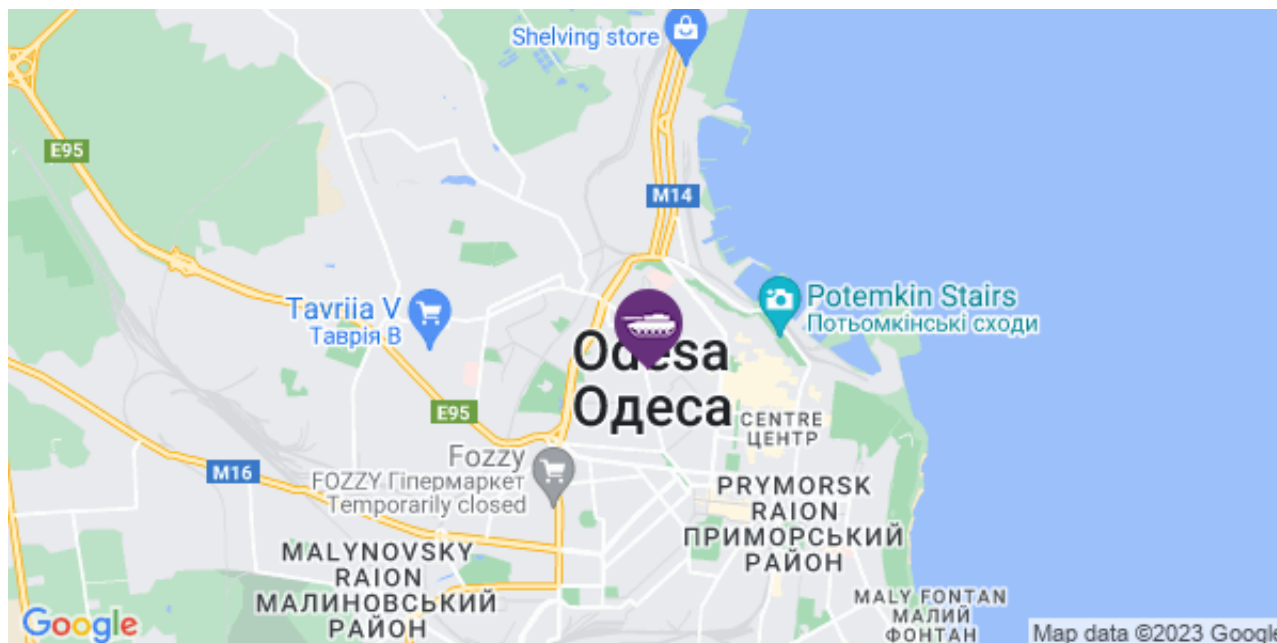


Armed Conflict



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Russia & Ukraine SITUATION UPDATE: UK warns of Russian sea mines as 12 cargo ships prepare to enter Black Sea ‘humanitarian corridor’ as of October 5; threat to naval activities remains elevated

Current Situation

Crimea & Black Sea

- On October 4, Ukraine stated that 12 cargo ships were ready to enter the ‘humanitarian corridor’ in the **Black Sea** that enables foreign ships to enter and exit Ukrainian ports. The corridor was set up by Kyiv after Russia terminated the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI). Meanwhile, the UK government claimed that Russia could target civilian shipping in the Black Sea by laying sea mines on the approaches to Ukraine’s ports.
- As per October 5 reports, the Russian military has transferred several Black Sea Fleet (BSF) vessels from **Sevastopol** in Crimea to the Russian port in Novorossiysk.
- On October 4, Moscow claimed that it repulsed an attempted landing of Ukrainian forces on Cape Tarkhankut in Russian-occupied **Crimea**.
- Also on October 4, Russia claimed that it shot down 31 Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in Crimea.
- On October 3, Russia claimed that its air defense systems detected and destroyed a Ukrainian Neptune anti-ship missile over the northwestern part of the Black Sea near occupied Crimea.

