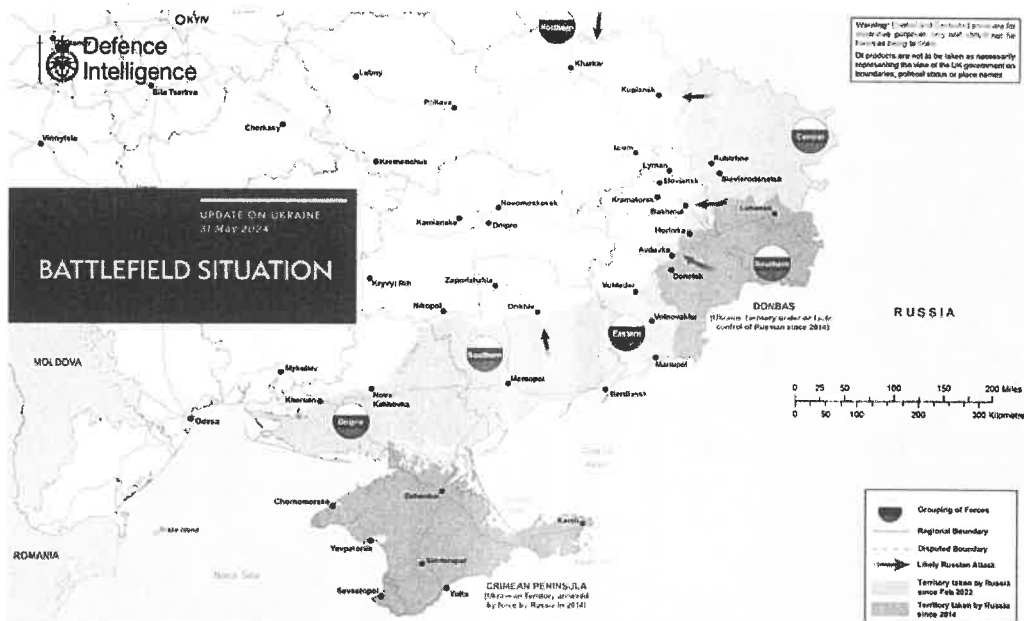


U.S. & Germany allow Ukraine to attack Russia near Kharkiv with weapons they provided and NATO foreign ministers discuss more assistance & membership for Ukraine.



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

As Friday’s British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in eastern Ukraine, above, indicates, last week the Russian forces continued to attack in the direction of Kupiansk in the eastern portion of Kharkiv region, in the area west of the destroyed city of Bakhmut from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew after a prolonged siege last spring, in the area to the west and northwest of Avdiivka, a small city north of Donetsk from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew in February, and toward the area south of Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia region taken by Ukrainian forces last year. The map also indicates that Russian forces continued to attack in the area just over the border north of the city of Kharkiv. Also, and importantly given Russia’s objective of taking most if not all of the Donbas area, the map, when compared with the one issued a week earlier, indicates that the Russian forces advanced a bit to the northwest of Donetsk and west of Avdiivka in the direction of Pokrovsk, a city which had a pre-war population of about 60,000 and is about 30 miles northwest of Donetsk.

But in its daily updates last week, the Ukrainian General Staff reported that, as in recent weeks, the Russian forces also attacked at a number of other points along the contact line between the forces in addition to those indicated on the map – specifically, toward Lyman in northern Donetsk region which, if taken, would provide a pathway southward toward the large cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk; toward the area to the west and southwest of Donetsk city; 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.

As important as the Russian attacks in the Donbas area were, the attention of most observers last week was focused instead, as it has been since the attacks began three weeks ago, on the Russian offensive toward Kharkiv. On Thursday, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, said on his Facebook page that Russia was bringing more troops into the Kharkiv region near the villages of Strilecha and Lyptsi and the town of Vovchansk and that Ukraine had moved reserve troops into the area in defense. But he said the new Russian troops were not sufficient to carry out a new offensive and the deployment and efforts of Ukrainian reserve units with new supplies of ammunition had reduced the Russian offensive capabilities. As a result, he said “the enemy has switched to the tactic of hitting our positions with artillery fire and strikes with aerial bombs. In these circumstances, the destruction of the aircraft carrying the KABs [satellite-guided bombs], as well as reconnaissance drones and fire adjusters, electronic warfare protection of our troops, camouflage, and the use of mock-ups are of paramount importance.” He added that the Ukrainian military was taking “urgent measures” to improve the air defense control system and its coordination with the ground forces. Syrskyi also spoke by phone with U.S. Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Thursday. According to the readout of the conversation, “The leaders discussed the latest developments on the battlefield and Ukraine’s most urgent needs. Gen. Brown reaffirmed the United States’ strong commitment to ensuring Ukraine has the capabilities and support it needs to defend its territorial sovereignty against Russia’s indefensible and illegal aggression.”

We don’t of course know precisely what was said in the Brown-Syrskyi conversation. But on Thursday, four U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said President Biden had authorized Ukraine to use U.S.-supplied weapons to strike military targets inside Russia that are supporting Russia’s offensive toward the city of Kharkiv, which is less than 20 miles from the border. The officials said the decision applies only to targets inside Russia near the border with Kharkiv region. According to one official, “The President recently directed his team to ensure that Ukraine is able to use U.S.-supplied weapons for counter-fire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them.”

