

# Ukrainian counteroffensive falters amid mass casualties

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky admitted in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday that the country's long-awaited "counteroffensive" was moving "slower than desired."

"Some people believe this is a Hollywood movie and expect results now. It's not," he told the BBC.

"What's at stake is people's lives," Zelensky absurdly stated as he pushes tens of thousands of Ukrainians forward into heavily-mined Russian fortifications and almost certain death.

While Ukraine on Monday claimed to have taken the town of P'yatykhatky, this was contradicted by the governor of the Zaporizhzhia province, Yuriy Malashko, who reported yesterday that fighting between the two sides was ongoing. "Right now the fighting continues there, and not only there—along the entire front line," Malashko stated.

Even Ukraine's highly censored media has begun to comment on the changes in the Ukrainian government's line on the offensive. The popular news site Strana reported on Wednesday, "For several days now, the Ukrainian authorities have been demonstrating a change in rhetoric on the counteroffensive in the south. If earlier the main theme was 'silence,' which must be observed in order not to interfere with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, now the narrative is different—the offensive is underway, but it will not be easy."

Last week, the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed up to 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers were being killed per day in the counteroffensive, with 30 percent of its Western supplies of tanks already destroyed in counteroffensive operations. Ukraine has not denied these figures and conversely claimed it had killed or injured 4,600 Russian soldiers.

This would indicate that well over 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers have already been slaughtered in the two-week-old offensive that has resulted in a grand total of eight

small villages and just 113 square kilometers of territory seized by Ukraine. Many more will have been wounded.

These tens of thousands of dead and injured come on top of 200,000 Ukrainians, who were estimated to have been killed in the NATO-provoked war in the first year of the war in a country with a pre-war population of under 40 million. Even using conservative casualty estimates, with a population of just over 20 million men, Ukraine is quickly approaching a situation where a huge portion of its working age men are either dead or injured. This horrific bloodbath has clearly made manpower a significant problem for the Ukrainian army.

As the number of experienced soldiers dwindled due to the mass slaughter in Bakhmut, Ukraine's Armed Forces spent the last year attempting to man quickly assembled assault brigades trained at American bases in Germany. Ukrainian youth and workers with no military experience whatsoever are routinely grabbed off the street and forced into service. As a result, many Ukrainian soldiers arrive poorly trained and equipped and with low motivation at the front, where they can get killed within days, if not hours.

As Yevhen Udovyehenko, 37, a commander in an assault group in the 122 battalion of the 81st brigade, told a *Guardian* reporter near the village of Velyka Novosilka in Donetsk province, "The situation is not good. We don't have enough weapons and armoured vehicles. We were almost encircled in Bilohorivka, just one way in and out.

"We need better training," he added. "I tell the recruits that they must pee in a bottle and then they leave the trench and are shot dead."

Speaking to the *New York Times* last Friday, two anonymous US officials confirmed that Ukraine was suffering heavy casualties and equipment losses "as expected." Indeed, the mass losses come as no surprise to Zelensky and his imperialist backers. In an interview with

the *Wall Street Journal* just before the beginning of the “counteroffensive,” Zelensky announced that “a large number of soldiers will die.”

While the full scope of the slaughter remains unknown, it is clear that Ukraine’s much publicized counteroffensive has already begun turning into an outright debacle both for Kiev and its NATO backers, who have spent the past year and billions of dollars on preparing the biggest military operation in Europe since World War II.

But the apparent setbacks of the counteroffensive in no way signify that the danger of the conflict further escalating into a full-scale war between Russia and the NATO powers has diminished. On the contrary, as throughout the entire conflict, the response of the imperialist powers and the crisis-ridden Zelensky regime to the military setbacks has been a further doubling down on the war effort and the evermore direct intervention of NATO.

In an indication of the dangers of an imminent further escalation of the war, on Tuesday, Russia accused Ukraine of planning to attack Crimea with US-supplied HIMARS long-range rocket systems and British-supplied Storm Shadow cruise missiles. Should Kiev follow through on the attack, Moscow warned that it would view both the United States and UK as full participants in the ongoing proxy war.

“The use of these missiles outside the zone of our special military operation would mean that the United States and Britain would be fully dragged into the conflict and would entail immediate strikes on decision-making centers in Ukraine,” Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu told a meeting of military officials on Tuesday.

The Zelensky regime, which has already attacked the Kremlin, assassinated several Kremlin supporters, and carried out a number of attacks within Russia using neo-Nazi forces, has proven time and again that it is ready to carry out the most reckless provocations on behalf of NATO.

Earlier on Sunday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reiterated his support for the counteroffensive and made clear that the aim of the war is to subjugate Russia militarily so that it can no longer complicate the aims of Western imperialism in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union.

“We all want this war to end. But for peace to be sustainable, it must be just. Peace cannot mean freezing the conflict and accepting a deal dictated by Russia,” the Stoltenberg said in an interview with the German

newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*.

Stoltenberg also said that “only Ukraine alone can define the acceptable conditions,” which according to Kiev’s current demands would mean retaking all of the Donbass region and Crimea.

“We need to make sure that when this war ends, there are credible agreements for Ukraine’s security so that Russia cannot rearm and attack again and the cycle of Russian aggression is broken,” Stoltenberg said, politely ignoring the fact that the current war marks the third time in a bit over a century that German imperialism has attempted to seize control of Ukraine, Russia and the vast resources of the region.

Following his visit to China, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in London with Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba on Monday. Indicating that soon even more weapons and money will be flowing into Ukraine, Kuleba stated that he and Blinken had “discussed next steps to bolster Ukraine’s counteroffensive capabilities, preparing the Vilnius summit deliverables on Ukraine’s NATO membership perspective, and growing the global support for the Peace Formula.”

Just last week Kuleba implored his Western backers through Facebook not to falter on the road towards a potential nuclear war as the counteroffensive sputters.

“The crucial thing for [Ukraine’s] partners is to not be afraid of global changes and to not stop supporting Ukraine. Life without a modern Russia is possible. And we continue to work on new weapons for Ukraine’s defense forces, on strengthening the international coalition to support [Ukraine’s] Peace Formula, and on restoring Ukraine every single day. All this will come,” Kuleba wrote.



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