

Ukraine Situation Report: Counteroffensive Slowed by 77,000 Square Miles of Mines

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says that regardless of what happens in the counteroffensive, he won't negotiate until Russia leaves.

By [Howard Altman](#)

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Regardless of what happens with his [counteroffensive](#), Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says the war is "not a Hollywood movie" and that Ukraine won't negotiate with Russia until its forces have left his nation's sovereign territory.

"No matter how far we advance in our counter-offensive, we will not agree to a frozen conflict because that is war, that is a prospectless development for Ukraine," [Zelensky told the BBC Wednesday](#). "Some people believe this is a Hollywood movie and expect results now. It's not."

Zelensky says in BBC interview that the counteroffensive's progress has been "slower than desired" but will continue and at Ukraine's chosen pace.

"Some people believe this is a Hollywood movie and expect results now. It's not." <https://t.co/WT7v8vTEdZ>

— Christopher Miller (@ChristopherJM) [June 21, 2023](#)

Zelensky added that while Ukraine has liberated eight villages so far, the counteroffensive was not going easily because 200,000 sq km (77,220 sq miles) of Ukrainian territory had been mined by Russian forces.

"Whatever some might want, including attempts to pressure us, with all due respect, we will

advance on the battlefield the way we deem best," Zelensky told *BBC*.

Ukrainian forces have made most of its progress in the southern section of the roughly 200 mile front that runs from northern Donetsk Oblast to central Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Kyiv's deputy defense minister said Wednesday.

Here are today's control-of-terrain maps of [#Russia's](#) invasion of [#Ukraine](#) from [@TheStudyofWar](#) and [@criticalthreats](#).

Interactive map, updated daily: <https://t.co/hwgxTnU2Tr>

Archive of time-lapse maps, updated monthly: <https://t.co/IT6FiqwgGO>
[pic.twitter.com/e9VCLNs93M](https://t.co/IT6FiqwgGO)

— ISW (@TheStudyofWar) [June 21, 2023](#)

"The defense forces of Ukraine continue to conduct offensive actions in the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions," Hanna Maliar said on her Telegram channel. "During the past day, they had partial success, they consolidated at the achieved boundaries and leveled the front line."

In the east, "our defenders continue to restrain the large-scale offensive of Russian troops in the Lyman and Bakhmut directions," she said. "Particularly heavy fighting continues in the Lyman direction in the Yampolivka and Serebryansk forestry districts of the Donetsk region. In the direction of Bilogorivka-Shypylivka, our troops conducted offensive actions and had partial success. Now they are fixed at the achieved boundaries."

The bottom line, however, is that Ukrainian forces "gradually advance step by step," she told Ukrainian media, [according to CNN](#). "So one can say we are gnawing our way meter by meter."

And she again repeated the [now-familiar theme](#) that "the main strike is still ahead."

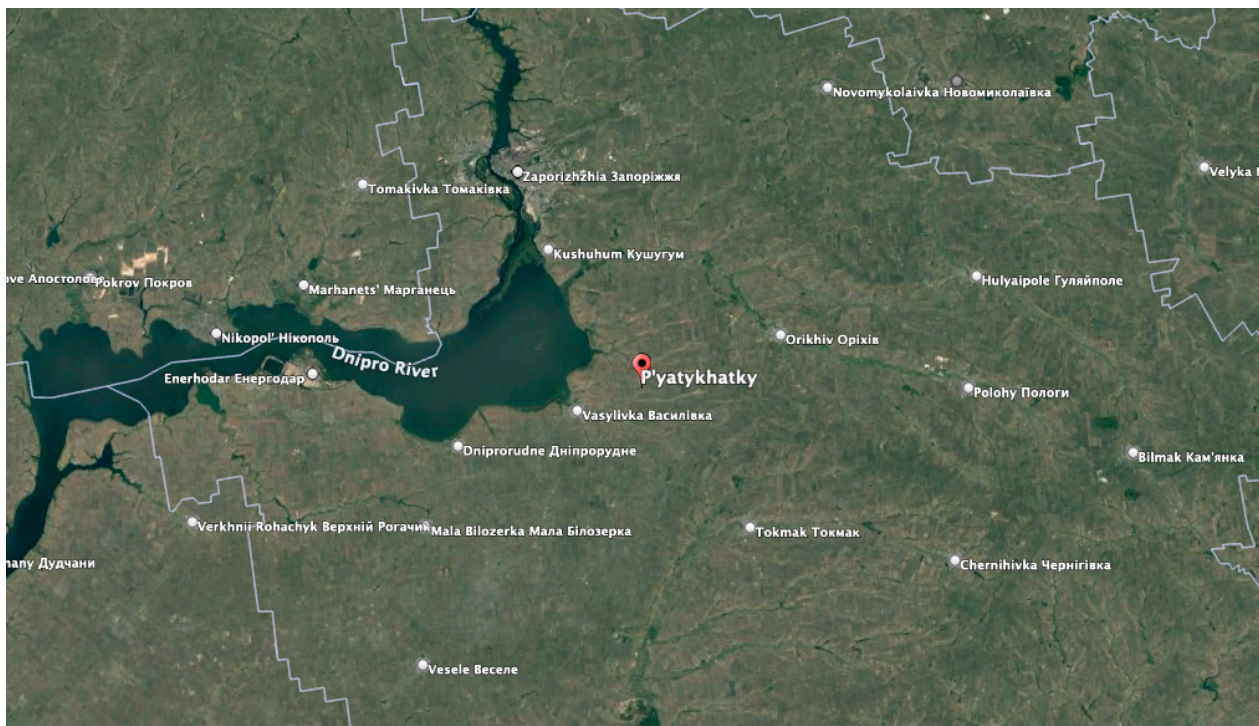
Take note Mordor; you ain't seen nothing yet. [#Ukraine's](#) main counteroffensive strike "is still ahead," Deputy Minister of Defense Hanna Maliar said today. Adding Ukrainian forces "are gnawing our way meter by meter" to advance. <https://t.co/ISrC3qlQf1> [pic.twitter.com/sBvRRaK9i2](https://t.co/ISrC3qlQf1)

— Glasnost Gone (@GlasnostGone) [June 21, 2023](#)

The Kremlin-connected Rybar Telegram channel acknowledged small Ukrainian gains in Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

"Battles for the village of Pyatikhatki continued throughout the day in the Zaporizhzhia direction: at the moment, units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine control only a small part of

the buildings in the north of the village.”



