As Russia's war continues on the ground and in the air, concerns mount about a possible meltdown at Zaporizhzhia.

UK Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine as of September 26.

As Friday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine indicates, last week the Russian forces continued to attack the Ukrainian forces at a number of locations in Ukraine, extending from the area south of Sudzha in the Russian region of Kursk to the area on the border north of Kharkiv, toward the city of Kupiansk and the area around it, the area around the small city of Chasiv Yar, toward the city of Pokrovsk and the area around it, along the front line in Zaporizhzhia region, and in Kherson region adjacent to the Dnipro River in southeastern Ukraine. But as the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported in its daily updates last week, the Russian forces also continued to attack the forces defending a number of other cities and towns in the large portion of Donetsk region north and west of Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk that's still held by Ukraine.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that over the seven days last week from Sunday through Saturday, the Russian forces conducted a total of 1,200 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending the cities and towns in northeastern, eastern, and southeastern Ukraine. As in previous weeks, the largest number of Russian attacks were directed against the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk, which, if taken would open a pathway toward the cities in Donetsk region that are still held by Ukraine. Over the seven days last week, the Russian forces conducted a total of 380 attacks against the forces defending Pokrovsk and the area around it. They also continued to attack the Ukrainian forces defending the cities of Lyman, Slovyansk, Kramatorsk,

Kostyantynivka, and Toretsk in Donetsk region, as well as those defending the cities and towns along the front line in Zaporizhzhia region.

While Russia's war against Ukraine continued on the ground in northeastern, eastern, and southeastern Ukraine, Russia also continued to attack the cities and towns of Ukraine with drones and missiles. On Saturday night and early Sunday, for example, Russia fired 595 drones and 48 missiles at Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Sumy, Odesa, and other cities and towns, destroying apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, and other public facilities. More than 70 people were wounded in the attack and several were killed. It wasn't the largest Russian drone and missile attack – that occurred three weeks ago, when Russia fired 810 drones and 13 missiles at Kyiv and other cities. But it was one of the largest attacks, and it destroyed a number of apartment buildings and other structures and killed or wounded a large number of men, women, and children.

Beyond the continuing battle along the front line in eastern and southeastern Ukraine and the constant barrage of drones and missiles each night, perhaps the most worrisome development last week was the looming danger of a meltdown at the large nuclear plant at Zaporizhzhia. The plant, which consists of six reactors, is the largest in Europe. The reactor core and the used nuclear fuel must be cooled to prevent them from overheating and possibly causing a meltdown such as the one that occurred in April 1986 at the Soviet nuclear plant in Chernobyl when a reactor exploded. The cooling and safety systems in the Zaporizhzhia plant depend on a power transmission line from the Ukrainian energy system. The Ukrainians say the line was damaged by the Russian forces Tuesday evening and they should repair it. The Russians claim the line was damaged by Ukrainian artillery and say they are unable to repair it because of the Ukrainian artillery. The plant has been using emergency diesel generators to run its cooling and safety systems since the line was damaged. The plant reportedly has sufficient diesel fuel reserves on-site to fuel the generators for 20 days, but a nuclear radiation and energy specialist has said emergency diesel generators are considered a last line of defense, to be used only in extreme circumstances. The threat of a meltdown was sufficient to cause Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to travel to Russia and meet with President Putin on Thursday. But thus far the power line hasn't been repaired and the threat of a catastrophic meltdown increases with each passing day as the amount of diesel fuel available at the plant decreases each day. There is, in addition, an important further complication: Russia is in the process of integrating the plant into *its* power network. Indeed, as Grossi was meeting with Putin, the Russian-appointed head of the plant announced that its integration into the Russian network was "in its final stage." Nuclear experts have urged Grossi and the IAEA to insist that Russia abandon its plan to integrate the plant into its network and focus instead on ensuring that a catastrophic meltdown is avoided. But based on the Russian response thus far, there's no reason to think Russia will abandon its plan and, most importantly of course, take the necessary steps to avoid a nuclear

catastrophe. And so, with the threat of a nuclear catastrophe looming over Ukraine and Europe, Russia's war against Ukraine continues on the land and in the air.

David R. Cameron
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