

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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NATO SAYS ADVANTAGE GOES TO UKRAINE, MARTIAL LAW EXTENDED FOR 90 DAYS

The American Institute for War Studies (ISW) [suggests](#) that the Russians are probably preparing to resume an offensive in southern Ukraine to seize the rest of the Kherson region and move toward Zaporizhzhia. In the temporarily occupied settlements of Zaporizhzhya region, there has been an [increase](#) in the number of Russian military personnel.

The Russian armed forces do not give up their plans to take control of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. As a result of the shelling, a bridge connecting the towns of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk was [destroyed](#), making evacuation and the entry of humanitarian supplies much more difficult. On May 20, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated that "the liberation of the 'LPR' will be completed soon." Sergei Gaidai, head of the Luhansk Oblast Military Administration, is [convinced](#) that such statements are made only for propaganda purposes. He also [noted](#) that Russia is relocating its military and equipment to the Luhansk region from other directions. The probable [goal](#) of the Russian army is to move from Popasna to the north in order to complete the encirclement of Severodonetsk from the south. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) notes that a rapid advance by the Russian army is unlikely to be achieved over the past week, the Ukrainian military [repelled](#) 84 attacks by the occupiers.

On the situation in the regions as of the morning of May 23, see [here](#). A summary of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces is [here](#).

The Armed Forces of Ukraine are conducting a counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region. Since May 24, the subway in Kharkiv, whose stations have served as shelters for citizens since the beginning of the war, resumed its work. Since February 24, rescuers [have removed](#) more than 150 dead bodies from the rubble in the city, and they managed to save another 250 people.

A report from the liberated villages near Kharkiv was [published](#) by the newspaper Grati.

As of May 19, more than 112 thousand explosive objects and 593 kilograms of explosives, including nearly two thousand aerial bombs, [had been deactivated](#) in Ukraine. For example, in the Kyiv region, sappers found and [destroyed](#) about 10,000 explosive objects, including shells banned by the Geneva Convention. NATO [believes](#) that in the coming weeks no great success is expected on the battlefield for either side of the war, while at the same time noting that the advantage is shifting to Ukraine and it will be able to liberate the occupied territories in the future.

On May 22, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [approved](#) a decree extending martial law in Ukraine for 90 days until August 23, 2022, and general mobilization was also continued. The Ukrainian president's representative to the Constitutional Court, Fedor Venislavsky, [noted](#) that the extension was lengthy because the transition to a counteroffensive required more time than the defense.

MARIUPOL DEFENDERS ARE OUT OF AZOVSTAL, POSSIBILITY OF EXCHANGE IS NOT GUARANTEED

On 16 May, an operation was launched to rescue Ukrainian servicemen defending the Azovstal plant in Mariupol. The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces [reported](#) that the top military command gave orders to the commanders of the units at Azovstal to keep the personnel alive. Part of the military was [evacuated](#) to the temporarily occupied territory, the wounded were taken to hospital. The BBC [reports](#) that Ukrainian servicemen were taken to pre-detention centers in Rostov-on-Don and Taganrog. Ukraine plans to return them through an exchange. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [commented](#), "Thanks to the actions of the Ukrainian military, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, intelligence, the negotiating team, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the UN, we hope that we will be able to save the lives of our guys. There are seriously wounded among them and they are being helped". Leonid Slutsky, a member of the negotiation process on the Russian side and chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, [said](#) there should be no exchange. The Ukrainian Defense Ministry [urged](#) not to take such statements as official, noting that they were aimed at propaganda for Russia's internal consumption. The International Committee of the Red Cross [keeps](#) a register of Ukrainian military personnel, including the wounded, coming out of the Azovstal plant. Ukraine has not named the exact number of servicemen leaving the plant, while the Russian Defense Ministry [claims](#) nearly 2,500 prisoners of war. The American Institute for the Study of War (ISW) [suggests](#) that Russia may be

exaggerating the number of Azovstal defenders, including for the sake of a more lucrative exchange or to preserve its image.

The containment of Russian troops around Mariupol prevented them from implementing a plan to quickly seize Zaporizhzhya, reach the administrative border of Donetsk and Zaporizhzhya regions and create conditions for encircling Ukrainian Armed Forces units, Ukraine got the necessary time to form reserves, regroup forces and get help from partners, the General Staff of the AFU noted. Photos of Mariupol defenders [here](#).

SITUATION IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The Mariupol City Council [reported](#) on the situation in the city. Since May 22, a new permit system [introduced](#) by the Russian occupation troops has been in effect there. From the new school year, a complete russification of the educational process is planned there, teachers are forced to cooperate, and dissenters are threatened with "negative consequences," as [reported](#) by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Lyudmila Denisova. Attempts to restore the water supply in the city could [lead](#) to a humanitarian catastrophe.

The occupation authorities of Melitopol in Zaporizhzhia region are trying to [blackmail](#) the loyalty of local residents. In Kherson region, Russian occupation troops are "introducing" a [pass system](#) for residents of the region and [blocking](#) travel to Ukrainian-controlled territory. At the same time, pro-Ukrainian sentiment in the occupied territories [remains high](#).

