

**As attacks continue toward Pokrovsk & other cities in east, Zelenskyy prepares a Victory Plan, Putin proposes change in nuclear deterrence policy, and Biden provides more military assistance, including JSOWs.**



As Friday’s British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine indicates, the war in eastern Ukraine continued last week, as it has for several months, 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 on the war, last week the Russian forces also continued to attack at a number of other points – toward Kharkiv from territory they hold north of the city; toward Lyman about 30 kilometers southeast of Izium that, if taken, would provide a pathway toward the 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 25 kilometers west of Donetsk city; toward Vremivka about 30 kilometers southwest of Kurakhove; in the Orikhiv sector southeast of Zaporizhzhia; and toward the area in Kherson region in southern Ukraine where the Ukrainian forces hold territory on the east bank of the Dniro River.

In its daily updates covering the seven days last week from Sunday through Saturday, the General Staff reported a total of 1,180 Russian attacks at various points along the contact line between the forces. The total number of attacks each day varied from 143 to 189. As has been the case for the last several weeks, the Russian forces launched more attacks last week against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk (272) and Kurakhove (176) than against those defending any of the other cities in Donetsk region. Among the other major targets in eastern Ukraine, the Russian forces conducted 128 attacks toward Lyman, 98 attacks toward Kupiansk, and 81 attacks toward Toretsk. While all of the targets in eastern Ukraine are important for the Russians, the large numbers of attacks toward Pokrovsk and Kurakhove make it clear they are especially important. Both are located at junctions of rail lines and major highways and, if taken, would provide pathways to other important cities still held by Ukrainian forces. Taking Pokrovsk, for example, would open a pathway to Kostiantynivka, Kramatorsk, and Sloviansk to the north. Taking Kurakhove, about 30 kilometers south of Pokrovsk, would open a pathway toward Zaporizhzhia.

The British Defence Intelligence map above appears at first glance to be identical, in terms of indicating the territory taken by the Russian forces as of Friday, to the map issued a week earlier. But when compared with the map issued the previous Friday, it indicates a very slight expansion of the shaded area, indicating control by the Russian forces, just above and below the word Avdiivka, indicating that the Russian forces had moved, even if slowly, toward Pokrovsk and the area immediately west of Donetsk city over the past week. It also indicates a slight expansion of the area controlled by the Russian forces southwest of Donetsk city toward Vuhledar, about 20 kilometers south of Kurakhove and 25 kilometers southwest of Donetsk.

As the war continued last week in eastern Ukraine, President Zelenskyy put the finishing touches on a “victory plan” that he presented to President Biden Thursday, after having addressed the UN General Assembly the previous day. Zelenskyy did not release the “victory plan” prior to his meeting with Biden. But various aspects of it became widely known prior to the meeting through leaks from some who were familiar with the plan. While the plan dealt with a number of issues, including the post-war reconstruction of the Ukrainian economy and future security guarantees, including membership in NATO, the most controversial feature involved the U.S. lifting its refusal to allow Ukraine to use long-range western missiles to hit targets in Russia.

Last Wednesday, as speculation continued about the specific elements of Zelenskyy’s “victory plan,” including U.S. approval for Ukraine to use western long-range missiles against Russia, President Putin chaired a meeting of Russia’s Security Council. The Council includes roughly two-dozen government ministers and high-level defense, intelligence, and security officials. Undoubtedly called because of the widespread public speculation, and in all likelihood Russian intelligence as well, that the “victory plan” included U.S. approval of Ukraine’s use of western long-range missiles against Russia, Putin told the Council the purpose of the meeting was to discuss updating and

possibly adjusting Russia's "Basic Principles of State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence." Introducing the discussion of a revised draft of the Basic Principles, Putin said the Basic Principles document "officially defines and details Russia's nuclear strategy. First of all, it sets forth the basic principle of using nuclear weapons: the use of nuclear forces is the last resort measure to protect the country's sovereignty." He said the principles "expand the category of states and military alliances in respect of which nuclear deterrence is exercised and expand the list of military threats to be neutralized by nuclear deterrence measures." While Russia's nuclear triad remains, he said, "the most important security guarantee for our state and citizens...at the same time, we can see that the modern military-political situation is rapidly changing and we have to factor that in, including the emergence of new sources of military threats and risks for Russia and our allies." He said a number of specialists in the security and defense ministries and offices had proposed a number of updates in terms of defining the conditions for using nuclear weapons which would "expand the category of states and military alliances in respect of which nuclear deterrence is exercised and expand the list of military threats to be neutralized by nuclear deterrence measures."

Alluding to the current situation, Putin said, "I would like to draw your attention specifically to the following. The updated version of the document is supposed to regard an aggression against Russia from any non-nuclear state but involving or supported by any nuclear state as their joint attack against the Russian Federation. It also states clearly the conditions for Russia's transition to the use of nuclear weapons. We will consider such a possibility once we receive reliable information about a massive launch of air and space attack weapons and their crossing our state border. I mean strategic and tactical aircraft, cruise missiles, UAVs, hypersonic and other aircraft...In conclusion, I will note that all the updates have been deeply calibrated and are measured against contemporary military threats and risks to the Russian Federation." In short, the revised principles will regard an "aggression" against Russia by a non-nuclear state [e.g., Ukraine] but involving or supported by a nuclear state [e.g., the U.S.] as "their joint attack against the Russian Federation."

On Thursday, Zelenskyy met with Biden, after which Biden issued a statement in which he announced, "a surge in security assistance for Ukraine and a series of additional actions to help Ukraine win this war." He said he had directed the Department of Defense to allocate all of its remaining security assistance funding that has been appropriated for Ukraine by the end of his term in office and said that, as part of that effort, the Department will allocate all of the remaining Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative funds by the end of the year. He also said he had authorized \$5.5 billion in Presidential Drawdown Authority to ensure the authority doesn't expire so the Administration can fully utilize the funding appropriated by Congress to support the drawdown of U.S. equipment for Ukraine and then replenish U.S. stockpiles.

Biden also announced that the Department of Defense was announcing \$2.4 billion in security assistance through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which will

provide Ukraine with additional air defense, unmanned aerial systems, and air-to-ground munitions, as well as strengthen Ukraine's defense industrial base and support its maintenance and sustainment requirements. Importantly given the continuing debate in regard to Ukraine's use of western weapons to attack Russia, and notwithstanding Putin's comments in that regard the previous day, Biden announced that, in order to enhance Ukraine's long-range strike capabilities, he had decided to provide Ukraine with the Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW). The JSOW is a medium-range, precision-guided, 1000-pound glide bomb that uses GPS-inertial navigation system, can be fired from an F-16 against targets outside the range of standard anti-aircraft defense, including surface-to-air missile sites, and has a range of roughly 120 kilometers. Biden also said that in order to further strengthen Ukraine's air defenses, he had directed the Department of Defense to refurbish and provide Ukraine with an additional Patriot air defense battery and additional Patriot missiles and had directed the Department to expand training for Ukrainian F-16 pilots, including an additional 18 pilots next year. Concluding his statement, Biden said, "Through these actions, my message is clear: the United States will provide Ukraine with the support it needs to win this war."

Hopefully, he and his successor will do that.

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