Ukraine has made advances toward the village of Pyatikhatki in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Russian sources claim. (Google Earth image)

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner mercenary group who continues to spar with Russian military leadership, offered a much more alarming take.

Pyatikhatki, he said, “is controlled by Ukrainian forces, as is the northern part of Robotyne. Urozhaine is also under Ukrainian control. Big parts have been given up by Russian forces. One day we will wake up and find out Crimea is given away.”

Prigozhin with an update on the front lines:

"Pyatykhatky is controlled by Ukrainian forces, as is the northern part of Robotyne. Urozhaine is also under Ukrainian control. Big parts have been given up by Russian forces. One day we will wake up and find out Crimea is given away."

pic.twitter.com/miQr5m7mBm

— NOELREPORTS (@NOELreports) [June 21, 2023](#)

Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, said Wednesday that Ukraine had suffered heavy losses and had no chance of success, “and they understand this,” [The Washington Post](#) reported.

But he said Kyiv had not yet exhausted its offensive potential.

So much of this is shrouded, of course, in the fog of war. We will continue to keep an eye on developments and report back to you with as much detail as we can gather.

Before we head into the latest from Ukraine, *The War Zone* readers can catch up on our previous rolling coverage [here](#).

The Latest

Noting the increasing Russian buildup of fortifications on the peninsula, National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) Secretary Oleksiy Danilov urged Russians living in Crimea to flee.

"They realize that it's only a matter of time before we come and kick them out," Danilov said, [according to The New Voice of Ukraine](#) (NVU) media outlet. "And I would advise everyone to use the services of the facility they have today (the Kerch Bridge) as soon as possible to be safe. Whoever manages to, let's say, come back to their homeland from where they came, they would be happy with that. They cannot escape through Ukraine."

That bridge, Vladimir Putin's prized \$4 billion span linking the peninsula with Russia, [was famously attacked last October](#).

!!The Armed Forces of Ukraine will enter Crimea and drive the Russian invaders from there!

"They understand that it is only a matter of time before we come and drive them out of there. And I would advise everyone to use the services of the structure that they currently have -... pic.twitter.com/lwqt3bHCyi

— Lew Anno Suport #Ukraine 24/2-22 (@anno1540) [June 21, 2023](#)

Reports indicate that numerous fortification lines are being constructed between the border with mainland Ukraine and the logistical hub in Dzhankoi in the north of Crimea, according to *NVU*. Russian troops have been observed moving into coastal mini-hotels near the ongoing fortification construction.

Here is a look at some of Russia's trenches along the North Crimean Canal.

Russian forces in Ukraine have constructed networks of fortifications in occupied territory. An interactive map showing many of these defenses is available here: <https://t.co/JGIYbCrrUE> pic.twitter.com/5p0zvZ1QDA

— Brady Africk (@bradyafr) [June 21, 2023](#)

The British Defense Ministry says that Russia "has continued to expend significant effort building defensive lines deep in rear areas, especially on the approaches to occupied

Crimea.”

That assessment includes observations that Russia is building “an extensive zone of defenses” about nine kilometers long, a short distance from the town of Armyansk on the narrow bridge of land connecting the peninsula to Kherson Oblast.

“These elaborate defenses highlight the Russian command’s assessment that Ukrainian forces are capable of directly assaulting Crimea,” the MoD said.

Latest Defence Intelligence update on the situation in Ukraine – 21 June 2023.

Find out more about Defence Intelligence's use of language:
<https://t.co/JZXB5VmisV>

📷 [#StandWithUkraine](#) 📷 pic.twitter.com/bgeFU1Vt6X

— Ministry of Defence 🇬🇧 (@DefenceHQ) [June 21, 2023](#)

Meanwhile, a Russian floating dock in Sevastopol sank, [HI Sutton reports](#).

What caused the sinking of that dock, known as PD-19 and near another one that sank four years ago with a submarine in it, is unknown, said Sutton.

In his tweet, Sutton said that reported explosions in Sevastopol, home of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, were unrelated to the dock sinking.

Those noises were related to training, occupation Governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhaev said Wednesday on his Telegram channel.

“The reason for the loud sounds (explosions, as they say in some channels) is that the Black Sea Higher Naval School named after P.S. Nakhimov conducted a training session...using rocket-propelled bombers,” he said. “Everything is calm in the city.”

before and after pic.twitter.com/CyxzlbqoUQ

— MT Anderson (@MT_Anderson) [June 21, 2023](#)

Pro-Ukrainian partisans have apparently struck again in Crimea, blowing up railroad tracks in the Black Sea port city of Feodosia in the southern part of the peninsula occupied by Russia since 2014.

“In the area of Feodosia, the railway track was damaged,” Crimean occupation governor Sergey Aksenov said on his Telegram channel Wednesday. “Train traffic will be restored

within two hours. There were no casualties. Services are on site. I ask everyone to remain calm and trust only trusted sources of information.”

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

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