EU leaders call for a ceasefire and reject Russia's claim to territory.

Friday's UK Defence Intelligence update on the battlefield situation in Ukraine.

As Friday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine indicated, the Russian forces continued last week, as they have in recent weeks, to attack toward the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine and at a number of points along the contact line between the forces in eastern and southeastern Ukraine from the area south of Kupiansk, to the area south of Lyman and Siversk toward the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in the northern portion of Donetsk region, toward the area along the eastern boundary of Dnipropetrovsk region south of Pokrovsk, and in the area near the junction of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions in southeastern Ukraine. As the green arrow indicates, the Ukrainian forces continued to attack the Russian forces at the southeastern corner of Dnipropetrovsk region. Both sides also attacked at a number of other locations along the contact line as well.

Friday's map, when compared with the map issued ten days earlier, shows virtually no change in the territory held by the Ukrainian and Russian forces. However, a comparison of the two maps suggests the Russian forces have advanced to the north and west of Pokrovsk and the neighboring city of Myrnohrad in the western portion of Donetsk region while the Ukrainian forces appear to have taken back most if not all of Lyman in the northern portion of Donetsk region. These changes, as limited as they are, suggest the focus in the war for both sides at this point is, at least in part, on securing specific portions of territory prior to a ceasefire that sooner or later will be agreed and that, when agreed, will presumably freeze the front line.

As the war on the ground continues, Russia's war in the air against Ukraine continues as well. Last Sunday night, for example, the Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russia launched 70 missiles and 611 drones at Kyiv, Kharkiv, and other cities in Ukraine. A number of apartment buildings were hit in both cities. Five people were killed and 29 injured in Kyiv and five were killed and four injured in Kharkiv, and five rescue workers were also killed during the firefighting efforts in Kharkiv. In

addition, one of the targets in the air attack was the Orthodox complex of Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, a UNESCO world heritage site that includes the 11th century Dormition Cathedral, the roof of which was badly damaged and set on fire.

As Russia's war against Ukraine continued on the ground and in the air, last week the heads of state and government of the 27 member states of the European Union met for their Spring meeting of the European Council. As usual, the leaders had a number of important issues on their agenda. But obviously, the war was the primary focus of the meeting. At the meeting, the EU leaders held an exchange of views with President Zelenskyy, and in their conclusions, issued after the two-day meeting, they reaffirmed their "continued firm and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders" and said the EU "will continue to provide, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, comprehensive political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people."

The leaders welcomed the decision to officially open last Monday membership negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, beginning with the "fundamentals" cluster of requirements, covers the core values and principles on which the EU is built, from the rule of law to strong democratic institutions, that must be met by a state seeking to become a member of the EU. The leaders also issued a statement in which they declared the EU's support for a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law and underpinned by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine." The statement was especially important because it made it very clear that the EU does not agree with the proposal put forward by President Trump last November, after speaking with President Putin, that Russia retain a substantial portion of the territory in Ukraine it now holds. The leaders said, "Only a solution that respects Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity can bring about a just and lasting peace. Borders must not be changed by force, the aggressor cannot be rewarded, and Ukraine's long-term security and ability to defend itself must be guaranteed." And, they added, "The path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine."

Continuing, the EU leaders said, "The European Council supports diplomatic efforts to bring Russia's war of aggression to an end and underlines the EU's readiness to step up its engagement in that context, in accordance with the Union's aim to promote peace, as enshrined in the Treaties. Europe has a key role to play in a future settlement and stands ready to defend its interests. Having failed to achieve its military and strategic objectives, Russia has intensified its missile and drone attacks against Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure. The European Council urges Russia to show genuine willingness regarding peace, agree to a full, unconditional, and immediate ceasefire and engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace."