THE FIRST RUSSIAN SERVICEMAN SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR THE MURDER OF A CIVILIAN IN UKRAINE

The trial of Vadim Shishmarin, commander of the 4th Tank Kantemirovskaya Division of the Moscow Region, the [first Russian serviceman](#) to stand trial for the murder of a Ukrainian civilian, [began](#) in Kyiv. The prosecutor's office charged Shishmarin under part 2 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine – violation of laws and customs of war combined with premeditated murder. Meduza interviewed the mother of the accused, who [pleaded](#) guilty in the courtroom. The [wife of the murdered Alexander Shelipov](#) from the Sumy region [said](#) that she expects a life sentence for Shishmarin, but is not against his exchange for the defenders of Mariupol. On 23 May, Vadim Shishmarin was [sentenced to life imprisonment](#).

Also in the Poltava region began the trial of two Russian servicemen on trial for the first artillery shelling of the Kharkiv region, they are accused of violating the laws and customs of war.

Ukrainian Prosecutor General Irina Venediktova [said](#) that as of May 23, at least 4,600 civilians, including 232 children, were killed as a result of Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Human Rights Watch [published](#) a report based on interviews with local residents in the liberated territories.

And The New York Times [published](#) new evidence of Russian military atrocities during the occupation of Bucha in the Kyiv region - a video showed the occupiers executing at least eight Ukrainians on March 4.

UNITED NATIONS SAYS 9 OUT OF 10 UKRAINIANS MAY FALL BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, G7 COUNTRIES ALLOCATE ABOUT \$20 BILLION IN AID

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denis Shmygal, speaking at a session with G7 finance ministers on May 19, [said](#) the Ukrainian budget deficit is about \$5 billion a month and called on the G7 to allocate \$15 billion over the next three months. He stressed that Russia is trying to create a food crisis by restricting Ukrainian exports, provoking a migration crisis by forcing millions of Ukrainian citizens to seek asylum in Europe, and using energy resources as a hybrid weapon.

As of May 19, the total direct documented damage to Ukraine's infrastructure as a result of the war's destruction [reached](#) \$97.4 billion, or 2.9 trillion hryvnia. At the same time, the total losses of Ukraine's economy due to the war range from \$564 billion to \$600 billion. These are both direct and indirect losses. The UN Development Program [believes](#) that if the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war drags on, 9 out of 10 residents of Ukraine may find themselves in poverty or almost below the poverty line.

G7 finance ministers [announced](#) that they had mobilized \$19.8 billion to support Ukraine. This money will help close the funding gap and provide basic services to Ukrainian citizens.

U.S. AND EU SEND MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

US President Joe Biden has [signed](#) a law on the allocation of military, economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine totaling almost 40 billion dollars. Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S., [spoke](#) about the planned aid items – most of the amount is for security and defense aid to Ukraine. Additionally, a \$100 million military aid package was [announced](#), which will include artillery from the Pentagon's stockpile.

Jake Sullivan, national security adviser to the US President, is [confident](#) that Russian forces will not be able to disrupt arms supplies to Ukraine because the US uses diversified and sustainable supply chains.

The Ukrainian presidential office is [calling](#) for MLRS multiple rocket launchers to be provided to Ukraine so that the Ukrainian Armed Forces can [decontaminate](#) the Black Sea and prevent a global food crisis.

The EU Council of Ministers has [approved](#) additional aid to Ukraine in the amount of 500 million euros for the purchase of military equipment. The European Parliament [supported](#) a one-year abolition of EU import duties on all goods from Ukraine, a

decision that must now be approved by the EU Council. In addition, the European Union is considering the possibility of attracting assets seized from the subsanctioned Russians to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine, [according to Bloomberg](#).

The European Commission plans to allocate in 2022 up to 9 billion euros more macrofinancial assistance to Ukraine, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, [announced](#) this, also announcing the creation of a "recovery platform" headed by Ukraine and the European Commission. EU member states, international donors, financial institutions and other partners will join it.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson [said](#) he would "redouble efforts" to provide food and humanitarian aid to Ukraine,

Portugal [will provide](#) up to 250 million euros of financial aid to Ukraine. [Britain](#) and [Canada](#) imposed additional sanctions against Russia.

MORE THAN 140 INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN ANTI-WAR CRIMINAL CASES IN RUSSIA

In Russia, anti-war speeches and statements continue to become grounds for criminal prosecution. OVD-Info [reports](#) on the currently known cases and 142 defendants.

Russia has involved at least two neo-Nazi groups in the war against Ukraine, which makes claims of "denazification" of Ukraine even more absurd, the German publication Spiegel [reported](#), citing a report by the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND).

TALKS BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA SUSPENDED

Russian presidential aide Vladimir Medinskiy, who heads the Russian delegation to the negotiations with Ukraine, [said](#) that the negotiations had been suspended at the initiative of the Ukrainian side. Mikhail Podolyak, advisor to the head of the presidential office, [confirmed](#) that Ukraine and Russia had suspended talks on ending the war, adding that Russia was using them as an element of propaganda for domestic politics. He also [stressed](#) that resumption is impossible until there is a total withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. The Russian Foreign Ministry [claims](#) that Ukraine has not responded to the Russian draft treaty.