

The Ukrainian incursion into Russia continues. But the Russian forces are closing in on Pokrovsk



British Defence Intelligence update on the battlefield situation in Ukraine as of today.

As today's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine, above, indicates, the war in eastern Ukraine has continued this week, as it has in recent weeks, with the Russian forces attacking in the area just over the border north of Kharkiv; westward toward the city of Kupiansk in the eastern portion of Kharkiv region; toward Chasiv Yar, a small city about 10 kilometers west of Bakhmut, which the Russians took last year after a prolonged battle; and in the area west and northwest of Avdiivka, a small city north of Donetsk from which the Ukrainian forces withdrew in February forces last year, toward Pokrovsk, a city with a pre-war population of 60,000 about 60 kilometers northwest of Donetsk

But unlike the previous weekly maps issued by the British agency, today's map also indicates where Ukrainian forces entered the Russian region of Kursk last Tuesday from the Ukrainian region of Sumy and have subsequently taken some territory in the Russian region, including the town of Sudzha. Yesterday, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, told President Zelenskyy Ukrainian troops had taken 82 Russian settlements in approximately 1150 square kilometers of territory and were establishing a military headquarters in the town of Sudzha. As of today, British Defence Intelligence reports the Ukrainian forces have penetrated 10 to 25 kilometers over a frontage of approximately 40 kilometers. It also reports that after some initial disarray and disorganization, the Russian forces have deployed additional forces to the area from elsewhere along the contact line.

Yesterday, Ukraine's incursion into Russia expanded to include the neighboring region of Belgorad, to the southeast of Kursk. But perhaps because the Russian forces were better prepared for a possible Ukrainian attack after having witnessed last week's incursion into Kursk, the Ukrainian forces reportedly encountered more resistance as they entered Belgorad.

As the Ukrainian incursion into Kursk and Belgorad continues, so too do the Russian attacks at various points along the contact line between the forces in eastern Ukraine. In its daily updates this week, the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that, as in previous weeks, the Russian forces 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 northwest, west and southwest of Donetsk city; and toward the area in Kherson region in southern Ukraine where the Ukrainian forces hold a narrow band of territory on the east bank of the Dnipro River.

In this week's updates, covering the five days from Sunday through yesterday, the General Staff reported a total of 701 Russian attacks, varying from 124 to 165 attacks each day, at various points along the contact line. Over the five days, it reported a total of 32 Russian attacks in the border area to the north of Kharkiv; 51 attacks toward Kupiansk in eastern Kharkiv region; 81 attacks in the direction of Lyman; 52 attacks in the Siversk sector between Sieverodonetsk and Sloviansk; 33 attacks in the Kramatorsk sector west of Bakhmut; 81 attacks in the Toretsk sector a few miles northwest of Horlivka; 246 attacks, on average about 50 a day, toward Pokrovsk, 46 attacks toward Kurakhove and Kostyantynivka, which are 15-20 miles west of Donetsk city; 26 attacks in the Vremivka sector west of Donetsk city; 13 attacks in the Orikhiv sector in Zaporizhzhia region, and 42 attacks against the Ukrainian forces attempting to hold the territory on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson region.

The exceptionally large number of Russian attacks this week toward Pokrovsk, and Ukraine's robust defense against those attacks no doubt reflect the fact that Pokrovsk, located as it is on the E50 highway connecting Dnipro and Donetsk city and connected to several nearby cities in Donetsk region such as Kostyantynivka and Kramatorsk, is especially important for both the Ukrainian and Russian forces. For the Ukrainian forces fighting to retake Donetsk region, it is the point to which supplies for both the military and citizens arrive from central Ukraine. For the Russian forces, cutting those supply lines is necessary if they are to achieve their ambition to take control of the central core of the Donbas.

Today the Russian forces are reportedly advancing on Pokrovsk and are only 8 miles from the city. A formal order to evacuate the city hasn't yet been issued. But the head of the military administration warned today, "The enemy is rapidly approaching the outskirts of Pokrovsk. Evacuation is underway in the community. Don't delay!"

If, as seems likely, the Russian forces will take Pokrovsk in the very near future, and in so doing open a pathway for themselves to other cities in Donetsk region, there will no doubt be many who will wonder why, instead of strengthening its defenses in and around Pokrovsk, Ukraine indulged in a largely symbolic gesture of invading Russia.

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