- On October 3, UK Defense Minister James Heappey claimed that Russia has suffered a “functional defeat” in the Black Sea over the past few weeks. He added that the Russian navy has been “forced to disperse to ports from which it cannot have an effect on Ukraine.”
- On October 4, Ukrainian officials claimed that Russia has again strengthened the security of the **Kerch Strait Bridge**, which links Crimean to mainland Russia.

Southern Ukraine

- On October 4, Ukrainian officials claimed that Russia is redeploying its reserve forces from Crimea to the southern frontline regions.
- As per October 5 reports, Ukrainian forces continue their efforts to advance to the east of Novopropkivka village in western **Zaporizhzhia**.
- On October 3, Russia launched airstrikes targeting Antonivka, an urban settlement in the **Kherson** region. At least seven people were injured. Multiple residential buildings were damaged.
- On October 3, Ukraine accused Russia of shelling civilian facilities in the village of Chornobayivka in the Kherson region. Multiple administrative, educational, and residential facilities were reportedly damaged.

Central & Eastern Ukraine

- On October 3, Ukraine claimed to have shot down 13 Russian UAVs and one cruise missile in the **Dnipropetrovsk** region.
- On October 4, intensified Russian shelling was reported in Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region. Civilian casualties were reported.
- As per October 5 reports, Ukrainian forces continue their offensive operations to the south of **Bakhmut** city in the **Donetsk** region. Moreover, they have reportedly broken through Russian defense lines near a railway line in Klishchiivka, a village located south of Bakhmut.
- On October 2, intensified Russian artillery shelling reportedly damaged an agricultural enterprise in the Donetsk region. Civilian casualties were also reported.
- On October 3, Ukrainian forces claimed that Russian shelling targeted residential facilities in the Donetsk region, injuring four civilians.

Other Military Developments

- According to October 3 reports, Russian forces are reportedly using the ‘elastic defense’ tactic across frontlines, wherein they initially cede ground and later strike back at advancing Ukrainian forces. The tactic is primarily used to prevent Ukrainian troops from using captured territory to stage future attacks.
- On October 3, Ukrainian authorities stated that Russia was increasingly using Iranian-made Shahed UAVs to target Ukrainian territory.
- Separately, on October 3, Russia’s Investigative Committee indicted four top Ukrainian military officials over alleged “terrorism” charges for ordering UAV attacks targeting Russian territory.

Other Developments

- On October 2, the foreign ministers of all 27 EU member states met in Kyiv. Following the meeting, Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, stated that the bloc had proposed a military aid package worth five billion EUR for Ukraine. However, the bloc failed to unblock the package as Hungary continued its veto against the same despite the temporary removal of a Hungarian bank from a Ukrainian blacklist. Separately, reports also indicated that Brussels is considering unfreezing 13 billion EUR from the funds frozen over Hungary's disputes with the bloc.
- According to October 3 reports, EU member countries have supplied Kyiv with as much military aid as they can, without compromising their own defense. The official reportedly added that EU countries cannot continue to supply weapons from their own stockpile.
- As per October 4 reports, US President Joe Biden has expressed concerns that Washington's aid to Kyiv could potentially slow down, amid ongoing Republican infighting in the US House of Representatives, which has complicated budget negotiations. He added that authorities were working out potential methods to aid Ukraine should funding requests fail.
- Separately, on October 5, the US military announced the transfer of an estimated 1.1 million rounds of ammunition seized from Iran to Ukraine. The rounds were reportedly seized from a Yemen-bound ship bound in December 2022.
- According to October 2 reports, a leaked US strategy document revealed Washington's elevated concerns over entrenched corruption in Ukraine. The document, which consisted of plans to reform Ukraine, suggested that Kyiv's Western allies would lose confidence in the government should Ukraine not successfully combat corruption. The confidential document is reportedly an extended version of a publicly released document published by the US State Department in August.
- According to October 4 reports, Germany intends to supply Ukraine with additional air defense equipment that would "better protect its grain ports" from potential Russian attacks. The planned transfer is set to include an additional IRIS-T air defense system and over 12 Gepard anti-aircraft guns. Further, reports indicate that Germany does not plan to supply the long-range Taurus missiles to Ukraine in the near-to-medium term.
- Separately, on October 3, Norway joined the EU sanctions against Russia. However, the Norwegian Foreign Minister added that the country would adhere to the sanctions after making national adjustments.



