

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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### RUSSIA SHELLS "UNDER A FOREIGN FLAG" BUT ACHIEVES ONLY MARGINAL TACTICAL SUCCESSES; UKRAINE SEEKS TO LIBERATE KHERSON

The Russian armed forces have made [marginal gains](#) in the vicinity of Severodonetsk, while their offensive has slowed down in other directions of the front. The head of the Luhansk Regional Military Administration, Sergei Gaidai, [noted](#) that people in the shelters of the Azot plant in Severodonetsk are refusing to evacuate. At the same time, despite the blowing up of bridges, communication with the city is preserved – it is possible to carry out evacuations and deliver humanitarian aid. The commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, [described](#) Severodonetsk as a key point in the Luhansk Region's defense operation system, in which Russian armed forces are attempting to launch attacks in nine directions simultaneously.

The main goal of the AFU's actions in [southern Ukraine](#) is the liberation of Kherson. [According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky](#), the occupier's offensive in southern Ukraine has been halted and the Ukrainian Armed Forces have a strategic initiative.

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) [notes](#) that Russian troops are moving reinforcements to the Zaporizhia region and are conducting artillery shelling "under a foreign flag" on occupied territory in the Donetsk region to suppress pro-Ukrainian sentiment. Analysts [speculate](#) that such provocative attacks may be Russia's response to Western partners' June 15 statements about increasing military aid to Ukraine.

U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Colin Kahl [said](#) that Russia probably still wants to seize many Ukrainian territories, if not the entire country, but it is unlikely that it will be able to achieve anything other than individual tactical objectives. According to Western intelligence, the war in Ukraine has reached a tipping point, and a number of scenarios for the further development of the conflict are possible, [according to CNN](#).

The situation in the regions as of the morning of June 20 can be found [here](#), and a summary of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' General Staff on the frontline can be found [here](#).

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS GRANTING UKRAINE CANDIDATE STATUS FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

On 16 June, French President [Emmanuel Macron](#), German Chancellor [Olaf Scholz](#), Italian Prime Minister [Mario Draghi](#) and Romanian President Klaus Johannis paid a diplomatic visit to Ukraine. After their visit to Irpin, the leaders [met](#) with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenski in Kyiv. The President of Ukraine noted that the main force and the most effective weapon is unification. The five leaders [discussed](#) steps to continue and strengthen Ukraine's defense, economic support for Ukrainian citizens and post-war reconstruction, measures to counter the Russia-induced food crisis, further sanctions pressure on Russia, and Ukraine's European integration.

During a press conference following the meeting, Emmanuel Macron [said](#) that France, Italy, Germany and Romania support the immediate granting of candidate status to Ukraine in the European Union. Volodymyr Zelensky [stressed](#) that granting this status to Ukraine would greatly strengthen freedom in Europe and would be an important decision on its historic path, and that Ukraine was ready to do the necessary work to become a full member of the European Union. He also [thanked](#) all four countries for their support for Ukraine.

On June 17, the European Commission recommended that Ukraine be granted candidate status for European Union membership. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [noted](#) that "Ukraine has clearly demonstrated its desire and determination to comply with European values and standards," adding that the country has already implemented about 70 percent of the necessary European rules and regulations.

At the same time, the European Commission stressed that Ukraine still had important work to do in the areas of rule of law, control of oligarchs, combating corruption and respect for fundamental rights.

The final decision on granting candidate status to Ukraine will be announced by the European Council during its summit on June 23-24. The decision must be approved by all 27 EU leaders in order for Ukraine to receive the status.

## UK PRIME MINISTER OFFERS WEST PLAN TO SUPPORT UKRAINE

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has offered the West a plan of action because of the protracted war in Ukraine. This is stated in his [column](#) for The Sunday Times. The plan includes four points: providing Ukraine with arms, rebuilding Ukraine, restoring export routes and unblocking Ukrainian seaports. Boris Johnson believes it is necessary to provide Ukraine with arms, equipment, ammunition and training faster than Russia will replenish them, and calls on allied countries to build up their capacity to help. In addition, during his visit to Ukraine, he proposed launching an extensive [training program](#) for the Ukrainian military that could train up to 10,000 troops every 120 days.

To rebuild the country, the West is invited to provide Ukraine with funding and technical assistance in the years to come. As Russia suppresses Ukraine's economy by blocking its main export routes through the Black Sea, Boris Johnson calls for a long-term effort to develop alternative land routes and also supports UN efforts to create a safe corridor for maritime exports.

## FOREIGN LEGION SEEKS EXCHANGE OF VOLUNTEERS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN THE SO-CALLED "DPR"

On June 18, the Coordinating Staff for the Treatment of Prisoners of War held another exchange of prisoners, as a result of which five people returned to Ukraine. The same number of people were handed over to Russia. It is [noted](#) that all the released citizens of Ukraine are civilians who were illegally held by the occupation troops, they were captured during the fighting in Kyiv Region and the occupation of Gostomel. The day before, as a result of another exchange, Ukraine [managed](#) to release volunteer and paramedic Yulia "Tyra" Pajewska, who had been held captive since March after she was detained in Mariupol, where she provided medical care to residents of the city. Damien Magru, spokesman for the International Legion, [said](#) during a briefing that the Legion expects that the three foreign volunteers "sentenced to death" last week in the so-called "DPR" will also be exchanged as prisoners of war as agreed upon by the parties. The head of the Ukrainian presidential office, Andriy Yermak, [stressed](#) that the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry was doing everything possible to free them and also to include them in the exchange lists of Ukrainian servicemen captured in Mariupol.

