

HIGHLIGHTS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR CHRONICLES

№100, 30 June–3 July, 2022

Dear subscribers,

this issue of the newsletter is special for two reasons: firstly, it is the 100th time our newsletter has landed in your inbox, secondly, it is in an updated format. Now, at the end of the news review, you will also find a brief overview of Russian propaganda fakes about the war in Ukraine. Maybe these exposés will give you a reason or way to talk with people who are influenced by Russian propaganda, or maybe you will just understand more about the propagandists' logic and will be able to use these insights in your work. Information warfare is part of the hybrid aggression of the Russian state, let's confront it together!

UKRAINE WITHDRAWS FROM LYSYCHANSK, EXPERTS SAY PRESERVATION OF THE ARMY MORE IMPORTANT THAN TERRITORIAL PRESERVATION

Head of the Donetsk regional military administration, Pavel Kyrylenko, [noted](#) that about 45% of the Donetsk oblast is under Ukrainian control and these settlements are constantly shelled. He estimates that around 340,000 civilians remain in the free territory of the Donetsk oblast.

On 3 July, the most concentrated shelling of Slovyansk in the Donetsk oblast took place, resulting in fires in the city. At least 6 people [died](#), 15 others were injured.

On 3 July, Ukrainian defence forces were forced to withdraw from their positions after heavy fighting for Lysychansk in the Luhansk oblast. One of the main aims of the retreat was to avoid personnel losses in the face of the Russian occupying forces' superiority in artillery, aviation, multiple rocket launcher systems, ammunition and personnel. Russia has [claimed](#) the complete occupation of the Luhansk oblast. The head of the Luhansk regional military administration, Serhiy Haidai, [confirmed](#) that the Russian armed forces had consolidated their hold in Lysychansk and crossed the Siverskyi Donets river, while the number of long-range weapons needed

to displace the occupiers had not yet reached the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU). The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy [asserted](#) that the town will be de-occupied as soon as Ukraine receives arms from partner countries. Siversk, Bakhmut or Slovyansk in the Donetsk oblast may [be](#) the invaders' next targets.

[According to](#) UK intelligence, the ability of the Ukrainian forces to continue fighting delaying battles, and then withdraw troops in good order to avoid being encircled, will continue to be a key factor in the outcome of the campaign in Donbas. Mick Ryan, a fellow at the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies, points out that for Ukraine at the moment, preserving their army is much more important than holding territory – it allows Ukraine to not fight on Russia's terms. On whether Russia has an opportunity to maintain its momentum in the east of Ukraine, read the interview with Mick Ryan [here](#).

Russian troops have continued offensive operations to the north of Kharkiv in recent days, which may [indicate](#) that Russia still has territorial ambitions beyond Donbas, while the dispersal of troops reduces Russia's attacking strength in more important areas.

Russian troops carried out large-scale artillery strikes in the southern regions of Ukraine, along the front line in Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, as well as in the [Odesa](#) oblast. The likely goal of this is to disrupt the Ukrainian counteroffensive. The Economist writes that the advanced units of the ZSU have reached Kherson, but do not yet have enough arms for de-occupation, and the southern grouping has not yet accumulated the three-to-one advantage recommended by the strategists for a successful offensive. Meanwhile, the USA [believes](#) that Russia does not have enough forces to control the Kherson oblast, as it has withdrawn some of its troops to reinforce the offensive in Donbas. A report on life in occupied Kherson and the prospects for its de-occupation is [here](#). The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [reported](#) on the situation on the front as of the morning of 4 July.

UK WILL HELP ZSU TO MOVE FROM DEFENCE TO INCREASED OFFENSIVE CAPACITIES

The Ukrainian budget has received a €1bn grant from Germany, the Ukrainian Finance Ministry has [said](#). The funds received will be used to finance essential budget expenditures during martial law. [Norway](#) plans to provide a similar amount of aid.

