

UKRAINE - RUSSIA

WEEKLY REPORT

OCTOBER 17 - OCTOBER 24, 2024



GEOS

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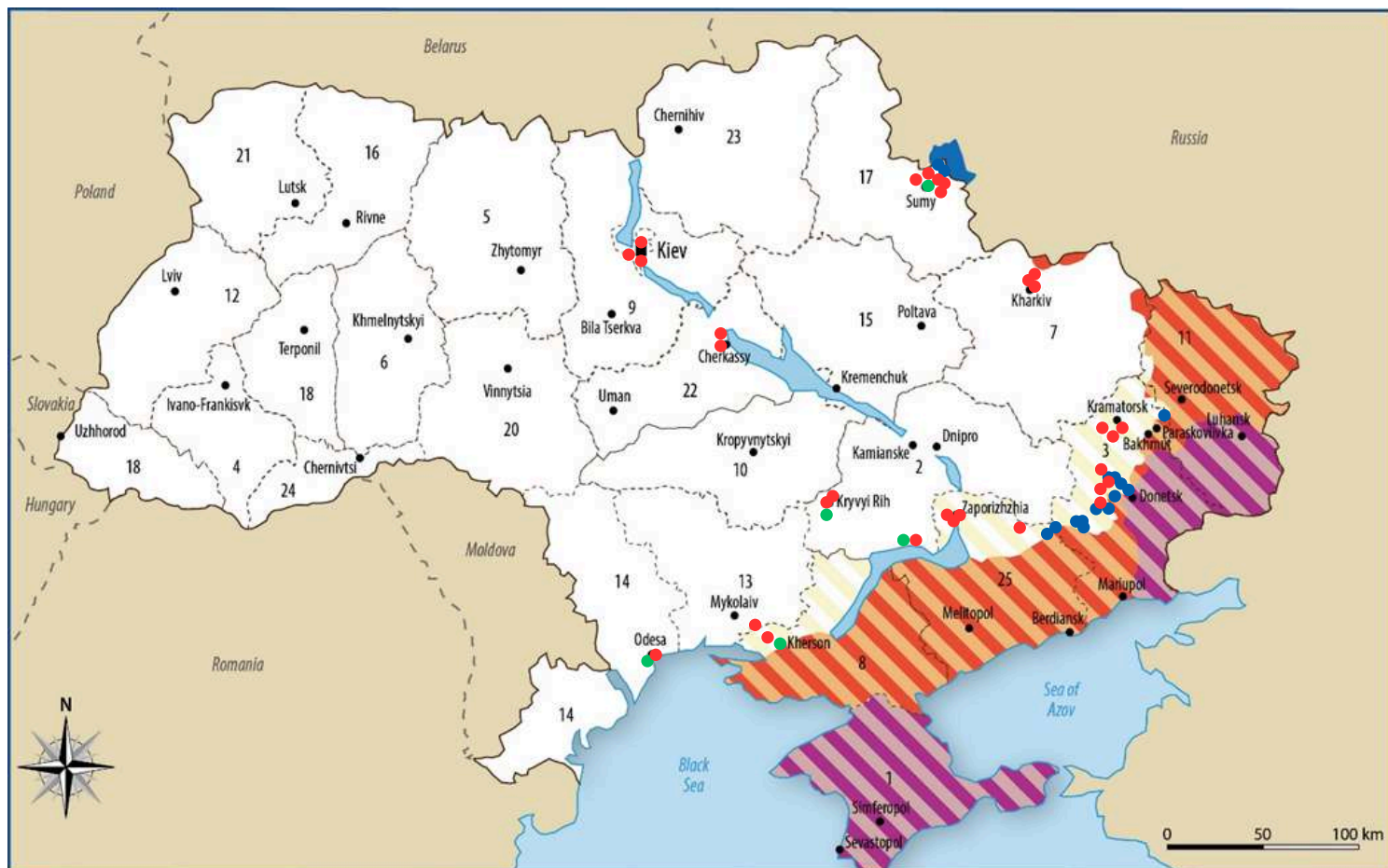
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GENERAL OVERVIEW

- On the 973th day of the attack in Ukraine (23/10), nearly 1,500 North Korean soldiers were reported to have arrived in Kursk Oblast (Russia, west).
- From 22/10 to 24/10, the BRICS Summit took place in Kazan, Russia. The objective of the summit was to demonstrate that Russia is not isolated and to reaffirm the support of its allies.