On Friday, while in Prague for the informal meeting of NATO foreign ministers, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, in response to a question about the U.S. decision, “Over the past few weeks Ukraine came to us and asked for the authorization to use weapons that we’re providing to defend against this aggression, including against Russian forces that are massing on the Russian side of the border, and then attacking into Ukraine. And that went right to the President, and as you heard, he’s approved the use of our weapons for that purpose. Going forward, we’ll continue to do what we’ve been doing, which is, as necessary, adapt and adjust. And that, as I said, has been a hallmark of our engagement; it will continue to be.”

Following Biden's decision, on Friday a spokesman for the German government said it too had given Ukraine permission to use weapons Germany had supplied to strike targets inside Russia near the city of Kharkiv. The spokesman said, "In recent weeks, Russia has prepared, coordinated and carried out attacks from positions in the Kharkiv area, in particular from the directly adjacent Russian border region." Ukraine, he said, "has the right, guaranteed under international law, to defend itself against these attacks. To do so, it can use the weapons supplied for this purpose in accordance with its international legal obligations, including those supplied by us."

Following the meeting of the NATO foreign ministers, held primarily to prepare for the formal meeting in Washington in July at which NATO will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of its founding there in 1949, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the ministers had discussed the current situation in Ukraine at some length: "Our discussions focused on our support for Ukraine. We all want to stop this war. But the paradox is that the better we prepare for the long haul, the sooner the war can end. Russia must understand that it cannot wait us out. No final decisions were made today. But we made significant progress on three issues. First, NATO's plans to play a greater coordinating role in the provision of equipment and training. Practically all military aid to Ukraine – 99 percent – comes from NATO Allies. So it makes sense that NATO should play a greater role in these efforts. This will enable us to use the NATO structures to put our support on a firmer footing, provide more predictability to Kyiv, and address both immediate and longer-term needs. Secondly, I have proposed that Allies commit to a multi-year financial pledge for Ukraine. Since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Allies have provided approximately 40 billion euros worth of military support to Ukraine each year. We must maintain at least this level of support each year, for as long as necessary. I have also proposed that Allies should share this burden equitably. This will improve accountability and give Ukraine the predictability they need to plan for the long term. Finally, we discussed Ukraine's path to NATO membership. Allies agree that Ukraine's future is in NATO. And we are determined to make progress in charting this path. Membership will be Ukraine's ultimate security guarantee. It will ensure a lasting peace. And provide the stability needed for reconstruction."

Continuing, Stoltenberg said, "Let me add this on Allied support and the question of escalation: Russia started this war. They annexed Crimea in 2014. And in 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II. Russia is striking hospitals, schools, and shopping malls. Russia is bombing power and water infrastructure. Russia is killing Ukrainian civilians. Ukraine is defending itself from appalling Russian brutality. So, let me be clear. Self-defense is not escalation. Self-defense is a fundamental right. It is enshrined in the UN Charter. Ukraine has the right, and the responsibility, to protect its people. And we have the right to help Ukraine uphold its right to self-defense. Of course, Russia does not like this. At every stage of this war Russia has

complained, threatened, and sabre-rattled. Putin wanted to deter NATO Allies from supporting Ukraine. But we are not and we will not be deterred. Russia is the one attacking. Russia is the one escalating. Most recently by opening a new front in the Kharkiv region. And with waves of new strikes on Ukrainian citizens. As the war has evolved, our support has evolved. And it will continue to evolve. I welcome that Allies are providing many different types of assistance. And at the NATO Summit, we will put NATO's support on a firmer footing for the long haul."

In response to a question about financial support for Ukraine, Stoltenberg said, "We are speaking about money for the future We have already spent roughly 40 billion per year so far, but [what] I'm asking Allies to do is to commit that for the following years. That's new money, because that's money which is not there now. And the important thing is that we need predictability. We need a firm commitment for the long haul to ensure that Ukraine is able to plan, to ensure that Ukraine has the predictability they need to conduct this war, self-defense, but also to send a message to Moscow. That Moscow cannot wait us out. So the more clear it is that we are prepared for long haul, the sooner this war can end. Because the sooner President Putin realizes that he cannot win this war, we will be there for as long as necessary."

In response to a question about Ukraine's future relationship to NATO, Stoltenberg said, "NATO Allies agree that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance. We are working on how to move Ukraine closer to membership. At the Vilnius Summit we agreed important steps. We removed the requirement for something called Membership Action Plan, meaning that we turned the membership process for Ukraine from a two-step process to a one-step process. And we also agree a comprehensive package for interoperability to ensure that Ukraine comes closer to NATO standards, doctrines and full interoperability with NATO. Then I hope that at the Summit in Washington we can take further steps and also believe strongly that the fact that we will most likely establish a mission or stronger structure for providing support to Ukraine. That will help to move Ukraine closer to membership. And of course, anything we do together with Ukraine will help them to come closer to membership. So Allies agree that Ukraine should be a member, but the timing of the invitation depends on when there will be consensus and when the conditions are met."

In response to a question about the decisions of the U.S. and Germany last week to allow Ukraine to use weapons they had provided to strike targets in Russia, Stoltenberg said, "As this war has evolved, also NATO support has evolved. That demonstrates that when they are now attacking Ukraine from inside Russia, on the other side of the border, when the border line or the front line is more or less the same, then of course the only way to attack behind enemy lines is also then to strike into Russian territory. Allies are providing support in different ways. Some Allies have never imposed any restrictions, other Allies have eased their

restrictions. We just need to be vigilant. We need to adapt and evolve our support as the war evolves. And of course, we addressed these issues in the meeting today, and will continue to coordinate very closely. That's also one of the reasons why I believe it will be helpful to have a stronger NATO coordination and the long-term financial pledge in line with what I have proposed."

David R. Cameron

June 3, 2024