

As attacks against Pokrovsk, Kurakhove and other cities continue, Zelenskyy presents Victory Plan & discusses it with EU & NATO.



As Friday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine, above, 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 last week in its daily updates on the war, 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; 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 Dnipro River.

In its daily updates covering the seven days last week from Sunday through Saturday, the General Staff reported a total of 1,243 Russian attacks at various points along the contact line between the forces. In the previous seven days from Oct. 6-12, the General Staff reported a total of 1,116 Russian attacks. As has been the case for the last several weeks, the Russian forces launched many more attacks last week against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk (215) and Kurakhove (313) than against those defending any

of the other cities in eastern Ukraine. But the forces defending some of those other cities were also the targets of many Russian attacks – most notably, those defending Kupiansk (149) and Lyman (134). But clearly, based on the total number of attacks last week, Kurakhove and Pokrovsk were, as they have been for several weeks, the most important targets for the Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine. 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 would open a pathway northward to Kostiantynivka, Kramatorsk, and Sloviansk to the north. And taking Kurakhove, about 30 kilometers south of Pokrovsk, would open a pathway toward Zaporizhzhia.

As the war in eastern Ukraine continued last week, on Wednesday President Zelenskyy formally presented his Victory Plan to the Ukrainian Rada. The Plan consists of five points and three secret annexes. The first point is geopolitical – an immediate and unconditional invitation to join NATO, recognizing that actual membership is a matter for the future. The second is an irreversible strengthening of Ukraine’s defense against Russia, which means strengthening the Defense and Security Forces of Ukraine, strengthening Ukraine’s air defense system, expanding operations involving Ukrainian missiles and drones, and lifting western restrictions on the use of long-range weapons on all the territory occupied by Russia and on the territory of Russia itself. That point has a secret annex that is accessible only to those partners that have the appropriate military capabilities. The third point, which also has a secret annex that has already been delivered to the U.S., the UK, France, Italy and Germany, involves deterrence – specifically, the deployment by Ukraine of a comprehensive non-nuclear strategic deterrence package on its territory that will be sufficient to protect Ukraine from any military threat posed by Russia. The fourth point, which also has a secret annex, involves conclusion of a special agreement with the U.S. and the EU on the joint protection of critical resources available in Ukraine as well as joint investment and use of the corresponding economic potential. The fifth point involves applying Ukraine’s experience in the war to strengthen the defense of the NATO alliance and ensure the security of Europe, including possibly replacing certain portions of the U.S. forces now stationed in Europe with Ukrainian units.

On Thursday, Zelenskyy met with the European Council – the leaders of the 27 member states of the European Union – in Brussels. Following the meeting, the European Council reiterated its “resolute condemnation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the UN Charter” and reaffirmed its “continued support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.” It also reconfirmed the EU’s “unwavering commitment to providing continued political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed. Russia must not prevail.” The leaders reiterated their support “for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, in line with the key principles and objectives of Ukraine’s

Peace Formula.... The European Council also stresses that no initiative about Ukraine can be taken without Ukraine.” The EU leaders also called on the Council to swiftly finalize work on the European Peace Facility assistance measures that will further incentivize the delivery of military support to Ukraine. And they called for a “rapid stepping up of military support and acceleration in its delivery, in particular air defense systems, ammunition and missiles, which are urgently needed to protect Ukraine’s population and critical energy infrastructure.” The EU leaders underscored the importance of living up to the commitment made by the G7 leaders at their Summit in Italy to provide, together with the G7’s partners, approximately €45 billion by the end of the year to support Ukraine’s current and future military, budget and reconstruction needs. The leaders also agreed that Russia’s frozen financial assets should remain immobilized until it ceases its war of aggression against Ukraine and compensates it for the damage caused by the war. And they welcomed the agreement to use the extraordinary revenues resulting from those frozen assets to assist Ukraine in its defense against the Russian aggression.

Zelenskyy also met on Thursday with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and the NATO defense ministers who were meeting in Brussels. Accompanied by Ukrainian defense minister Rustem Umerov, he joined the ministers in the NATO-Ukraine Council and provided an overview of his plan for ending the war. The discussion focused on Ukraine’s most urgent needs, including equipment and training. Rutte noted that work is well underway to set up NATO’s new command to coordinate security assistance and training for Ukraine and to deliver on the pledge at the Washington Summit to provide Ukraine €40 billion in military assistance this year. In his joint press conference with Zelenskyy on Thursday, Rutte said, “I look forward to the day that Ukraine is here as a member of this Alliance. And until then, we will continue to do all that we can to ensure Ukraine prevails. This is vital for our shared security... Ukraine will be a member of NATO, there is no doubt about it, and until that happens we will make sure that Ukraine has everything it needs to prevail.”

In his press conference Friday after the NATO meeting concluded, Rutte said, “As you know, we are establishing NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine and we expect this command to become fully operational in the coming months. And we are well on our way to fulfilling our pledge to provide Ukraine €40 billion of military support within the next year. We will continue to stand by Ukraine. As we stand by the right of every nation to live in freedom, sovereignty, and security. Supporting Ukraine is not an act of charity. It is also an investment in our own security. Ukraine’s fight is our fight.” In response to a question about the first point in Zelenskyy’s Victory Plan – an invitation to join NATO – Rutte said, “The main focus of the discussion was to get massive military aid into Ukraine from, of course, the armed forces here in the west, so Allies providing that military aid to Ukraine... Putin would be wrongly advised thinking that we will give up on this. No, we will continue doing this as long as is necessary. And that was the main focus of the debate last night. Obviously, we all know that Ukraine will become a member of NATO, so the question is exactly when and

when the invitation will take place. But that was not the main issue of the debate last night.” In response to a question suggesting that Ukraine be recognized as a future NATO member as Sweden and Finland were prior to their accession, Rutte said, “As I said before, Ukraine will be a member of NATO, and I will applaud that day, and obviously, including what we said in Washington, the irreversible path to membership, which was a considerable increase in language, in signaling to the Ukrainian people, that their future will be in NATO. There will be the discussion among Allies and with Ukraine on the path towards NATO. But when you look at what is happening practically, the interoperability, JTECH being set up in Poland, which will help with the interoperability between Ukraine and NATO, the bilateral security agreements of many Allies helping Ukraine on their path to NATO membership. The €40 billion pledge, the setting up of the command in Wiesbaden, this all collectively constitutes a sort of pathway, a bridge to membership. So that leaves only the question, which still politically is an important question, of the exact step-by-step approach towards membership, and that is something we are ongoingly debating, of course, amongst ourselves.”

Article 5 of NATO’s founding treaty stipulates that an attack on one is an attack on all. All of the members, and Ukraine, understand that Article 5 means that Ukraine won’t join NATO until the war has ended. That being the case, the first order of business for those supporting Ukraine is not extending an invitation to join NATO now but, rather, helping Ukraine win the war. First things first.

David R. Cameron
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