GENERAL OVERVIEW



- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Crimea* | 5. Zhytomyr | 9. Kiev | 13. Mykolaiv | 17. Sumy | 21. Volhynia | 25. Zaporizhzhia** |
| 2. Dnipropetrovsk | 6. Khmelnytskyi | 10. Kirovohrad | 14. Odesa | 18. Ternopil | 22. Cherkassy | |
| 3. Donetsk** | 7. Kharkiv | 11. Luhansk** | 15. Poltava | 19. Transcarparthia | 23. Chernihiv | |
| 4. Ivano-Frankivsk | 8. Kherson** | 12. Lviv | 16. Rivne | 20. Vinnytsia | 24. Chernivtsi | |

* Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014 and is not recognized internationally

** Oblasts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia were annexed by Russia in 2022 and are not recognized internationally

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Russian airstrikes on energy sites | Territory under Russian occupation | Occupied territories of Ukraine before 24/02/2022 |
| Russian airstrikes / artillery bombardments | Territory under Ukrainian occupation | |
| Armed clashes | Territory annexed by Russian and not recognized internationally | |

SITUATION ON THE FIELD

This week, Russian armed forces have continued to advance in multiple directions in Donetsk oblast (Ukraine, east), threatening Kurakhove (west) and Chassiv Yar (north). In the Kursk oblast (Russia, west), Ukrainian troops are at risk of encirclement and may soon be forced to leave their positions on the northern front and regroup in Soudja (west). The arrival of North Korean soldiers poses a further threat to Ukrainian positions, especially as it could lead to a non-negligible escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and of the overall geopolitical situation.

Donetsk Oblast (Ukraine, East)

In the Donetsk Oblast (east), Russian armed forces continue advancing in various directions, including towards **Kurakhove (west) and Chasiv Yar (north)**.

Russian troops notably captured Maksymilianivka, about 8 km east of Kurakhove, on 19/10, while fighting continues near Petropavlivka (west of Kurakhove), Hornyak (north of Kurakhove), and Zoryane (north of Kurakhove). Russia aims to increase pressure on Ukrainian forces toward Kurakhove. This town, with a pre-conflict population of around 20,000, is a **significant logistical and industrial hub**. Kurakhove is a **crossroads** of several key roadways linking important cities, including **Pokrovsk** (northwest), and hosts a **thermal power plant essential for the region's energy supply**.

Furthermore, on 21/10, Russia announced the deployment of infantry forces in **Selydove**, located equidistant between Pokrovsk and Kurakhove, intensifying an offensive dynamic on several fronts around Pokrovsk. Mechanized assaults are regularly conducted in this area, indicating an escalation of Russian operations on the western Donetsk front.

Additionally, the situation in Chasiv Yar (north) is particularly concerning. This strategic point defended by the Ukrainian army, has seen Russian

forces cross the **Siverskyi Donets canal**, a major natural obstacle located north of the town, significantly constraining Russian forces. For now, no critical breach in the Ukrainian defense of Chasiv Yar has been reported. However, the potential encirclement of this locality could have severe consequences for surrounding towns, such as **Kramatorsk and Sloviansk**, which serve as crucial logistical bases for the Ukrainian army. Capturing Chasiv Yar would provide Russian forces with a strategic vantage point over these vital areas.

Kharkiv Oblast (Ukraine, North)

In the Kharkiv Oblast, Ukrainian special forces recaptured the village of Kruhliakivka, located south of Kupiansk, on 19/10. This reconquest holds significant strategic value, as **Kupiansk acts like a central hub for military operations**, given its close proximity to the Russian border, just **40 kilometers away**. By controlling Kruhliakivka, Ukrainian forces strengthen their defense of Kupiansk, a crucial **crossroads for both railway and road transport**, which functions like the lifeline for moving troops and supplies. Securing this area is similar to cutting off an opponent's key supply routes in chess, as it restricts Russian troop movements and ensures better control over the vital communication routes necessary for ongoing operations in the region.

SITUATION ON THE FIELD

Koursk Oblast (Russia, West)

In the Kursk oblast (western Russia), Ukrainian forces now find themselves in a situation of **near-encirclement north of Soudja**. This week, Russian forces made a significant breakthrough on the western front by recapturing the locality of Novoivanovka. By advancing an additional 2 km westward, Russia could take control of **Malaya Loknya, threatening to completely cut off Ukrainian positions in the area**, while Russian attacks continue to the northeast near Pogrebki. Under this pressure, a **strategic Ukrainian withdrawal in the coming days or weeks seems increasingly likely**, with a concentration of forces around the city of Soudja, which was fortified by Kyiv at the onset of its incursion into Russia on 06/08.