Australia [will increase](#) military aid to Ukraine and will provide additional armoured personnel carriers, armoured vehicles, military equipment, drones and other equipment. The country also intends to impose sanctions on 16 Russian ministers and oligarchs and to ban imports of Russian gold.

The Pentagon has [confirmed](#) another package of military aid for Ukraine worth \$820 million. This will include, in particular, two NASAMS air defence systems. Additionally, Ukraine has received \$1.3 billion in non-repayable grant aid from the USA as part of the \$7.5 billion package financing the state budget, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal [has said](#). The UK [will give](#) Ukraine another £1 billion (more

than \$1.2 billion) in military aid to help the ZSU move from defence to ramp up its offensive operations with the aim of restoring sovereignty.

Canada [will provide](#) Ukraine with armoured combat support vehicles, and [France](#) will provide self-propelled artillery and armoured vehicles.

Slovakia announced that it could provide Ukraine with fighter jets and tanks, while the Czech Republic [expressed](#) its readiness to help with their transfer.

The Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Oleksiy Danilov, [thanked](#) the partner countries, while noting that the assistance was still insufficient to achieve parity in heavy weapons with Russia.

AT LEAST 14 RUSSIAN DEFENCE COMPANIES ARE NOT SUBJECT TO SANCTIONS

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control has [discovered](#) that Russian oligarch Suleyman Kerimov used a number of opaque legal entities to invest in the US. The oligarch's assets of over \$1 billion have been blocked.

In addition, almost three dozen leaders of Russian weapons firms and at least 14 defence companies have not been sanctioned by the USA, EU or the UK, according to a Reuters [report](#). Experts note that countries have applied the sanctions inconsistently and not all governments have imposed restrictions.

UKRAINE HAS MANAGED TO RETURN THE BODIES OF MORE THAN 400 DEAD SERVICE MEMBERS

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vershchuk has [said](#) that Ukraine has managed to return the bodies of more than 400 dead service people during the full-scale war (as of 3 July). A driver of the Evacuation 200 project, which enables relatives to receive the bodies of service members for burial, said: "I am carrying the most precious thing for relatives – a little time to be with their dead." Hromadske reports on the project [here](#).

DEBUNKING FAKES

RUSSIA ACCUSES UKRAINE OF SHELLING BELGOROD, EXPERTS POINT OUT THAT THE UKRAINIAN ARMY HAS NO SUCH MISSILES

On the night of 3 July, [several explosions](#) were heard in Belgorod (Russia), close to the border with Ukraine. According to the regional governor, three people were killed, 11 apartment buildings and 39 private homes were damaged (five of them completely destroyed). However, he did not specify the cause of the explosions and [gave](#) no guarantees that the situation would improve. It was later announced that [Ukrainian nationals](#) were among the dead, and that the Armed Forces of Ukraine

were [responsible](#) for what was happening, having [allegedly](#) launched three Tochka-U missiles, one of which fell on residential buildings after being shot down by air defence. Russia's Investigative Committee [opened](#) a criminal case over the shelling. The Insider quoted military expert Oleg Zhdanov and investigators from the Conflict Intelligence Team as [saying](#) that part of a Russian missile, which is not in service in Ukraine, had fallen on a high-rise building in Belgorod. A report from the city is available on [Meduza](#).

RUSSIA CALLS THE FORCED RETREAT FROM SNAKE ISLAND A "GOODWILL GESTURE"

