settlements south of the city, all of which were repelled. It reported the Russian forces had attempted to encircle Avdiivka and, toward that end, had launched 10 offensive attacks yesterday, all of which were repelled by the Ukrainian forces. And it reported that in and around Marinka the Russian forces had launched 12 attacks, all of which were repelled. It also reported that the Russian forces had conducted unsuccessful assaults near Robotyne and Verbove, villages about 10 miles south of Orikhiv that the Ukrainian forces had taken several weeks ago. And it reported the Ukrainian forces had continued to conduct their offensive operation in the direction of Melitopol yesterday and continued to hold their positions on the left bank of the Dnipro River in the Kherson area after having repelled 48 attacks yesterday.

As Ukraine's counteroffensive, which includes both offensive operations and robust defensive operations, grinds on in week 25, it's important to remember that, as much as Ukraine has lost, in apartment buildings, homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and most importantly, the lives of so many men, women and children, it hasn't lost the war. And that Russia isn't winning the war and won't win it. Lest there be any doubt about that, consider the response of a British minister last week to a question from a Member of Parliament. Asked how many Russian soldiers have been killed in the war, James Heapey, an MP and Minister of State for the Armed Forces, said, "We estimate that approximately 302,000 Russian military personnel have been killed or wounded, and tens of thousands more have already deserted since the start of the conflict." That is the same figure Ukraine's Ministry of Defense gives for the number of "combat losses" between February 24, 2022 and November 2, 2023.

Ukraine has not yet won the war. But Russia has already lost it.

David R. Cameron
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