

Russian attacks continue toward Pokrovsk, Kurakhove & other cities



As today's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine, above, indicates, the war in eastern Ukraine continued this week, as it has in recent weeks, with the Russian forces attacking 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 siege; and toward Pokrovsk, a city with a pre-war population of 60,000 about 60 kilometers west of Avdiivka, which the Russians took in February.

But as the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported in its daily updates this week, the Russian forces also continued to attack at a number of other points along the contact line between the forces – toward Kharkiv from territory they hold north of the city; toward Lyman about 30 kilometers southeast of Iziium that, if taken, would provide a pathway toward the large cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk; toward Siversk about 15 kilometers southeast of Lyman and 20 kilometers north of Bakhmut; toward Kramatorsk about 25 kilometers northwest of Chasiv Yar; toward Toretsk about 20 kilometers south of Chasiv Yar; toward Kurakhove about 20 kilometers west of Donetsk city; toward Vremivka about 30 kilometers southwest of Kurakhove; and toward the area in Kherson region in southern Ukraine where the Ukrainian forces hold some territory on the east bank of the Dnipro River.

In its daily updates covering the five days this week from Sunday through yesterday, the General Staff reported a total of 710 Russian attacks at various points along the contact line between the forces. It reported a total of 15 Russian attacks in the border area north of Kharkiv; 64 attacks toward Kupiansk; 63 attacks in the direction of Lyman; 39

attacks in the Siversk sector; 21 attacks in the Kramatorsk sector west of Bakhmut; 54 attacks in the Toretsk sector; 178 attacks toward Pokrovsk; 192 attacks toward Kurakhove; 24 attacks in the Vremivka sector west of Donetsk city; 9 attacks in the Orikhiv sector in Zaporizhzhia region, and 29 attacks against Ukrainian forces on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson region.

All of those targets are obviously important for the Russians. But it's clear from the cumulative number of attacks thus far this week that, as has been the case for the past several weeks, the most important objectives for the Russian forces in eastern Ukraine remain, as they were last week and have been for several weeks, Pokrovsk and Kurakhove. Located at the junction of both major highways and rail lines, Pokrovsk is a logistical hub that connects Dnipro and the rest of Ukraine with the Donetsk region. If taken by the Russians, it would open a pathway for the Russian forces to other cities in the region such as Kostiantynivka to the northeast and Kramatorsk and Sloviansk to the north. And Kurakhove, which is west of Donetsk city and south of Pokrovsk, is an important target, located as it is on the highway that links Zaporizhzhia and its nuclear power plant to Donetsk city. Reflecting the importance of both targets, from Sunday through yesterday more than half of all of the Russian attacks in eastern Ukraine were directed toward Pokrovsk and Kurakhove.

In an interview with CNN last Thursday, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, when asked bluntly "Do you think you might lose Pokrovsk?" said, "We are doing everything we can not to lose Pokrovsk. We are strengthening our defenses there. Over the past six days, the enemy has not advanced a single meter in the Pokrovsk direction. So our strategy is working. Of course, the enemy has concentrated the most trained of its units in the Pokrovsk sector. But we have deprived him of the ability to maneuver his units and the ability to redeploy his strengthening units from other areas. So, in fact, it turns out that even though they did not move many troops from the Pokrovsk area except for one marine brigade [in response to Ukraine's incursion into Russia's Kursk region], they are now unable to manoeuvre their reserves as they used to. And this weakening is actually felt in other areas. We note that the number of artillery attacks and the intensity of offensive actions have decreased."

Nevertheless, Syrskyi did note that "the Pokrovsk direction remains the most problematic for us." A week later, the situation in Pokrovsk is indeed bleak. Roughly 25,000 remain in the city. The Russians have destroyed a substation, knocking out power to half the city, and have destroyed a filtration plant, cutting off the supply of water to the city. They've destroyed three bridges connecting the city to the west of the city and the evacuation trains, which had been running on a regular basis, are no longer running. Those who want to leave have to leave by car, bus or on foot. Meanwhile, the Russians are getting closer. On Sunday, the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed its forces had taken control of the small city of Novohrodivka, 15 kilometers southeast of

Pokrovsk, and today the Russian forces took the nearby small city of Selydove about 10 kilometers south of Novohrodivka.

Today President Zelenskyy received reports from Defence Minister Rustem Umierov and Col. Gen. Syrskyi on the situation on the Pokrovsk, Kurakhove, and Toretsk fronts. In his evening address he said, “The main priority is weapons for our warriors on the Pokrovsk, Kurakhove, and Toretsk fronts, on all Donetsk fronts, and along the entire frontline. This includes the issue of delivery and the issue of production, both in Ukraine and together with partners. The goal is to strengthen our positions as much as possible and put maximum pressure on Russia. We can end this war fairly only from a position of strength. We are doing everything for that.”

He’s right. But unfortunately, before that happens, the Russian forces are likely to take Pokrovsk, Kurakhove and Toretsk – in a matter of days, not weeks.

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