Putin suggests there may be more talks about ending the war. But he makes it clear Russia wants much of eastern Ukraine.

UK Defence Intelligence update on the battlefield situation in Ukraine, June 29, 2026.

As Monday's British Defence Intelligence map of the battlefield situation in Ukraine indicates, the Russian forces continue, as they have in recent weeks, to attack toward Sumy in northeastern Ukraine and at a number of points along the long contact line between the forces in eastern and southeastern Ukraine from the area south of Kupiansk to the area toward Kostyantynivka and the cities of Druzhkivka, Kramatorsk, and Sloviansk in the northern portion of Donetsk region, the area between Pokrovsk and Dobropillia, and the area in Kherson region near its junction with Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. As they do, the Ukrainian forces continue to attack the Russian forces in the southeastern corner of Dnipropetrovsk region just north of Dobropillia. Both sides also continue to attack at a number of other locations along the long contact line.

In comments to a journalist Sunday, President Putin said the Russian forces were only 10 kilometers from the city of Sumy and 3 to 5 kilometers from the city of Kupiansk, had taken nearly all of the city of Lyman, were "advancing at a good pace" toward Sloviansk, and held 96 percent of the city of Kostyantynivka. He also said the Russian forces were advancing in Zaporizhzhia region by about a kilometer a day and were advancing toward the city of Orikhiv in that region as well. In the interview, he said Ukraine had proposed a mutual halt to long-range air strikes as a step toward peace. But he said Russia saw the proposal as a means of strengthening its ground forces along the long frontline in eastern Ukraine: "It is clear why this proposal is being made, because our counterstrikes deep into Ukrainian territory are much stronger, have greater impact and are, frankly, more destructive. Given their catastrophic shortage of personnel, the Ukrainian Armed Forces apparently believe this [ending the air war] could be their salvation. But saving the Kyiv regime is not part of our plans."

In the interview, Putin downplayed the impact of the recent Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian fuel storage facilities, claiming they were “aimed at diverting our attention and forces from achieving the main objectives – the complete liberation of Donbas and Novorossiya.” The former of course refers to the easternmost Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. The latter term, which originally had been used to refer to territory in the Russian Empire that had been taken from the Cossacks and the Ottoman Empire, was first used by Putin in April 2014 to legitimize Russia’s support for the pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas, saying the two regions, along with those of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odessa, were part of “New Russia.” If, as Putin said, Russia’s “main objectives” were “the complete liberation of Donbas and Novorossiya,” that implied, given the conventional understanding of the term Novorossiya, “liberating” a substantial portion – roughly the eastern third - of Ukraine, including in addition to the two regions of the Donbas the regions of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa.

As the war on the ground continues, Russia’s war in the air against Ukraine continues as well with drones, glide bombs, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, including its new intermediate-range hypersonic Oreshnik ballistic missile, which reaches a speed of Mach 10 (over 7500 miles per hour) and is obviously exceptionally difficult to hit with defensive weapons. According to the UN, which keeps track of the fatalities from Russia’s air war, more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the daily barrage of drone and missile attacks which hit apartment buildings as well as public utility facilities that provide electricity, water and gas for the residents of Kyiv and the other cities that are hit on a daily basis by Russian drones and missiles. For example, on Sunday, Ukraine reported that in the previous evening and early morning that day Russian drones and missiles had killed 16 and injured 40 in Kyiv, had killed 5 and injured 29 in Dnipro, had killed 3 and injured 6 in Zaporizhzhia, and had killed 2 in Sumy. And on Wednesday night and early Thursday morning, Russia fired 74 missiles and 496 drones that hit in 30 locations in Kyiv, including 20 apartment buildings, killing 21 civilians and injuring 85. It was, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, “a terrible night for Kyiv. The enemy’s most massive attack.” President Zelenskyy pleaded once again for U.S. Patriot air defense systems and asked the U.S. to grant Ukraine a license to produce more missiles for the Patriot systems in now has.

