

## Russian attacks continue against Pokrovsk, other cities in east – and Putin continues to rationalize war at St. Petersburg Forum



As Friday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine, above, indicates, last week the Russian forces continued to attack the Ukrainian forces that still hold a small portion of Russia's Kursk region and toward Sumy as well as toward Kharkiv and Kupiansk, the area around Chasiv Yar, and the city of Pokrovsk. But as the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported in its daily updates, the Russian forces also continued to attack the Ukrainian forces defending other cities and towns in eastern Ukraine – among them, Lyman about 30 kilometers southeast of Izium, Kramatorsk about 25 kilometers northwest of Chasiv Yar, Toretsk about 20 kilometers south of Chasiv Yar, Vremivka about 50 kilometers south of Pokrovsk, the Orikhiv area southeast of Zaporizhzhia, and the area in Kherson region adjacent to the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that over the past week from last Sunday through Saturday, the Russian forces conducted a total of 1,245 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending the cities and towns in northeastern and eastern Ukraine. As in previous weeks, the largest number of Russian attacks were directed against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk, an important transit hub on the highway that links Donetsk city with Dnipro and that, if taken, would open a pathway northward for the Russian forces toward Kostyantynivka, Kramatorsk, Sloviansk and the remaining portion of Donetsk region still under Ukrainian control. Over the seven days last week, the Russian forces conducted a total of 365 attacks against the forces defending Pokrovsk.

President Putin has ordered the Russian forces to create what he has called a “buffer zone” in Ukrainian territory along the border with Russia’s Kursk region and those forces have taken a number of border settlements in Ukraine’s Sumy region in recent weeks. Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Friday, Putin said the Russian forces were 12 kilometers inside the border in that region. The city of Sumy, which had a pre-war population of about 250,000, is about 30 kilometers from the border. He said, “Next is the city of Sumy, the regional center. We have no objective to take Sumy, but in principle I do not rule it out.... They pose a constant threat to us, constantly shelling the border areas.”

At the Forum, Putin was asked, provocatively, how the war in Ukraine is reflective of the values the Forum was promoting. He said, “It is very easy to explain. And it is directly related to what we said before, what I said before. I said that no country’s security should be guaranteed at the expense of another country’s security. From the early 1990s and for decades, we received repeated assurances that by no means, never, under no circumstances, NATO would expand eastward. After that, we have witnessed five, or effectively six, expansion waves. Despite our persistent objections, these were ignored. This is the first. Without doubt, these represent rudimentary manifestations of the old, or even centuries-old, neo-colonial policy upgraded to a certain extent in order to align with contemporary trends, while retaining its fundamental nature. These are exercises of power politics that disregard the legitimate interests of the Russian Federation. This is my general assessment.”

Continuing, he said, “Regarding Ukraine, all developments there similarly constitute exercises of power politics. What am I referring to? The bloodstained anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine. What did this represent? More power politics. The previous US administration openly admitted it had invested billions of dollars in orchestrating the coup. These admissions were made publicly, without any constraint. Our objective was to protect the population that historically and culturally identified with Russia, the Russian culture and its people – specifically, the residents of Crimea. Subsequently, we attempted to settle the situation in southeastern Ukraine, particularly in Donetsk and Lugansk. We made attempts. However, once again resorting to power politics, our ideological adversaries, so to speak, chose to impose a military solution in Donetsk and Lugansk – in Donbass. It was not Russia that initiated hostilities. Following the anti-constitutional coup, part of the population in southeastern Ukraine rejected both the coup’s outcome and the authority of its perpetrators. It was against them that military operations were first launched. We made attempts to achieve a peaceful resolution and to put together broken pieces, but our so-called “partners” (let’s put them in quotation marks now), as it was further revealed, initiated the peace talks for one purpose only: to arm Ukraine and continue these hostilities. Ultimately, we had no choice but to recognize the independence of these republics – Lugansk and Donetsk. For eight years we refrained from such a decision, persistently pursuing diplomatic solutions. But eventually, we were forced to recognize their independence and extend our support, including military assistance, in order to end the war launched by our

Western adversaries and by those whom they relied and continue to rely on now in Ukraine – the radical nationalists and neo-Nazis. Therefore, responsibility for the tragedy in Ukraine lies not with Russia. It is the responsibility of those who refuse to reconcile with the global changes in the world.”

Continuing, Putin said Russia doesn’t want to destroy Ukraine, but Ukraine must accept Russia’s territorial advances if peace is to be achieved: “I have already said many times that I consider Russians and Ukrainians to be one people. In that sense, all of Ukraine is ours...There is a saying: Wherever a Russian soldier sets foot, that is ours. But we have never questioned Ukraine’s sovereignty. At the same time, the conditions under which Ukraine became independent were set forth in the 1991 Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, where it is clearly written in black and white that Ukraine is a non-aligned, non-nuclear, neutral state. It would be good to return to these fundamental values.”

Wishful thinking.

David R. Cameron

June 23, 2025