This situation highlights Ukraine's difficulties in achieving its goal of establishing a lasting presence in the region to pressure Moscow and push for negotiations. Soudja will likely remain a priority for Ukrainian forces on this front, but this objective **could be sidelined** due to the **intensification of fighting in the Donbass**, the **onset of winter**, and the strengthening of Russian forces with the **arrival of North Korean soldiers**.

North Korea's involvement in Ukraine war

North Korea's involvement in the war in Ukraine marks a new phase in this conflict. According to South Korean intelligence services (NIS), Pyongyang has decided to send **12,000 soldiers, divided into four brigades**, to support Russia. 1,500 of them are reported to have already arrived in Russia between 08/10 and 13/10, stationed at several military bases in the Far East, and are currently undergoing training before being deployed to the front lines.

Additional reinforcements, including 10,000 soldiers currently in preparation, are also expected. These reports, which have also been echoed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainian intelligence services, indicate North Korean military support for Russian forces, particularly in the Kursk oblast (Western Russia). Nearly **1,500 North Korean soldiers** were reported to have arrived on 23/10. However, **Moscow and Pyongyang continue to deny these allegations, dismissing them as "fake news."**

The deployment of North Korean troops could provide a strategic boost to Russia, particularly on fronts where Ukraine is under pressure. Despite their lack of war experience, **North Korean soldiers make up for heavy Russian casualties** while avoiding new recruitment campaigns, which are unpopular in Russia. However, their gradual arrival and the need to complete their training before participating in combat **limit their immediate impact**. Integrating such a large contingent into Russian forces also presents significant **logistical and cultural challenges**. Language barriers and differences in command methods could complicate coordination between North Korean and Russian forces, potentially undermining their effectiveness on the ground.

Despite these challenges, North Korean soldiers, particularly special forces, could enhance Russian capabilities in **asymmetric operations**, such as infiltrations or combat in difficult environments. This could play a role in regions like Donbass (Ukraine, East), where more targeted operations are taking place. However, the issue is not just tactical.

SITUATION ON THE FIELD

North Korea's direct involvement shifts the political dynamics of the conflict by signaling a closer alignment between Moscow and Pyongyang, while also prompting a response from Ukraine's Western allies. The United States, the European Union, and South Korea may increase their military and diplomatic support to Kyiv in response to this development. South Korea has already announced it is considering **sending weapons and specialists to Ukraine** to help the Ukrainian armed forces **analyze North Korean army tactics and translate Korean** if Ukrainian forces capture DPRK military prisoners.

This North Korean involvement also raises broader concerns about a **potential global escalation of the conflict**. Volodymyr Zelensky has mentioned the **possibility of the war being prolonged**, while the arrival of these troops could **heighten international tensions**.

Even if their immediate military impact remains limited, their presence on the ground marks a significant shift in alliances and in the very nature of the conflict, while further **polarizing global powers around this war**.

COMMENT-PERSPECTIVES:

Thus, this week was marked by Russian advances in Donetsk (Ukraine, East) and Kursk oblasts (Russia, West). In the coming weeks, it seems quite likely that the town of **Kurakhove** (Donetsk Oblast, west), a Russian military objective to surround Pokrovsk, will be threatened by the arrival of Russian forces. In the Kursk oblast, Ukrainian forces should **continue to retreat** in the face of the Russian counter-offensive, gathering **on the Soudja locality** (west). Fighting is expected to slow down at the gates of Soudja, as Ukraine has established the majority of its defense forces there.

Regarding North Korea's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, the international community is closely monitoring these developments, fearing that direct North Korean involvement could lead to **a significant escalation of hostilities**. Although no North Korean soldiers have yet been reported on the front line, Pyongyang's decision could be perceived as a **de facto entry into war**, raising major geopolitical concerns beyond the context of the war in Ukraine. In particular, North Korea's military activity could **heighten tensions in South-East Asia**, especially with Japan and South Korea, leading to **increased rearmament and a general climate of mistrust**.

MAIN EVENTS

UKRAINE

Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (central), Krivoy Rog (southern): Russian rocket attack reported on 20/10. 17 injured. Power outages recorded.

Kharkiv Oblast (north), Kharkiv (north): Russian shelling reported on 21/10. Casualties reported as 12. Power cuts recorded.

Kiev: Russian drone attack reported on 21/10. Interception of a dozen Russian drones by Ukrainian air defense. At least one person injured. Falling debris recorded in three districts of Kiev.

Zaporijia Oblast (south), Zaporijia (center): Russian missile strike reported on 21/10. Three dead and fifteen wounded.