On Sunday, after a meeting with a number of government ministers and other officials to discuss the supply of fuel to car owners, businesses, enterprises, and other significant organizations in the wake of Russia’s continuing drone and missile attacks, Putin was asked by a journalist about a comment he made at an international economic forum in St. Petersburg a week earlier that, while there had not been any talks with or about Ukraine recently, contacts continued through other channels. He was asked if those contacts were ongoing and whether there had been any new proposals from Ukraine. Putin said, “Yes, contacts do continue. They have been established through several channels and along several lines. There is no secret about that. There have also been new proposals. The suggestion of a meeting with the head of the Kiev regime is common knowledge. The request for at least a

temporary ceasefire along the line of contact is no news either. There have, however, been some new proposals, and I am prepared to mention a few of them. One is that both sides should stop carrying out long-range strikes deep inside each other's territory. The reason for this proposal is obvious. Our retaliatory strikes deep inside Ukrainian territory are far more powerful, more effective and, frankly, more destructive, resulting in genuinely serious consequence for the Kiev regime."

Continuing, Putin said, "Another proposal is to limit military operations – please note this carefully – to just four territories: the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions and the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, while halting hostilities everywhere else. The reasoning here is equally clear. If we were to agree, it would allow the Ukrainian armed forces to redeploy troops from the Nikolayev, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, and Sumy regions, as well as from certain sections of the state border, to reinforce those four regions. Given the Ukrainian armed forces' catastrophic manpower shortage, they apparently believe this could provide them with a lifeline. But rescuing the Kiev regime is not part of our plans.…. At the same time, in the current circumstances, we cannot rule out attempts by the Ukrainian armed forces to carry out what they believe would be surprise diversionary attacks pursuing limited objectives by special forces units. Their aim would be to divert our attention and resources away from our primary objective: the final liberation of Donbass and Novorossiya."

Asked whether there are contacts between the two governments, Putin said, "Yes, contacts do continue. They have been established through several channels and along several lines. There is no secret about that. There have also been new proposals. The suggestion of a meeting with the head of the Kiev regime is common knowledge. The request for at least a temporary ceasefire along the line of contact is no news either. There have, however, been some new proposals, and I am prepared to mention a few of them. One is that both sides should stop carrying out long-range strikes deep inside each other's territory. The reason for this proposal is obvious. Our retaliatory strikes deep inside Ukrainian territory are far more powerful, more effective and, frankly, more destructive, resulting in genuinely serious consequences for the Kiev regime. Another proposal is to limit military operations – please note this carefully- to just four territories: the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions and the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, while halting hostilities everywhere else."

He said Ukraine had proposed an agreement with Russia to end their long-range drone and missile attacks on each other as a step toward peace. But he said he had rejected it as an effort to relieve the Russian pressure on the Ukrainian forces along the contact line between the forces in eastern Ukraine: "It is clear why this proposal is being made, because our counter-strikes deep into Ukrainian territory are much stronger, have greater impact, and are, frankly, more destructive. Given their catastrophic shortage of personnel, the Ukrainian Armed Forces apparently believe this could be their salvation. But saving the Kyiv regime is not part of our plans." He did acknowledge, however, that the Ukrainian drone attacks on gas and oil facilities and storage areas had led to fuel shortages in some Russian regions.

Putin also made it clear in comments in a television interview that Russia aims to take all of the territory in the four Ukrainian regions – Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia - it formally annexed in September 2022. (Crimea was annexed in 2014.) He also made it clear that, as U.S. Secretary of State Rubio said last week about the Trump-Putin talks in Anchorage last year, there had been no formal agreement in regard to territory: “Nobody signed anything,” he said. “But we talked about certain possibilities for ending the conflict in Ukraine.” He also told the interviewer Russia expects a resumption of the U.S.-led diplomatic effort to end the war and another visit to Moscow by presidential envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner once the “hot phase” of the U.S.-Israel war with Iran ends.

David R. Cameron
July 5, 2026