

HIGHLIGHTS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR CHRONICLES

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UKRAINIAN ARMED FORCES ADVANCING IN KHERSON REGION

On 18 July, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valeriy Zaluzhnyy, said that Ukraine had managed to stabilize the situation on the front, which was largely facilitated by the HIMARS missile systems supplied by the United States.

[According to experts from the Institute for the Study of War \(ISW\)](#), the Ukrainian Armed Forces are preparing for or have already launched a counteroffensive in the Kherson Region, a large part of which is currently occupied.

President Volodymyr Zelensky also [stated](#) that the Ukrainian Armed Forces were advancing into the Kherson region, and their daily losses [had dropped](#) significantly. During the week, strikes by the Ukrainian Armed Forces damaged [all three Russian-controlled bridges](#) leading to Kherson. [According to Ukrainian intelligence officials](#), the Russian armed forces do not have the reserves to fundamentally change the situation in this area and are spreading reports of preparations for an offensive to sow panic.

According to Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, the Ukrainian Armed Forces have already [destroyed](#) 50 ammunition depots of the occupants using HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, which significantly reduces their ability to conduct active combat operations.

Analysts [predict](#) the end of the Russian offensive in Donbas.

The report of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the situation on the front by the morning of July 26 is [here](#), on the situation in the regions – [here](#).

RUSSIA IS PREPARING FOR "REFERENDUMS" IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

In the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, access to the Google search engine [was blocked](#), allegedly because of fakes and extremist materials, but in fact in order to strengthen the information blockade of the region. This later occurred in the temporarily occupied territory of [Kherson Oblast](#), and similar plans are also in the temporarily occupied part of [Zaporizhia Oblast](#).

In Luhansk Region, the occupation authorities "[mobilized](#)" men from recently occupied settlements.

On July 20, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [said](#) that the "geographical objectives of the Russian special operation" have changed and are no longer limited to the so-called "L/DPR." However, a British intelligence report [published](#) by the British Ministry of Defense notes that establishing control over the seized parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions was certainly in Russia's original plans. At the same time, the purpose of these comments is to legitimize the holding of pseudo-referendums in the occupied territories outside of Luhansk and Donetsk.

In temporarily occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhia region, the Russians began preparations for a "referendum". They plan to hold it in early September, and the plan is to deport pro-Ukrainian residents, Melitopol mayor Ivan Fedorov [said](#). The beginning of the active phase of the preparation of a pseudo-referendum for the illegal "annexation" of the temporarily occupied territories of eastern Ukraine was also [documented](#) by the SBU.

On July 19, Iryna Vereshchuk, Minister for the reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, [said](#) that voluntarily obtaining a passport of an aggressor country should be regarded as a crime. There can be an exception only in situations where this document was issued forcibly. In a joint statement, the Ukrainian human rights organizations [note](#) that the establishment of such responsibility is contrary to the policy of Ukraine in this area, and the fact of voluntary receipt of Russian documents in the temporarily occupied territories is questionable. In addition, this practice can be used by Russian propaganda to further intimidate residents of these territories and prevent them from leaving. The opportunity to leave is already extremely limited: for example, at a checkpoint in Zaporizhia region, Russian occupation forces are [holding](#) about five thousand people who want to leave the occupation.

Hromadske [reported](#) on the near humanitarian catastrophe of the situation with medicine in the temporarily occupied territories.

HUNGARY DOES NOT OBJECT TO TRANSIT OF WEAPONS TO UKRAINE

On July 20, the fourth [meeting](#) of the international Contact Group on Ukrainian defense, Ramstein, took place, at which the partners [pledged](#) to provide Ukraine with a total of more than 20 HIMARS missile systems and also made a number of new aid commitments. On the previous day, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov [noted](#) that at least 50 HIMARS and M270 artillery systems are needed to effectively deter Russian forces, and twice as many for an effective counterattack.

