

As Ukraine's incursion continues, Russian forces approach Pokrovsk



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

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 in recent weeks, with the Russian forces attacking westward toward the city of Kupiansk in the eastern portion of Kharkiv region; westward toward Chasiv Yar, a small city about 10 kilometers west of the destroyed city of Bakhmut which the Russians took last year after a prolonged siege; and westward 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 last week, the Russian forces also continued to attack at a number of other points along the contact line between the forces in addition to those indicated on the map – toward Kharkiv city from the territory they hold north of the city; toward Lyman about 30 kilometers southeast of Iziium that, if taken, would provide a pathway southward 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 Kurakove about 20 kilometers west of Donetsk city; toward Vremivka about 30 kilometers southwest of Kurakove; 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 week from last Sunday through Saturday, the General Staff reported a total of 1056 Russian attacks, varying from 134 to 166 attacks each day, at various points along the contact line. Those

figures, both the seven-day total and the daily range, are roughly similar to the figures reported by the General Staff for the previous week; over the seven previous days, the General Staff reported a total of 972 Russian attacks, which varied from 124 to 165 attacks each day.

Over the seven days last week, the General Staff reported a total of 37 Russian attacks in the border area to the north of Kharkiv; 114 attacks toward Kupiansk in eastern Kharkiv region; 106 attacks in the direction of Lyman; 41 attacks in the Siversk sector; 90 attacks in the Kramatorsk sector west of Bakhmut; 123 attacks in the Toretsk sector; 382 attacks, on average about 55 a day, toward Pokrovsk; 100 attacks toward Kurakhove; 38 attacks in the Vremivka sector west of Donetsk city; 5 attacks in the Orikhiv sector in Zaporizhzhia region, and 10 attacks against the Ukrainian forces attempting to hold the territory on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson region. The largest increases in the number of attacks over the seven days last week, compared with the seven days in the previous week, were those directed toward Kramatorsk, 51 more than in the previous week; Kupiansk, 41 more than in the previous week; Pokrovsk, 39 more than in the previous week; and Kurakove, 29 more than in the previous week.

But there can be no doubt that, with nearly 400 attacks over the seven days last week, more than three times as many as were directed toward any other target, the most important objective for the Russian forces in eastern Ukraine last week was, as it has been for the past several weeks, Pokrovsk. The reason is obvious: Pokrovsk is a logistical hub with both roads and rail lines to the important cities in Donetsk region such as Kostiantynivka, Kramatorsk, and Sloviansk. Pokrovsk is also important because it is near a coal mine that is Ukraine's largest producer of the coking coal used in the production of steel. And for the Ukrainian forces fighting to retake Donetsk region, Pokrovsk is where supplies intended for both civilians and military personnel in the central core of Donetsk region arrive from Dnipro and other cities to the west. For that reason, taking Pokrovsk is also a priority for the Russian forces hoping to take much if not all of Donetsk region.

Before the war began, almost 70,000 people lived in Pokrovsk. As of last week, more than 50,000 still lived there, including more than 4,000 children. Last Monday, with the Russian forces reportedly less than 10 miles from the city, the head of the Donetsk Oblast Military Administration announced there would be a compulsory evacuation, starting the next day, of children with their parents or guardians from Pokrovsk and a neighboring city as well as a dozen nearby villages. He also warned that, with the Russian forces only 10 kilometers from the city and with the city within range of Russian artillery, others would have only a week or two to leave. As he put it, "When our cities are within range of virtually any enemy weapon, the decision to evacuate is necessary and inevitable."

Beyond indicating the continued Russian attacks toward Kupiansk, Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk, Friday's British Intelligence map is notable for something else as well –

evidence that the Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk region continues and the Ukrainian forces continue to hold territory in the Sudzha district of that region. The incursion, which began on August 6, has reportedly taken almost 500 square miles of territory in which there were almost 100 settlements. There have been recurring questions regarding the purpose of the incursion and speaking today on television via a video link, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, provided an explanation: "In order to create a buffer zone, stop cross-border strikes, and protect civilian assets in Sumy region, a decision was made, and on August 6, the Defense Forces of Ukraine launched an offensive operation in the Kursk direction. As of today, we continue advancing, inflicting significant losses on enemy manpower and equipment. To date, the territory of 1294 square km with 100 settlements had come under our control. Also, thanks to the successful actions of our troops, we significantly replenished our POW exchange fund. To date, 594 servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces have been taken prisoner in Kursk region."

But Syrskyi also made it clear that one of the objectives of the Kursk incursion was to divert Russian forces from other areas, primarily the Pokrovsk and Kurakhove sectors: "The Kursk operation diverted a significant number of its forces," he said, noting that Russian troops had been drawn from Ukraine's south. "As of now, we can say that around 30,000 servicemen have been sent to the Kursk front and this figure is growing." In regard to the continuing battle for Pokrovsk, he said, "Ukrainian defenders are doing everything possible to maintain their defense lines and positions, inflicting significant losses on the enemy." But he added that Russia was strengthening its force on the Pokrovsk front and trying to disrupt Ukraine's supply lines to the front near Pokrovsk. And he said, "The situation on the Pokrovsk front is fairly difficult. The enemy is using its advantage in personnel, weapons and military equipment, it is actively using artillery and aviation."

As Russia's ground offensive continued this week toward Pokrovsk and other targets in eastern Ukraine, yesterday Russia launched 127 missiles and 109 Shahed drones at "critical energy infrastructure facilities" throughout Ukraine. Ukraine shot down 102 of the 127 missiles and 99 of the 109 drones, but enough got through to cause significant damage to some of those facilities. And last night, Russia launched another 10 ballistic and cruise missiles, 5 of which were shot down, and 81 drones, 60 of which were shot down, meaning that 5 missiles and 21 drones got through. Meanwhile, the war on the ground continued. This morning the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported that a total of 170 combat clashes took place yesterday, with most of them occurring on the Pokrovsk front. It said the Ukrainian troops repelled 60 assaults on that front, were doing everything possible to maintain their defense lines and positions and were inflicting significant losses on the Russian forces.

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