As Russia's war against Ukraine continues on the ground & in the air, U.S. and European leaders and officials meet in Berlin

UK Defense Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine as of Dec. 12.

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 from the area south of Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region to the area on the border north of Kharkiv and at a number of points along the long contact line between the forces in eastern and southeastern Ukraine from the area north and east of Kupiansk to the area in the northern portion of Donetsk region toward Lyman and Siversk and the cities of Slovyansk, Kramatorsk and Kostyantynivka (not shown) in that region, toward the city of Pokrovsk and the area around it, and at several locations along the long contact line between the forces in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in southeastern Ukraine.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that over the seven days last week from Sunday, Dec. 7, through Saturday, Dec. 13, the Russian forces conducted a total of 1,220 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending the cities and towns in northeastern, eastern, and southeastern Ukraine. In the previous seven days from Sunday, Nov. 30 through Saturday, Dec. 6, the Russian forces conducted 1,247 attacks against the Ukrainian forces defending those cities and towns. As in previous weeks, the largest number of Russian attacks last week were directed against the Ukrainian forces defending the area around Pokrovsk which, if taken, would open a pathway northward toward the cities of Kostyantynivka, Slovyansk and Kramatorsk that are still held by Ukraine. The General Staff reported that over the seven days last week the Russian

forces conducted a total of 328 attacks against the forces defending Pokrovsk and the area around it, compared with 349 attacks in the previous seven days.

While the Russian forces continue to attack the Ukrainian forces defending Pokrovsk and the other cities and towns in northeastern and eastern Ukraine, Russia also continues its air war against the people of Ukraine. On Friday night into early Saturday morning, for example, Russia fired 465 drones and 30 air-, sea-, and ground-based missiles toward Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, and other cities. As with previous attacks, the Friday night-Saturday morning attack was aimed at electricity-generation, transmission, and distribution facilities but also hit a number of apartment buildings in those cities. On Sunday, Zelenskyy said that over the past week Russia fired more than 1,500 drones, 900 aerial bombs, and 46 cruise and air- or ground-based missiles at electricity facilities and distribution systems throughout Ukraine, many of which hit apartment buildings and other buildings in cities throughout the country. He also said that, because of the repeated and continuing attacks on the facilities producing and distributing electricity, Ukraine would have to introduce restrictions on the use of electricity.

As Russia's war against Ukraine continues on the ground and in the air, U.S. and European officials met in Berlin over the weekend and continuing today to discuss possible changes in the peace plan put forward by President Trump on Nov. 20 and discussed by U.S. presidential envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner with Ukraine officials and then with Putin in Moscow on Dec. 2 One possible change reportedly involves Ukraine's willingness to agree to Russia's insistence that it not at some unspecified future date become a member of NATO in exchange for a U.S. security guarantee approved and enacted into law by the U.S. Congress and President. Another possible change reportedly involves alteration of a key provision in the Trump plan – point 21 pertaining to territories – that Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk (the latter two of which constitute the Donbas) "will be recognized as de facto Russian" as will be the portions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions now held by Russia, and that Ukraine will withdraw from the part of Donetsk region it now controls, with the area from which it withdraws being considered a "neutral demilitarized buffer zone, internationally recognized as territory belonging to the Russian Federation." Ukraine has made it clear, repeatedly, that this provision is unacceptable. Whether the U.S. can frame language pertaining to the security guarantee for Ukraine and to the territorial issue that both Ukraine and Russia can accept remains to be seen. If it can do so, the war may finally come to an end. But if it cannot, the war will presumably continue with no end in sight.

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December 15, 2025