

As Russian offensive in east continues, Syrskiy warns situation becoming more difficult for Ukrainian forces



UK Defence Intelligence update on the 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, the Russian forces continued to attack in the direction of Kupiansk in Kharkiv region, in the area west of the destroyed city of Bakhmut from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew after a prolonged siege last spring, toward the area north and west of Avdiivka, a small city north of Donetsk city from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew in February after another prolonged siege, and toward the area south of Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia region taken by Ukrainian forces last year.

However, the Ukrainian General Staff reported last week, as it has for several months, a number of Russian attacks at other points along the contact line in addition to those identified in the British map – toward Lyman in northern Donetsk region which, if taken, would provide the Russian forces a pathway toward the large industrial cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk; toward the area 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 established a beachhead on the east bank of the Dnipro River.

Based on the daily reports of the General Staff, last week the Russian forces conducted 513 attacks against the Ukrainian forces at various points along the contact line – 3 in the direction of Kupiansk compared with none the previous

week; 10 in the direction of Lyman compared with 37 the week before; 195 in the direction of Chasiv Yar, a city about 20 kilometers west of Bakhmut, compared with 92 the week before; 68 toward the area west of Avdiivka and northwest of Donetsk city compared with 66 the week before; 169 toward the area south of Marinka and southwest of Donetsk city compared with 132 the week before; 31 toward several villages and small towns south of Orikhiv held by the Ukrainian forces compared with 24 the week before; and 37 against the Ukrainian forces on the east bank of the Dnipro River compared with 41 the week before. The total number of Russian attacks against the Ukrainian forces at those locations last week, 513, compares with the totals of 433 in the week of March 24-30 and 392 in the week of March 31-April 6.

The substantial increase in the number of Russian attacks in eastern Ukraine last week, coupled with the fact that there were only three attacks in the direction of Kupiansk and 10 attacks in the direction of Lyman last week, is indicative of the intensification of the Russian attacks against the other points along the contact line – most notably, in the direction of Chasiv Yar west of Bakhmut, the area west of Avdiivka, and the area south of Marinka. Chasiv Yar, which had a pre-war population of about 12,000, is, despite its small size, important for the Russians since it is only about 10 kilometers from the city of Kostyantynovka, which had a pre-war population of about 70,000 and is mid-way on the main highway between Horlivka, which the Russians hold, and Kramatorsk, an important industrial center that had a pre-war population of about 150,000. Clearly, the priority for the Russian forces in eastern Ukraine is to continue pushing westward in Donetsk region and ultimately take most if not all of it.

The Ukrainian General Staff said, as it always does, that all of the Russian attacks last week had been repelled. But in a statement on Facebook Saturday, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, made it clear that the situation is nevertheless becoming more difficult for the Ukrainian forces in some areas in eastern Ukraine: “The situation on the eastern front has deteriorated significantly in recent days. This is primarily due to a significant intensification of the enemy’s offensive after the presidential elections in the Russian Federation.” He said the situation around the frontline city of Chasiv Yar is “difficult and tense” with the area under “constant fire.” And, he said, “The enemy is actively attacking our positions in the Lyman and Bakhmut sectors with assault groups supported by armored vehicles. In the Pokrovsk sector [about 25 miles northwest of Donetsk city and Avdiivka], they are trying to break through our defense using dozens of tanks and armored personnel carriers. This is facilitated by the warm dry weather, which has made most of the open areas accessible to tanks. Despite significant losses, the enemy is increasing his efforts by using new units on armored vehicles, thanks to which he periodically achieves tactical gains.”

Continuing, Syrskyi said, “After listening to the conclusions regarding the nature of the enemy’s actions, decisions have been made to strengthen the most problematic areas of the defense with electronic warfare and air defenses. The stocks of drones of all types and anti-tank missiles have also been replenished, and additional reserves of forces and means have been moved. The issue of achieving technical superiority over the enemy in high-tech weapons has arisen again. Only this will give us the opportunity to defeat the larger enemy and create conditions for seizing the strategic initiative.”

Raising another issue, he said, “The second serious problem is to improve the quality of training of military personnel, especially infantry units, so that they can make the most of all the capabilities of military equipment and Western weapons. The results of my work will be taken into account in the plans for the training of troops and management bodies.” Concluding, he said, “In personal communication with our military, we discussed the current situation and ways to solve all problematic issues. We are aware of the real scale and degree of threat from the enemy and are ready to take adequate and effective measures.”

Yesterday, in a statement on Telegram, Syrskyi said the Ukrainian forces were holding back the Russian assaults near Chasiv Yar and had been reinforced with ammunition, drones and electronic devices. But, he said, “The threat remains relevant, taking into account the fact that the higher Russian military leadership has set its troops the task of capturing Chasiv Yar by May 9.” Germany surrendered at 11 p.m. on May 8, 1945, by which time it was already May 9 in Moscow, as the result of which Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, celebrates the victory in World War II on May 9. The assumption is that Putin ordered the military to take Chasiv Yar by that date so that he can announce it at the military parade in Red Square on May 9 and use it as a prelude to his announcement of the new offensive that is now being prepared.

David R. Cameron
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