Russia

- On October 3, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that over 50,000 citizens signed up for the Russian military in September 2023 alone. Shoigu also said that there were no plans for additional mobilization in the near term.
- On October 3, the RUB weakened to an exchange rate of 100 to the USD for the first time since mid-August. Following this, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (CBR) raised the interest rates to 12 percent. In response, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that Russians should “not feel dependent on the dollar”.
- On October 4, Russia conducted its emergency public warning systems test nationwide, with loud sirens and interruptions to mass media.
- On October 4, Russian air defenses allegedly shot down 31 Ukrainian UAVs in the **Belgorod**, **Bryansk**, and **Kursk** regions. Reports claimed that this was Kyiv’s largest single cross-border attack since the start of the conflict. However, no casualties or damage have been reported as of writing. In Belgorod, the SBU claimed to have successfully attacked the Russian S-400 “Triumph” strategic anti-aircraft complex. Meanwhile, in Bryansk, several villages were targeted, including a military unit in Karachev.



Assessments & Forecast

Ukraine

1. Ukraine’s statement claiming that 12 cargo ships are ready to enter the Black Sea corridor is notable, as it represents a significant increase in maritime traffic to and from Ukraine, in defiance of Russia’s effective blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports with the termination of the BSGI in July. **FORECAST:** That said, with Russia recently warning that all ships traveling to Ukraine’s Black

Sea ports will be considered potential military targets, there remains an elevated threat of Russian attacks targeting these vessels over the coming weeks. As indicated by the UK government, the primary threat to these vessels will likely emanate from sea mines. This is especially so, as Moscow is wary of openly targeting civilian ships with missiles, with UK officials indicating that Moscow could potentially blame Ukraine for any damage to civilian vessels caused by such sea mines. That said, Russia could also launch UAVs to monitor and survey shipping along the humanitarian corridor.

2. Meanwhile, Russia's use of the 'elastic defense' strategy is likely in response to Ukraine's recent recapture of the Robotyne village in Zaporizhzhia. This is especially so, considering that Ukrainian control over Robotyne would enable Kyiv to stage further advances to strategically important areas such as Tokmak, a critical Russian military supply hub. **FORECAST:** Given this, coupled with Russia's use of multi-layered minefields and defenses in southern Ukraine, Kyiv's ongoing counteroffensive is unlikely to make significant progress before winter. Moreover, reports of Russia transferring reserve troops from Crimea to southern Ukraine also indicate that Moscow is bolstering its defense lines, thereby further slowing down Kyiv's counteroffensive even further.
3. The leaked US strategy document reiterates heightened concerns among Kyiv's Western allies, especially the USA, over endemic corruption in Ukraine. That the document suggests potentially reducing Western assistance to Ukraine is likely reflective of the West's deteriorating confidence in Kyiv's efforts to curb entrenched corruption. As such, the developments reflect the limited impact of Kyiv's recent efforts to demonstrate a hardline stance against corruption, despite the dismissals of multiple high-level officials. **FORECAST:** With that, Kyiv is expected to strengthen its efforts to curb the entrenched corruption, with further dismissals of top officials expected in the near term.
4. The EU meeting in Kyiv is notable, as it marks the first such meeting outside the bloc's borders. As such, it indicates that Brussels is attempting to placate Kyiv's concerns about continued Western aid. This is especially so, with Poland recently announcing that it will cease military assistance to Kyiv, coupled with the US Congress blocking aid worth six billion USD to Ukraine as part of its budget stopgap measures. That said, the fact that the EU was unable to unblock its military aid package is expected to keep such Ukrainian concerns elevated. This is even more so, given reports of EU officials indicating that they cannot provide military support to Ukraine from their own stockpiles. As such, with Western countries having expended significant resources to aid Ukraine's current counteroffensive, their ability and willingness to continue providing the same extent of aid during and after the winter months remains uncertain. However, Ukraine is likely to continue pushing for the same, especially amid reports of Russia planning to launch an intensified offensive campaign post-winter 2023.