## RUSSIA REMOVES MORE THAN 1.9 MILLION UKRAINIANS TO ITS TERRITORY, EUROPE IMPOSES SANCTIONS

New York Times journalists [analyzed](#) more than a thousand photos from Ukraine of the aftermath of Russian shelling and identified more than 2,000 munitions. The investigation notes that at least 210 of them are internationally banned treaties. Most of them are cluster munitions, which can pose a serious danger for decades after the end of hostilities.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion and as of June 18, Russia has illegally removed, by de facto deportation, more than 1.9 million residents of Ukraine, including more than 307,000 children, a figure [announced](#) by Mikhail Mizintsev, head of the Russian National Defense Management Center.

[According to Ukraine](#), at least 20 filtration camps and prisons have been established in the temporarily occupied territories by the Russian Armed Forces.

The Ministry of Reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine [noted](#) that the forced departure from the temporarily occupied territory to Russia is not a crime during the war.

On June 16, the Lithuanian Seimas [passed](#) a resolution recognizing Russia's removal of people from Ukraine as deportation of the Ukrainian people. It called for legal methods to stop the genocide of the Ukrainian people, and for deported people to create conditions for their return to Ukraine or departure to another safe country. The deputies also appealed to other states to prosecute people involved in the deportation of Ukrainians and other crimes in Ukraine.

Britain [announced](#) a new wave of sanctions, including adding Russian Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova to the sanctions list for "allowing 2,000 unprotected children to be forcibly removed from Luhansk and Donetsk regions and facilitating their forced adoption in Russia. Sanctions were also imposed on the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, who supports Russia's war against Ukraine.

## DURING RAMSTEIN-3, THE PARTNERS ANNOUNCED AN INCREASE IN ARMS SUPPLIES TO UKRAINE

Mykhaylo Podolyak, adviser to the Head of the Presidential Office of Ukraine, [announced](#) that Ukraine needs to supply 1,000 howitzers, 300 multiple rocket launchers, 500 tanks, 2,000 armored vehicles and 1,000 unmanned aerial vehicles in order to create parity with the Russian Armed Forces.

[According to Anna Malyyar](#), deputy defense minister of Ukraine, Western partners have transferred to Ukraine about 10 percent of the requested weapons. She stressed that the assistance should be accelerated and a clear timetable for its delivery to Ukraine should be established.

On June 15, a regular meeting of the contact group on Ukrainian defense issues (the so-called "Ramstein-3") was held in Brussels. The group brings together defense ministers from more than 40 countries and coordinates international military assistance to Ukraine. Earlier, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov [noted](#) that the goal of the current meeting was to achieve significant practical results in increasing the supply of weapons, especially heavy weapons, for the needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [stressed](#) that the United States, together with allies and partners from various countries, were ready to meet Ukraine's request for all necessary weapons to counter the Russian invasion. After the meeting, Lloyd Austin, who chaired it, [said](#) that Slovakia would provide Ukraine with attack helicopters and Canada, Poland, [the Netherlands and Germany](#)

with artillery. He added that the meeting would deepen coordination and cooperation, strengthen Ukraine's Armed Forces to help repel Russian aggression now and in the future, and continue to defend a rules-based world order. [According to U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken](#), more than 40 countries are currently providing defense assistance to Ukraine.

Australia [sent](#) the first four M113AS4 armored personnel carriers to Ukraine, with a total of 14 such armored personnel carriers scheduled for delivery. Slovakia [gave](#) Ukraine five helicopters and ammunition for "Grads", and [Lithuania](#) purchased for Ukraine 110 anti-aircraft guns of Lithuanian production. The funds for the purchase of the guns were raised by Lithuanian citizens. France will [supply](#) Ukraine with self-propelled artillery systems.

## U.S. TO PROVIDE \$1 BILLION IN ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID

US President Joe Biden [announced](#) an additional \$1 billion in military aid to Ukraine. It includes additional artillery and coastal defense equipment, as well as ammunition for artillery and advanced missile systems. Politico [quoted](#) U.S. Defense Department officials as saying that the Pentagon plans to double the number of missile systems supplied to Ukraine. The head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, [specified](#) that U.S. MLRS will arrive in Ukraine by the end of June.

At the same time, Joe Biden's administration plan to sell Ukraine advanced combat drones is under threat – the U.S. fears that it could pose a threat to U.S. security if the equipment falls into Russian hands, Reuters [reported](#). The paper notes that the decision is currently being considered by the Pentagon's top command, but the timing of its adoption is unknown.

## UKRAINE GATHERS INFORMATION ON RUSSIAN WAR CRIMINALS, RUSSIA CONTINUES REPRESSIONS AGAINST ANTI-WAR ACTIVISTS

The "Book of Executioners of the Ukrainian People" [website](#), which contains verified information on Russian war criminals, has been launched. At the moment there is information about 607 Russian servicemen, who can be located according to their place of birth, military unit, age and also the territory where they committed war crimes. [According to Andrei Yermak](#), head of the Ukrainian presidential office, everything will be done to find and punish all Russian war criminals.

At the same time, repressions against people with an anti-war position, from a [priest](#) to an [artist](#), continue in Russia. In the three months since the article was published, at least 59 criminal cases have been opened and two sentences handed down in various regions of the country regarding "fakes" about the army. The OVD-Info project [tells](#) about how this article is applied and the people who are persecuted.