

HIGHLIGHTS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR CHRONICLES

№124, 15-19 December, 2022

SITUATION ON THE FRONT

The Russian armed forces continue to attempt to [storm](#) the Bakhmut and Avdiivka areas, while artillery fire continues in Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Slobozhanske, Kupyansk and Lyman directions. They continue to strengthen the defense line on the border of Kherson Oblast and in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, they are repeating the [retreat](#) scenario that was used in Kherson.

The Ukrainian Defense Forces are [preparing](#) for different scenarios in the coming months in an effort to stabilize the situation in the east of the country. According to the Commander of the Joint Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Serhiy Nayev, the military threat from [Belarus](#) is gradually growing, but Ukraine is taking [measures](#) to reduce it. British intelligence [believes](#) that the allied forces of Belarus and Russia are not capable of a successful offensive.

Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov [noted](#) that the effectiveness of Ukraine's air defense systems has increased from 50% at the start of the full-scale invasion to 80% in December 2022, giving Ukraine the advantage in the air. At the same time, Ukraine still needs allies to provide weapons systems, including better air defense capabilities.

He also suggested that Russia is preparing for a new large-scale offensive in February, which may be indicated by the training of those mobilized and conscripted. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the Commander-in-Chief of the AFU also admitted the possibility of a new [attack](#) on Kyiv in an extensive interview published in The Economist. Hromadske [published](#) excerpts from it.

According to the AFU General Staff, as of the morning of December 20, Russian military [losses](#) exceeded 99,000.

RENEWED RUSSIAN SHELLING AND DEALING WITH ITS CONSEQUENCES

On December 16, Russia once again fired missiles at Ukrainian territory, firing 76 [missiles](#) and using Tu-95 strategic bombers from the city of Engels (Saratov Oblast) for the first time for this purpose. Sixty of them were destroyed by Ukrainian air defense, while the rest hit critical infrastructure in [Kyiv](#) and the [Kharkiv](#), [Dnipropetrovsk](#), [Kyiv](#), [Poltava](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Mykolaiv](#), [Zhytomyr](#) and [Kirovohrad](#) Oblasts. Buildings were also damaged – in [Kryvyi Rih](#) (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast) at least 13 were [wounded](#) and at least four people were killed, including a 1.5 year old child, as a result of a residential building being hit. The Ukrainian energy system [lost](#) more than 50% of its capacity and emergency blackouts were imposed across the country. Thanks to the work of power engineers, within two days power to 9 million residents could be [restored](#).

On the night of 19 December, Russia again attacked Kyiv and the surrounding region with [kamikaze drones](#), damaging [infrastructure](#) and private homes. The situation with the energy system is [complicated](#), and emergency [power cuts](#) were again imposed in ten oblasts. At the same time, the [Kharkiv](#) Oblast power supply has already been restored to 75% of the de-occupied areas.

A total of 5000 “[Points of Invincibility](#)” are [operating](#) in the country, and there are plans to increase their number threefold. Despite shelling that disables electricity and heat supply, most residents of Ukraine are going to spend winter at home, and only 7% are preparing to move, the International Organization for Migration [reports](#). According to the organization, as of December, more than 5 million people who moved within the country and went abroad had returned home.

The EU has allocated a 50 million euro [grant](#) to the rebuilding of Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, which will be used to repair electricity, water and heating supply systems in the de-occupied part of Kyiv Oblast. [Austria](#) will allocate 5 million euros for the purchase of energy equipment for Ukraine, while [New Zealand](#) is providing Ukraine with about 2 million euros in humanitarian aid amid the winter, and the [US](#) will provide equipment for the rapid restoration of energy facilities, the first consignment of which has already [arrived](#) in the country.

OVER 70% OF EU CITIZENS APPROVE OF SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The European Parliament has [approved](#) an aid package providing Ukraine with an 18-billion-euro loan through 2023 (an average of 1.5 billion euros per month). 26 EU member states agreed to act as guarantors that enabled a veto from Hungary to be bypassed. The aid, subject to a series of reforms, will cover basic public services and is intended to help maintain Ukraine’s macroeconomic stability and rebuild its infrastructure.

In addition, the European Commission [transferred](#) an additional 500 million euros, the last of three tranches of macro-financial assistance from the 5 billion euro package approved in June. It comes in the form of concessional loans with long repayment periods, and the EU budget will also cover the interest on these loans as a gesture of solidarity with Ukraine. The funds will be used [to finance](#) the most urgent budget expenditures and maintain financial stability in Ukraine. The European Commission noted that the payment was a result of the

positive assessment of Ukraine's implementation of structural policy measures agreed in the [Memorandum](#) of Understanding from 3 October, which aims to strengthen the country's resilience and economic stability, improve the business climate, strengthen the rule of law and governance and ensure energy security in Ukraine. Ukraine has also successfully complied with stricter reporting requirements.