The United States [announced](#) a new \$270 million military assistance package for Ukraine, which will include [four additional HIMARS systems](#). In addition, the US Department of Defense is tentatively [evaluating the possibility](#) of providing Ukraine with American fighter jets. The head of the US Armed Forces Committee [announced](#) plans to transfer at least 25-30 HIMARS and MLRS multiple rocket launchers to Ukraine.

The Council of the European Union [approved](#) the fifth tranche of military aid for Ukraine worth 500 million euros.

[Poland](#) transferred tanks to Ukraine, and its civil society raised money for a [Bayraktar drone](#) for Ukraine. [Lithuania](#) plans to give Ukraine additional armored personnel carriers and ammunition, and [Great Britain](#) plans to give Ukraine artillery, drones, and anti-tank systems. In addition, the first three Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft artillery systems from [Germany](#) have arrived in Ukraine.

On July 25, the Board of Directors of the European Investment Bank of the EU approved the allocation of 1.59 billion euros to Ukraine. The money will be used to repair essential damaged infrastructure and restore critical projects.

Hungarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Economy and Foreign Affairs Levente Madjar [said](#) that the country did not object to the transit of weapons to Ukraine through its territory, although it had previously opposed it. At the same time, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban [called on](#) the European Union to stop arming Ukraine and said that a new war strategy should be developed. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [stressed](#) that the sanctions imposed by the EU had already significantly reduced the ability of the Russian military machine to wage war, while providing Ukraine with weapons saved the lives of its residents. At the same time, it is not sanctions but Russia's hybrid war that is causing Europe's economic crisis, and without peace and stability in Ukraine, there can be no peace and stability in Europe.

EU APPROVES NEW SANCTIONS PACKAGE, DISCUSSES GAS DEMAND REDUCTION

The EU Council [has approved](#) the European Commission's proposal for a new package of sanctions against Russia, which [includes](#) a ban on gold imports, new export controls, the freezing of Sberbank assets and the expansion of the sanctions list by more than 50 new individuals and entities. At the same time, the EU [decided](#) to introduce sanctions relief for trade in agricultural products and oil transportation to third countries "to avoid potential negative consequences for food and energy security in the world". [The UK](#) has also followed the EU in banning imports of gold, coal from August and oil from December. In addition, the European Commission [proposes](#) to introduce a gas demand reduction plan to reduce gas use in Europe by 15% by next spring.

RUSSIA SHELLS PORT IN ODESA 24 HOURS AFTER AGREEMENT ON SAFE EXPORT OF GRAIN

On July 22, Ukraine [signed](#) an agreement with Turkey and the UN on the safe export of grain by the Black Sea. The arrangements [involve](#) unblocking three Ukrainian ports: the Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny ports for the export of grain and food, while control over them remains in the hands of the Ukrainian side. A Joint Coordination Center will be created under the auspices of the UN, which should include representatives of Turkey, Ukraine, the UN and Russia. In Turkey, inspection groups will be created from representatives of all parties who will check cargo and personnel going to or leaving Ukrainian ports. The document does not provide for the easing of sanctions against Russia and does not affect the actions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces at the front.

Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, [noted](#) that Ukraine did not sign any documents with Russia, and the agreement did not provide for the escort of transport by Russian ships or the presence of Russian representatives in Ukrainian ports.

Ukrainian Deputy Infrastructure Minister Mustafa Nayem [added](#) that the export of grain would provide about a billion dollars in foreign currency proceeds monthly, which would go to support the economy and the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

On July 23, the Russian Armed Forces launched [a missile attack](#) on the Odesa Commercial Seaport, with two missiles hitting a piece of its [infrastructure](#). This happened the very next day after an agreement was reached in Istanbul to resume grain exports by sea from Ukraine. [According to Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar](#), Russia said it had nothing to do with the attack. Only a day later, the Russian Defense Ministry [confirmed](#) that it had allegedly destroyed a docked Ukrainian warship and anti-ship missiles.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [stressed](#) that the attack on the port casts doubt on the grain export agreements reached in Istanbul and called on the UN and Turkey to ensure that Russia meets its obligations. The missile attack on the port of Odesa was condemned by UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#) and [the United States](#). The United States also [said](#) that it planned to work with its partners to ensure that Russia complies with its agreement to unblock Ukrainian ports.

