

As war continues, EU approves 18th package of sanctions on Russia. Meanwhile, both sides prepare for new round of talks in Istanbul.



British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation as of July 18, 2025.

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. They also continued to attack the Ukrainian forces to the north and west of Chasiv Yar. And they continued to attack the forces defending the city of Pokrovsk in the western portion of Donetsk region. 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, including Lyman, about 30 kilometers southeast of Iziurm; 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 1,289 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 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 398 attacks against the

Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk and the surrounding territory. Today the General Staff reported that the Russian forces conducted 154 attacks yesterday on the Ukrainian forces defending the cities and towns in eastern Ukraine, 46 of which were directed against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk.

While the Russian attacks in northeastern and eastern Ukraine continued on the ground last week, the attacks with drones and missiles continued in the air as well. Over 13 hours on the night of July 3-4, Russia had fired 539 drones and 12 cruise or ballistic missiles at Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine in what was, at the time, the largest drone and missile attack of the war. But only a few nights later, on July 8-9, Russia set a new record for the number of drones and missiles fired in a single night by firing 728 drones and 13 cruise and ballistic missiles at Kyiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and other cities in Ukraine. The drone and missile attacks continued every night last week. On Saturday, President Zelenskyy reported that on Friday night and early Saturday morning Russia fired more than 300 drones and more than 30 cruise missiles toward Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipro, Kherson, Odesa and other cities in Ukraine. Last night and early this morning, Russia fired a total of 426 drones and 24 cruise missiles at those and other cities in Ukraine..

As the war continued on the ground and in the air, the EU Council met on Friday and approved its 18th package of sanctions against Russia. Included in the package are a number of measures designed to hit Russia's energy, financial and military sectors. 14 individuals and 41 entities were added to the long lists of individuals and entities responsible for actions that undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine. Those measures bring the total number of designated Russians to more than 2,500 and the total number of entities to ____.

The package further curtails Russia's energy revenues by lowering the price cap for crude oil from \$60 a barrel to \$47.60 a barrel to align it with the current global price. The EU will also introduce an automatic and dynamic mechanism to modify the price cap as needed, since oil exports still represent one-third of the Russian government's revenues. The EU is also imposing further sanctions on Russia's so-called shadow fleet. An additional 105 vessels will be subject to a port access ban and a ban on the provision of a broad range of services related to maritime transport, bringing the total number of banned vessels to 444. The measure is designed to target non-EU tankers that are part of Russia's shadow fleet that circumvents the oil price cap and, in so doing, supports the Russia's energy sector, transports Russian grain to other countries, or transports military equipment for Russia.

The package also includes sanctions that target Russian and international companies that manage shadow fleet vessels, traders of Russian crude oil, and a Russian-owned refinery in India that is a major customer of the shadow fleet. The package also includes a Russian entity in the liquified natural gas sector. The package includes for the first time an import ban on refined petroleum products made from Russian crude oil and coming from any third country except the U.S., Canada, the UK, Norway, and Switzerland. And importantly and symbolically, the package includes a full transaction

ban on Nord Stream 1 and 2, preventing the completion, operation, maintenance, and future use of those pipelines.

The EU package also upgrades and extends the existing prohibition on providing EU-based specialized financial messaging services that applies to 23 Russian banks to a full transaction ban that includes those banks and 22 additional Russian banks. The package also lowers the threshold for sanctioning third-country financial and credit institutions that are evading existing sanction measures against Russia or are connected to the alternative financial messaging system that is managed by the Russian Central Bank. The package also increases the transaction ban on third countries' financial institutions which are already under EU sanctions. The package also includes a ban on carrying out any transaction with the Russian Direct Investment Fund and places a new ban on selling or supplying Russia any software management systems and software used in the banking and financial sector.

In order to curb Russia's military capabilities, the EU package also imposed further sanctions on suppliers of the Russian military industrial complex, including three in China and eight in Belarus. In addition, 26 entities, including seven in China and Hong Kong and four in Türkiye, that have been circumventing export restrictions pertaining to unmanned aerial vehicles, i.e., drones and missiles have been added to the list. The package also includes a ban on exports worth more than €2.5 billion that have been used to enhance Russia's defense and security sector. The new package also includes sanctions on individuals and entities involved in the deportation to Russia and indoctrination of Ukrainian children. Finally, the new package includes eight new listings related to the Belarusian military complex, imposes on Belarus' trade the same measures imposed on Russia, extends the ban on specialized financial messaging services for Belarus to a full transaction ban, and introduces an embargo on the import of arms from Belarus.

As the war continued today, both sides indicated there may soon be another round of talks in Istanbul between the Russian and Ukrainian negotiating teams. Today, President Zelenskyy told a group of Ukrainian diplomats that, "We need greater momentum in negotiations to end the war. The agenda from our side is clear: the return of prisoners of war, the return of children abducted by Russia, and the preparation of a leaders' meeting." And tonight in his daily video address, Zelenskyy said, "Today I discussed with Rustem Umerov the preparation for a prisoner exchange and another meeting with the Russian side in Turkey. Umerov reported that the meeting is planned for Wednesday. More details will follow tomorrow." [Umerov, the former defense minister, was appointed last week as Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council. He is the head of Ukraine's negotiating team, which met with the Russian team in Istanbul on May 16 and June 2.] On Friday, President Putin had a telephone conversation with President Erdogan and, according to his site, "confirmed Russia's fundamental commitment to seeking a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict and thanked Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his readiness to continue facilitating direct talks between

Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul.” TASS, the Russian news agency, quoted a source in Turkey as saying the talks would take place on Wednesday while the RIA news agency, also quoting a source, said they would take place on Thursday and Friday. Today, commenting on the earlier reports, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, “We call for a third round of talks. As soon as there is final clarity on dates, we will inform you.”

And while both sides talk about talks, the war continues both in the air and on the ground.

David R. Cameron
June 21, 2025