[According to a poll](#) conducted by the European Parliament, over 70% of EU citizens approve of supporting Ukraine, the highest rates were found in Sweden (97%), Finland (95%), the Netherlands (93%), Portugal (92%) and Denmark (92%).

MILITARY AID

At the EU leaders' summit on 15 December, it was [decided](#) to increase military support to Ukraine, in particular through the transfer of aid defense equipment and de-mining capabilities.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new aid package, which includes artillery [ammunition](#) worth more than \$300 million dollars.

The [Bulgarian](#) parliament finally approved military aid to Ukraine.

The US announced the expansion of a training program for the Ukrainian armed forces in Europe, starting from January 2023, about 500 service personnel will participate in the program each month.

The [US](#) intends to implement a control system for military and financial aid to Ukraine. And [Cambodia](#) will conduct training for Ukrainian deminers in early 2023 – due to a war that lasted almost 30 years, this country became one of the most [mined](#) in the world and its deminers are very experienced.

9TH EU SANCTIONS PACKAGE APPROVED

On 16 December, the [EU](#) Council finally approved the ninth package of sanctions against Russia. Among other things, it included new restrictions on the export of goods and technology that Russia could use for the war, with the EU imposing sanctions against 168 entities related to the country's military-industrial complex, expanding the ban on the export of goods and technology related to the aviation and space industries, freezing the assets of two more Russian banks, and the suspension of the broadcasting licenses of several propaganda TV channels. In addition, the list of [personal](#) sanctions was expanded to [include](#) members of the Russian armed forces, members of the State Duma and the Federation Council and state officials. Also, the EU countries were able to agree on a price cap for gas, as Bloomberg [reported](#).

[Switzerland](#) also extended sanctions in line with the EU sanctions, in particular, by capping the price of Russian oil.

The list of sanctions against Russian institutions and officials was also extended by the [US](#). As part of this, one of Russia's richest businessmen, Vladimir [Potanin](#), was put on the sanctions list.

[Canada](#) renewed sanctions against the Nord Stream pipeline and the [Polish](#) Sejm passed a [resolution](#) recognizing Russia as a sponsor of terrorism.

65 PEOPLE RETURNED TO UKRAINE AS PART OF EXCHANGE

Another prisoner [exchange](#) took place on 14 December, as part of which Ukraine returned 64 service personnel, as well as a [US](#) citizen who had been captured by occupiers in Kherson in early summer 2022.

DEBUNKING FAKES

UN DID NOT VIOLATE “RUSSIAN BORDER CROSSING RULES”

UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths made an official visit to Kherson. The [Russian media reported](#) that by doing so he supposedly violated the rules of crossing Russia’s borders and ignored the basic principles of international law, and that the visit itself was a [provocation](#). These allegations are fakes.

In news reports, the Russian propaganda media refers to the [Telegram channel](#) of the collaborator Volodymyr Saldo, who was appointed Acting Governor of Kherson Oblast during the Russian occupation – this fictitious position has nothing to do with the Ukrainian authorities. His statements are not a reliable source of information. The media also [quoted](#) Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova as saying that the goal of the UN in this case was to politicize humanitarian activities and to profit off the suffering of civilians. The UN representative visited Kherson in an [official](#) capacity, at the invitation of the Ukrainian authorities.

Kherson is a city in Ukraine and the pseudo-referendums held there by Russia [are not recognized](#) by the international [community](#). Thus, Russia’s statements about “border violations” are false.

After his visit to Ukraine, Martin Griffiths [said](#) that the UN has identified three main areas of humanitarian assistance, which Ukraine needs because of the Russian aggression: restoration of electricity, de-mining of land and restarting the local economy in the regions. Ukraine and the UN plan to expand cooperation on humanitarian aid programs, with Ukraine having [received](#) \$4.5 billion in aid from the UN since the beginning of 2022 (and as of 15 December). The UN and other international organizations are thus the most important source of aid for Ukraine in general, and for its civilians in particular.

The claims of the Kremlin’s media about “the international community ignoring a nation’s right to self-determination” are also fake, since the UN [Charter](#) cannot be used to justify Russia holding forced “referendums” on its temporarily occupied territories. Article 2 of the UN Charter emphasizes that UN members may not infringe on the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. And the “[Declaration](#) on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the UN Charter” emphasizes that no state has the right to take any action aimed at the partial or

total violation of the national unity and territorial integrity of another state. These norms have been and continue to be violated by Russia waging war in Ukraine.