

Russian offensive in east targets area west of Donetsk city



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

Last week the Russian forces continued their offensive operations against the Ukrainian forces at a number of points along the “contact line” between the forces in eastern and southeastern Ukraine. As Friday’s British Defense Intelligence map of the battlefield situation, above, indicates, as it has for the past several weeks, the Russian forces continued to attack in the direction of Kupiansk in Kharkiv region in northeastern Ukraine, toward the area around Bakhmut, toward the area around Avdiivka, a small city north of Donetsk city that is noteworthy for having the largest coke and chemical plant in Ukraine and from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew last month, and toward the area south of Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia region recently taken by the Ukrainian forces. But, as in recent weeks, the Russian forces also continued to attack at other points as well – toward Lyman in northern Donetsk region, in the Novopavlivka sector to the west and south of Marinka, a small city west of Donetsk city the Russians took in December, and toward the area in Kherson region in southern Ukraine where the Ukrainian forces have established a beachhead on the east bank of the Dnipro River.

Based on the daily updates on the previous day’s combat engagements issued each morning by the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, last week the Russian forces conducted 489 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending those points along the contact line – 20 in the direction of Kupiansk, 64 in the direction of Lyman, 62 in the direction of the area around Bakhmut, 77 toward the area to the west of Avdiivka, 201 in the Novopavlivka sector to the west and southwest of Marinka, 51 toward several villages and small towns held by Ukrainian forces south of Orikhiv, and 14 against the Ukrainian beachhead on the east bank of the Dnipro River east of Kherson city. The total number of attacks last week, 489, is

surprisingly close to the total number in each of the three previous weeks – 491 in the week of March 3-9, 488 in the week of March 10-16, and 489 in the week of March 17-23. Indeed, it is so close that one can only assume that the aggregate number of attacks in the east each week is set by the Russian command.

Based on the number of attacks, the highest priority for the Russian forces in eastern Ukraine last week, as in the previous several weeks, was extending their control of the territory to the west of Avdiivka and Marinka, and in so doing securing the territory to the northwest, west, and southwest of Donetsk city, the capital city of the region, which had a pre-war population of more than 900,000. And judging by the number of attacks last week, the next highest priority for the Russian forces last week was the area around and to the west of Bakhmut, which had a pre-war population of 70,000 that was reduced to rubble in a prolonged siege last spring, and Lyman, which, although a small city – its pre-war population was 20,000, is an important rail junction and is close to the large industrial cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in the northern portion of Donetsk region.

The attention of the world has been focused, understandably, on Friday evening's attack by ISIS-K on the Crocus City Hall near Moscow that was packed with people for a rock concert. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine continues, with no end in sight.

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