Although several media [quoted The New York Times](#) as saying that the missile attack on the port of Odessa did not technically violate the "grain agreement" signed the day before, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [was assured](#) by the UN that the comment was unofficial and not a UN position.

Ukrainian Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov [confirmed](#) that Ukraine continues technical preparations for the launch of exports of agricultural products by sea, despite the occupants' missile strike on the ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny in the Odesa region are preparing to resume operations.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR BRINGING RUSSIA TO JUSTICE

The International Criminal Court in The Hague intends to file the first charges of Russian war crimes in Ukraine in late 2022 or early 2023, sources told [Bloomberg](#).

The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union [notes](#) that the case is unprecedented, which could make Russia liable for violating the Genocide Convention and oblige Ukraine to pay reparations for the crimes committed.

Ukrainian and international experts [tell](#) how this system works, when the real trial can begin and over whom.

While preparations for the trial are underway, the work of human rights organizations recording Russia's crimes continues. For example, Human Rights Watch published a [report](#) on the war crimes committed by Russian troops in the occupied south of Ukraine, including the abduction and torture of civilians and soldiers. It is noted that the purpose of the abductions is to intimidate people into accepting the occupation.

The Human Rights Center "ZMINA" [talks](#) about the possibility of creating a Special International Tribunal for the aggression against Ukraine and bringing to justice the top military and political leadership of the Russian Federation.

DEBUNKING FAKES

EUROPOL HAS NOT CLAIMED ANY FACTS OF ARMS SMUGGLING FROM UKRAINE

On July 21, the international media spread a statement by Europol spokesman Jan Op Gen Ort allegedly "about signs of arms smuggling from Ukraine." A report by the German Press Agency (DPA), which [was cited](#) by numerous media publications, [particularly Spiegel](#), claimed that Europol spokesman Jan Op Gen Ort was aware of this. In a DPA commentary, he allegedly pointed to "detected cases of trade in firearms and military goods on the black market." Russian propaganda media outlets [Lenta.ru](#), [Kommersant](#), [TASS](#) and others also picked up on these claims. However, the claim that Jan Op Gen Ort confirmed signs of arms smuggling from Ukraine is a fake. His words were misinterpreted by the German press agency (DPA) and other media. It turned out that there were no cases of arms smuggling supplied to Ukraine by its allies to repel Russia's full-scale military aggression. A [press release](#) issued following the statement by Europol's spokesman specifies that it did not refer to the already existing, but only to the potential threat of a possible increase in illegal trafficking of firearms in the EU due to the war in Ukraine. Europol noted that it has full confidence and is working closely with Ukrainian officials to reduce the threat of arms trafficking into the European Union. However, the service did not report any established facts or indications of arms smuggling from Ukraine.

Measures to monitor and trace weapons, including [at the national level](#), are necessary because of the potential threat of weapons diversion in war. In this connection, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [created](#) a temporary special commission (TSC) to monitor the receipt and use of international logistical aid during martial law. Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov [noted](#) that he plans to discuss these statements with representatives of Europol. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [stressed](#) that the narratives about possible arms smuggling are part of Russia's information war.

Ukrainian military expert Oleh Zhdanov [called](#) the spinning of such fake allegations in the media part of Russia's information and lobbying campaign to slow down arms supplies to Ukraine. Accusations that Ukraine "potentially" and "hypothetically" could be involved in illegal sales of Western weapons began to appear actively in the Western press in late June. In July, the EU [said](#) that news about "arms smuggling" from Ukraine was massive Russian propaganda.

StopFake had previously [denied](#) allegations about Ukraine's alleged sales of Western weapons.