Russia

1. Although Shoigu announced that no new rounds of mobilization will be launched in Russia in the near term, this is unlikely to affect Moscow's semi-annual conscription cycle, as evidenced by Russia announcing the conscription of 130,000 military personnel from October 1 as part of the same. With the conscriptions scheduled to be carried out in the occupied Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia for the first time, the development highlights Russian efforts to legitimize its September 2022 annexation of these territories. **FORECAST:** Despite Shoigu's statement, the above is likely to raise concerns that Russia is carrying out fresh mobilization under the guise of its routine conscription.
2. Separately, the UAV attacks in Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk reiterate elevated Ukrainian efforts to target Russian mainland regions and thereby exacerbate concerns about the domestic security situation. The fact that military facilities were targeted indicates that Ukraine is attempting to undermine Russian military capabilities ahead of winter when Russia is expected to increase attacks on Ukrainian energy and other critical infrastructure facilities. Moreover, such attacks have the perceived advantage of compensating for the relatively slow progress of Ukraine's counteroffensive campaign in the eastern and southern frontlines of Ukraine. **FORECAST:** With that, further UAV attacks targeting Russian military infrastructure remain elevated, both in the regions bordering Ukraine, as well as areas located far away from the border.

Recommendations

Ukraine

1. Avoid all travel to Ukraine due to the ongoing hostilities.
2. Those operating in the East, South, and Center of Ukraine are advised to minimize outdoor travel and avoid inter-city travel due to the increase in artillery fire and airstrikes.
3. Avoid all travel to Crimea due to the ongoing conflict and the potential for sporadic attacks on civilian and critical infrastructure facilities.
4. Those continuing to operate in the North and West of Ukraine are advised to adhere to air raid sirens over the coming days due to the heightened threat of missile and UAV attacks by Russian forces.
5. Identify the nearest shelter, which may be a Metro station, and proceed towards it when air sirens are sounded. Prepare emergency kits of food, water, medicine, and clothing in case needed.
6. Considering the heightened risk of unpredictable power outages, take mitigatory measures, such as confirming that business locations have working generators, sufficient access to fuel for longer periods, and access to several flashlights. Keep necessary electronics constantly charged.
7. For more information on the security situation and assistance please contact intel@max-security.com

Russia

1. Avoid nonessential travel to Russia due to potential instability in the coming days, the underlying threat of military mobilization, arbitrary detention, and increased risk of spillover violence in regions bordering Ukraine.
2. Remain cognizant of authorities' updates regarding travel prohibitions on individuals deemed eligible for military conscription.
3. Foreign companies operating in Russia are advised to remain cognizant of government regulations and decrees that pose risks to business continuity and operations.
4. It is recommended to have emergency plans in place in case of further deterioration in the security landscape.
5. Foreign citizens in Moscow and other areas in western Russia are advised to review evacuation plans in case of emergencies.
6. Avoid all travel in the vicinity of government and military facilities, as well as possible political gatherings or lone picket protests, in the coming days.
7. Remain cognizant of restrictions enacted at a regional and local level.
8. Avoid discussions concerning the political, economic, and military situation, even with friends and family.
9. Avoid meeting strangers, discussing the political situation, or using any anti-Russia rhetoric in public.
10. Those intending to travel between Russia and its neighboring European countries are advised to remain cognizant of authorities' updates regarding land border restrictions. Review options for departing Russia, including air, rail, and land routes, with the understanding that certain options may become unavailable with short notice.