By 30 June, Ukrainian armed forces had carried out another stage of the military operation on [Snake Island](#) that forced the occupiers to leave it. The full de-occupation of the island was [confirmed](#) by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence on 4 July, and before that by the [Pentagon](#). The Russian Minister of Defence confirmed the retreat from there, [calling](#) it a "goodwill gesture". Despite these announcements, the next day Russia carried out two [airstrikes](#) on the island. The real reason for the retreat from the island were the losses Russia had incurred trying to hold it: during the standoff on the island and in the surrounding waters, Russia lost more than \$900 million [worth](#) of military equipment, including by [destroying](#) some of it before retreating. Furthermore, the Russian Ministry of Defence [stated](#) that the aim of withdrawing troops was to demonstrate to the civilian population that Russia was not blocking UN efforts to organise a humanitarian corridor for the export of agricultural products from the territory of Ukraine. This statement is also [false](#): the Russian armed forces left Snake Island as a result of a successful attack by Ukraine, while the invading troops themselves continue to shell Ukrainian grain silos, in particular in the [Dnipropetrovsk](#) oblast, as well as to export stolen grain [by sea](#). Russia's defeat on Snake Island will reduce the threat to the Ukrainian coast but will not stop the naval blockade, experts [say](#). On 1 July, Ukraine [asked](#) Turkey to detain a Russian cargo ship carrying grain that had arrived in the Turkish port of Karasu from the occupied Berdiansk, and Turkey launched an [investigation](#). [According to](#) the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, from the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion until the end of June, Russia has taken away from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine at least 400,000 tons of grain - over a quarter of the grain that was there at the time of the occupation.

RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA CALLS ATTACK ON A SHOPPING CENTRE IN KREMENCHUK "PLANNED UKRAINIAN PROVOCATION", INVESTIGATORS CONFIRM THAT RUSSIA IS RESPONSIBLE

On 27 June, the Amstor shopping centre in Kremenchuk (Poltava oblast) was [hit](#) by a Russian missile attack, at least 19 people were [killed](#).

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [said](#) that at the time of the attack, there were up to 1000 people in the building. The Kyiv official emphasised that the attack was an act of terrorism and "a deliberate attack on a civilian facility". The Ukrainian Air Force command said that the shopping centre had been hit by Russian missiles fired from bombers that departed from an airfield in the Kaluga oblast in Russia. Russian politicians started to justify the attack, but some of the explanations contradicting one another. Thus, Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polianskiy [called](#) the attack a "provocation" by Ukraine. Russian Defence Ministry spokesperson, Igor Konashenkov, [said](#) that the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) had launched a "high-precision airborne weaponry strike on hangars with arms and ammunition from the United States and European countries," the shopping centre was not operational and caught fire due to strikes on targets nearby. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [accused](#) Western media of distorting the situation. Russian propagandists also joined the officials' statements: Vladimir Solovyov [claimed](#) that Ukraine had launched the missile attack on the Amstor shopping centre [so that](#) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at the G7 summit, could talk of even greater Russian atrocities and argue that is why Ukraine needs much more money and weapons from Western partners, while Margarita Simonyan [called](#) the attack a "planned Ukrainian provocation." As US vs DISINFO fact checkers [write](#), there are numerous pieces of evidence that it was Russian pilots who struck the shopping centre in Kremenchuk. Bellingcat [notes](#) that the Russian statements about the missile strike contradict evidence from open sources. In the comments of the Russian Defence Ministry, they said that the shopping centre was damaged only by the detonation of munitions, which they claim were stored nearby, but satellite images as well as [video footage](#) published on the internet contradict these statements. This refutes claims by the Russian Defence Ministry that the fire spread from another building. Russia has also stated in comments that the shopping centre was not in use. This was [not the case](#): a few days earlier in a closed Telegram chat for staff at the Amstor shopping centre [said](#) that the shops would continue to operate as normal, despite the air raid sirens, and after the attack, [many shops](#) wrote about staff being injured as a result of it. The BBC Reality Check team [reported](#) about posts in local groups about the search for missing people from the shopping centre. Moreover, on the day of the attack, Amstor's revenue [was](#) almost three million hryvnia.

Bellingcat calls pro-Russian claims that the shopping centre itself was a military site a key trend, stressing that no source has provided any evidence for this claim and no information from open sources has emerged that could confirm it. Another investigation refuting Russian propaganda fakes was [conducted](#) by The Insider. An interview with the city's mayor about how Kremenchuk and its residents are dealing with the shopping centre incident can be found [here](#).