Donetsk Oblast (east): Russian shelling reported on 24/10 in Kostiantynivka (north), Lyman (north), Kurakhove (west), Myrnohrad (west), Pokrovsk (west), Rodynske (west), Selidove (west) and Novooukraïnka (southwest). Four people were injured.

RUSSIA

Lipetsk Oblast (west): Ukrainian drone attack targeting a Russian military airfield, reported on 20/10. Infrastructure damaged.

Moscow, Ramensky district (south-west): Ukrainian drone debris reported on 20/10. No casualties reported.

Nizhny Novgorod Oblast (west), Dzerzhinsk (center): Ukrainian bombardment targeting a factory producing industrial explosives, reported on 20/10. Four people injured. Fire started.

Tambov Oblast (west), Rasskazovo (center): Ukrainian drone strike targeting the building of an industrial chemical company, reported on 22/10. Fire declared, then brought under control. No casualties.

Belgorod Oblast (southwest): Ukrainian shelling reported on 24/10 in three localities. One casualty reported.

DIPLOMATIC FRONT & NEGOCIATIONS RUSSIA / UKRAINE

This week, North Korea has deployed 3,000 troops to Russia, confirmed by NATO and the U.S. on 23/10, raising concerns about escalating the Ukraine conflict, as warned by Ukrainian President Zelenskiy. Meanwhile, the U.S. offered nuclear talks with Russia, China, and North Korea, but Russia rejected the proposal, citing U.S. deception. At the BRICS Summit in Kazan (22/10 - 24/10), Russia emphasized its global alliances despite Western pressure, while Poland arrested a Ukrainian spy working for Russia on 23/10 amidst rising sabotage incidents. The G7 and EU are finalizing a \$50 billion loan for Ukraine, partly funded by frozen Russian assets.

BRICS Summit in Kazan (Russia, center)

The BRICS Summit is currently taking place in Kazan despite the ongoing war, with the aim of demonstrating that **Western pressure has failed to isolate Russia**. The summit sends a strong message that attempts to weaken Russia's global position have been unsuccessful. Key attendees include China's President **Xi Jinping**, Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, and Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian**.

Beyond its geopolitical significance, the summit focuses on creating alternative trade mechanisms, cross-border settlement systems, and **developing an alternative to the U.S. dollar** for global payments. These measures are primarily aimed at **circumventing U.S. sanctions** and reducing the dominance of the dollar in international transactions.

During the summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping reaffirmed China's **strategic partnership with Russia**, describing it as a stabilizing force amid global chaos and significant geopolitical changes. Russian President Vladimir Putin echoed these sentiments, stating that "Russian-Chinese cooperation in world affairs is one of the main stabilizing factors on the world stage." Both nations, facing pressure from the U.S., have increasingly aligned their geopolitical interests.

On 22/10, South African President **Cyril Ramaphosa** reaffirmed his country's close ties with Russia, referring to it as a **"precious ally"** and citing a 3% increase in cross-border trade between January and August 2024. Ramaphosa confirmed his commitment to Russia and announced that South Africa's foreign minister would attend a Russia-Africa partnership meeting in Sochi on 9 and 10/11.



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DIPLOMATIC FRONT & NEGOCIATIONS RUSSIA / UKRAINE

US statements on readiness for nuclear talks

On 21/10, the Biden administration announced that the U.S. was ready to engage in **nuclear talks without preconditions with Russia, China, and North Korea**, aiming to reduce the nuclear threat. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed the proposal, calling it a "deception." Lavrov claimed that the U.S. intends to declare its goal of inflicting a "strategic defeat" on Russia on the battlefield.

In recent weeks, Russia has lowered its threshold for nuclear weapon use and warned the U.S. and its allies that their support for Ukraine could lead to direct conflict with Moscow, **potentially escalating into nuclear war**. Sergei Lavrov stated that Moscow is closely monitoring the U.S. presidential race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. He emphasized that Russia is prepared to engage with any U.S. administration chosen by the American people, but only under conditions of mutual respect and equality. Currently, Sergei Lavrov noted, there are no indications that such a dialogue will resume.

Russian spy accused of sabotage arrested in Poland

On 23/10, a Ukrainian national **wanted for spying on behalf of the FSB** was arrested in the city of Łódź (Łódź Voivodeship, central Poland) after a **10-month manhunt**. The individual had already been convicted in a collective trial for espionage against critical Polish infrastructure in 2023, posing a serious threat to national security. This group of 16 members is accused of monitoring military sites and seaports, and had planned to derail a train.

