

## Russian forces take Kurakhove, intensify attack on Pokrovsk



As Friday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine, above, indicates, Russia's war against Ukraine continued last week, as it has for several months, with the Russian forces attacking toward Kupiansk in Kharkiv region; toward Chasiv Yar, west of Bakhmut which was taken last year after a lengthy siege; and toward Pokrovsk, which had a pre-war population of 60,000, is a transit hub on the important E50 highway northwest of Donetsk and 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, as they have for the last several months, 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; toward Vremivka about 30 kilometers southwest of Kurakhove; toward Orikhiv 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. And they continued to attack, with the assistance of a substantial number of North Korean troops, the Ukrainian forces holding a portion of Russia's Kursk region northeast of Sumy after their August incursion.

Last week the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported a total of 1,318 Russian attacks at various points along the contact line between the forces in eastern Ukraine in the seven days from Sunday, Jan. 5 through Saturday, Jan. 11. That compares with a total of 1,150 Russian attacks in the previous week of Dec. 29-Jan. 4. As in the previous weeks, the two most frequently-attacked points along the contact line

in eastern Ukraine last week were those where the Ukrainian forces were defending Pokrovsk (400 attacks last week), Kurakhove (140 attacks last week), and Lyman (135 attacks last week).

On Monday, the Russian Ministry of Defense said its forces had taken Kurakhove, but the Ukrainian General Staff disputed that assertion, saying its forces had repelled 26 attacks on their positions near Kurakhove. On Tuesday, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian forces said they continued to hold positions in the western outskirts of Kurakhove and a local power plant. But the spokesperson acknowledged "the situation in Kurakhove is really quite difficult right now, because a significant part of the city has been destroyed.... Ukrainian troops are holding on the western part of the town, its western outskirts. They are also holding onto a power plant located in the town." He said the Russian forces were attempting to raze Kurakhove building by building, thereby destroying potential defensive positions for the Ukrainian forces. The method, he said, mirrors what the Russian forces have done in other front-line towns, causing there to be "no intact buildings" after they have moved in.

On Friday, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian forces said the Russian forces were still trying to drive the Ukrainian forces out of Kurakhove but the Ukrainian forces were continuing to hold the thermal power plant and the western outskirts of the town. But the situation in Kurakhove was, the spokesperson said, "difficult;" the Russian forces had blown up the dam of the Kurakhove reservoir and the thermal power plant was no longer operating and had become, instead, the site of intensive conflict within Kurakhove. The spokesperson said Ukrainian forces "are holding the plant and inflicting all the damage they can on the enemy. But how much longer they can continue to hold it is uncertain."

The Ukrainian General Staff has not yet confirmed that the Russian forces have taken Kurakhove. But one indication that they have done so is the fact that the Ukrainian General Staff stopped reporting the number of Russian attacks on or in the city Friday and Saturday. If the Russian forces have in fact taken Kurakhove, as seems likely, it would be the first city or significant town in eastern Ukraine taken by the Russians since they took Avdiivka last February and Vuhledar in October. Meanwhile, the Russian forces have increased their attacks toward Pokrovsk, 30 kilometers to the north; whereas they launched between 41 and 50 attacks a day against Pokrovsk on Sunday, January 5 through last Thursday, on Friday and Saturday they conducted more than 70 attacks each day against the Ukrainian forces defending that city, and yesterday they conducted 58 assault and offensive operations in the Pokrovsk sector. It clearly is now the most important priority for the Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.

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