Continuing, the leaders said, "The European Council strongly condemns the recent serious escalation by Russia, including large-scale missile and drone attacks against civilians in Ukraine, the recent strikes against the UNESCO World Heritage site of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, as well as the increasingly aggressive, reckless and

irresponsible behavior towards EU Member States, including foreign information manipulation and interference, and threats against the European diplomatic presence in Ukraine. The recent incident in which a Russian drone carrying explosives crashed into a residential building in Romania as well as similar incidents in other Member States are a direct result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and threaten the security of EU citizens and regional stability. The European Council strongly condemns the repeated violations of Member States' airspace and territorial waters and underlines that Russia bears full responsibility for the consequences of its escalatory behaviour and its continued military actions. The European Council reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the security of all Member States."

"The European Union and Member States are prepared to contribute to robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, notably through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States. This will include supporting Ukraine's ability to deter aggression and defend itself effectively, also in the long term, including through the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) and the European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), as well as support for ceasefire monitoring through the EU Satellite Centre. The contribution of the European Union and Member States will be based on their respective competences and capabilities and in line with international law."

"The European Council strongly condemns Russia for systematically and deliberately targeting Ukraine's civilian and energy infrastructure and calls for the immediate cessation of all military activities near Ukraine's nuclear facilities, which pose a serious threat to their safety and security. It also calls for further intensified EU efforts, coordinated with international partners' efforts, to support Ukraine in urgently repairing, rebuilding and strengthening the resilience of its critical infrastructure and energy system ahead of next winter and to ensure the rapid rehabilitation of the Chornobyl containment arch. At the same time, it encourages enhanced regional energy cooperation and cross-border electricity interconnections."

"The EU remains committed to supporting Ukraine's repair, recovery, and reconstruction, in coordination with international partners. In this context, the European Council looks forward to the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Gdansk on 25 and 26 June 2026 [and] to the first disbursement to Ukraine from the [EU's recently approved] €90 billion loan for 2026 and 2027 before the end of June 2026. It calls on Member States to continue their bilateral support for Ukraine and underlines the importance of continued EU outreach to third countries to ensure further international support to help close the remaining gap in Ukraine's finances."

The EU leaders also underlined "the importance of further sustained efforts to provide military support to Ukraine, including through the Ukraine Support Loan, and urgently accelerate the production and delivery of priority equipment, in particular air defence systems, ammunition, drones and missiles, including to help Ukraine protect its civilian population and its energy and critical infrastructure. In this context, further enhancing EU-Ukraine defence industrial cooperation remains crucial….The EU remains determined to further increase pressure on Russia and

continue weakening Russia's war economy so that it stops its brutal war of aggression and engages in meaningful negotiations towards peace. The European Council reiterates the importance of further reducing Russia's energy revenues, curbing its shadow fleet operations and further constraining its banking system. The European Council welcomes the recent adoption of new sanctions, notably targeting the shadow fleet, following the adoption of the 20th sanctions package. It calls for the swift adoption of the 21st sanctions package. Undermining the Russian shadow fleet's business model requires a 'whole of route' approach and coordination among Member States and with partners, including a common approach to addressing the significant environmental, security and maritime safety risks posed by such vessels. The European Council also stresses the importance of continued coordination with G7 and other like-minded partners on sanctions, of strengthening the enforcement of existing measures and closing loopholes, and of further reinforcing the anti-circumvention measures. The European Council stresses that, as long as there is no just and lasting peace in Ukraine, there should not be a normalization of Russia's participation in international sports and cultural events."

"The European Council urges all countries to immediately cease any assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, whether direct or indirect, and notably through the provision of dual-use goods and components. The European Council reiterates its urgent call on Russia and Belarus to immediately ensure the safe and unconditional return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and transferred Ukrainian children and other civilians…. The European Council also reaffirms the EU's commitment to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

Strong words. But Ukraine needs more than strong words of support; it needs more defensive weapons, such as the U.S. Patriot surface-to-air defense system, to counter the relentless attack of Russian drones, glide bombs, and cruise and ballistic missiles.

David R. Cameron
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