Since the Russian invasion in 2022, **cases of sabotage and espionage have increased**, particularly arson attacks in Europe and the United States. According to Polish intelligence, pro-Russian Ukrainians are being recruited online via Telegram by Russian agents. This was illustrated by the arson of a paint factory in Wrocław, southwestern Poland, in January 2024, where the perpetrator, a Ukrainian, was allegedly paid by Russians to carry out the act. **Similar incidents have been observed in allied countries**. In July 2024, an arson attack ordered by Moscow was reported at a logistics warehouse in Birmingham (central England). According to Ken McCallum, head of British domestic intelligence, Russian military intelligence appears to be engaged in a "sustained mission to sow chaos on European streets."

In response to these acts of sabotage and espionage, the Polish Foreign Minister announced on 22/10 the decision to **withdraw the operating permit of the Russian Federation's consulate in Poznań**. This measure could be followed by the expulsion of the Russian ambassador from Poland. The decision follows legal proceedings related to the Wrocław paint factory fire.

DIPLOMATIC FRONT & NEGOCIATIONS RUSSIA / UKRAINE

\$50 Billion Loan to Ukraine by G7

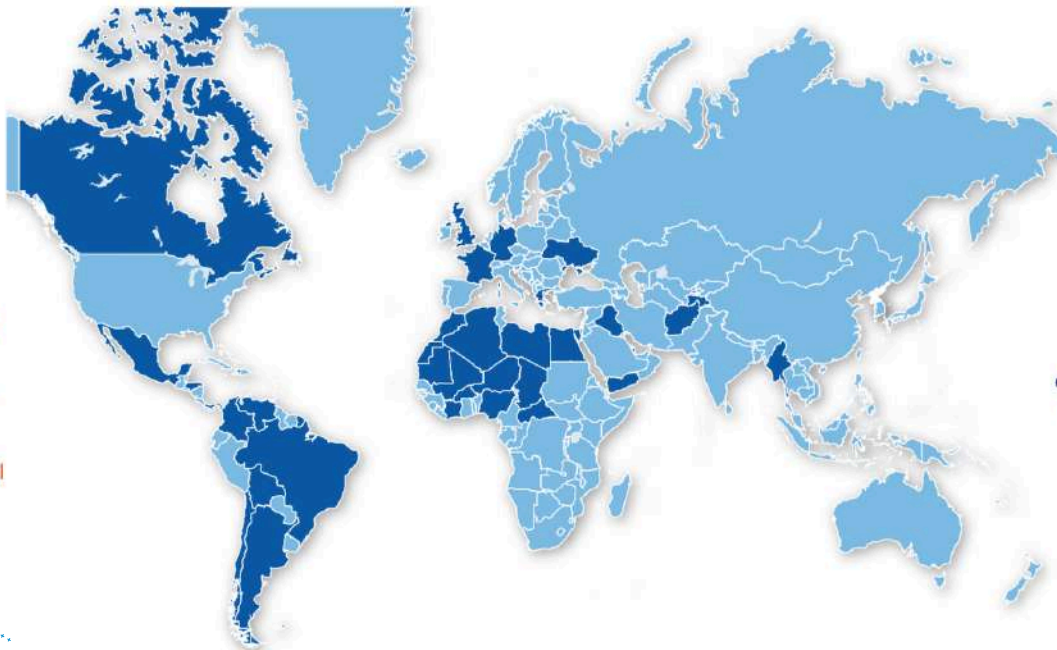
On 22/10, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced that G7 and European Union (EU) allies were close to finalizing a **\$50 billion loan intended for Ukraine, financed in part by frozen Russian assets**. The U.S. is expected to contribute about \$20 billion. This loan is anticipated to be concluded by the end of the year, ahead of the U.S. presidential election on 05/11, where Donald Trump has promised to **withdraw from the Russia-Ukraine conflict**.

Yellen expressed confidence that the immobilization of Russian sovereign assets in Europe would continue, despite the need for the EU to renew the freeze every six months. **The EU has approved the use of these assets to loan up to €35 billion.**

The U.S. has sought stronger assurances from the EU to maintain these frozen funds even if a ceasefire is reached, in order to minimize risks for American taxpayers. Yellen also indicated that **new sanctions against Russia**, targeting intermediaries supplying critical components to its military, would be announced soon.

COMMENT-PERPECTIVES

In the coming week, attention will focus on the potential escalation of risks from the deployment of North Korean troops and the possible response from the Allies. Following the closure of the Russian consulate in Poland, other European countries may take similar actions.



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international
offices

+ 900
collaborators

+ 1000
support missions
per year

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including 30 French
CAC40 companies

+ 100
qualified
partners



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