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Sitrep: Operation Z

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By Nightvision for the Saker Blog

Let's start with the biggest news today, the Black Sea Fleet flagship Moskva cruiser suffered some sort of major 'incident'. I had an entire writeup planned to explain how Ukraine could (or could not) possibly have shot it, but now I won't waste valuable analysis time because more and more it appears Ukraine either was not overtly involved, or if it was it was through some sort of asymmetric/sabotage methods, etc. Even the Pentagon now reports there's no data to confirm that Ukraine hit it with any missiles and all such claims come only from Ukrainian OSINT propagandists on twitter.

In fact they seemed to have cleverly combined several real life data points to try to weave their tale, i.e. using the fact that a Russian frigate shot down a TB2 drone a couple days ago as a means to "prove" that Ukrainian TB2's are operating over the Black Sea and that their alleged strike on the Moskva consisted of a TB2 running a decoy/screen op to "distract" the ship's crew, while Ukrainian Neptune missiles simultaneously were fired on it. This is not very believable as these ships are capable of tracking dozens of objects, nor is the damage now being reported consistent with massive ship-killing missiles (based on the Soviet Kh-55) successfully hitting the ship.

"The nature of the damage to the cruiser is still unclear. According to the statement of the RF Ministry of Defense, the main caliber of the cruiser survived, which hints that either the artillery ammunition or the anti-aircraft gun detonated, which caused damage to the ship. There is not enough information yet to talk about the cause of the fire and explosion, whatever it was caused by."

Anti-ship missiles like Neptune are sea-skimming and would have hit low on the hull and not on top where the 'artillery/AA' are stationed.

The latest reports state that the ship has reached Sevastopol on its own power and that the ammunition fires were contained. We have no info how accurate any of this is, so we have no choice but to standby for further updates. All photos/videos released by the Ukr side so far have been fake, various manipulations of photos of burning Iranian ships, fake Norwegian missile strike test videos, etc.

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It seems logically that Ukraine was somehow involved but we simply don't have any real data to even speculate as to what could have happened. All we know is Russian MOD claims they are 'investigating the cause' of the fires to the ammunition on board. It could be negligence, to sabotage, to a number of other things. Very unlikely but, nothing is impossible. After all just last year the U.S. lost an entire modern amphibious assault ship, completely burned down via sabotage. U.S. is supposed to be the 'greatest Navy on earth', right?

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/14/sailor-charged-over-fire-that-destroyed-us-warship-disgruntled-prosecutors-say>

"On 12 July 2020, a fire started on a lower vehicle-storage deck while the ship was undergoing maintenance at Naval Base San Diego. It took four days for firefighters to extinguish the fire, which injured at least 63 sailors and civilians and severely damaged the ship. After a long investigation into the cause of the fire, a sailor was charged with arson. [3] Repairs to the ship were estimated to take up to seven years and cost up to \$3.2 billion so the ship was decommissioned on 15 April 2021 and sold for scrap."

Not to mention the general incompetence of the U.S. Navy – who remembers this incident <https://youtu.be/SYwglNz7Qyo?t=35>

The damage was over \$2 billion.



In fact it was a string of incidents: <https://maritimecyprus.com/2017/08/25/why-do-u-s-navy-ships-keep-crashing/>

The USS John McCain only a year later had another collision with 10 dead sailors: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-navy-crash-singapore/u-s-destroyer-mccain-collision-which-killed-10-sailors-caused-by-sudden-turn-singapore-idUSKCN1GK0HU>

And USS Champlain collided with a South Korean vessel in a display of "shoddy seamanship" according to the Navy: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2017/11/07/shoddy-seamanship-to-blame-in-lake-champlain-collision/>

Or the U.S.'s most expensive ship in history breaking down immediately after launch: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/most-expensive-destroyer-zumwalt-navy-history-breaks-down/>

Or how about "the second breakdown in 2 years" for the Navy's most advanced and expensive (13 billion) aircraft carrier <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a20521726/americas-newest-aircraft-carrier-suffers-a-breakdown/>

And the fact that tests of its anti-air/interception systems failed and there were doubts that the carrier could even 'protect itself'

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<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-25/navy-s-13-billion-carrier-sows-doubt-that-it-can-defend-itself>

The Navy's \$13 billion supercarrier still can't do the one thing it's absolutely required to do.

So in short, accidents do happen, things fail: in fact they happen much more in the U.S. Navy than any other navy on the planet. So before anyone raises too many questions on how the Russian navy can suffer an incident during high-stress wartime, then you should first investigate how the U.S. lost over \$10-20 billion worth of warships in the past few years alone in *peacetime*.

And let's not forget this thing from the infamous crash a few months ago belonged to the Navy as well, when it failed to land on the aircraft carrier:



Add another \$100+ million down the drain.

With that said, in regard to the Moskva. It is still a terrible and huge loss, even if the loss is 'temporary' (as "temporary" in Naval parlance usually means years). This is not only the flagship but one of the most powerful ships in the entire Russian Navy, even modest damage will likely keep it out of action for years as repairs on these capital ships take a very long time. This will reduce the firepower projection capabilities of the Black Sea fleet by as much as 10-15% alone, if not more. IF the loss is in fact confirmed to be from a Ukraine strike I'll write up a separate analysis on it, but for now don't want to waste valuable space on 'hypotheticals' as even the Pentagon refuses to say Ukraine did it.

As pertains to this specific conflict however, the loss is irrelevant as the ship was not doing anything in terms of abetting the military actions against Ukraine. The ship does NOT have Kaliber missiles or any ground-target cruise missiles so it was not really involved in the hostilities apart from adding an extra layer of S-300 and various air defense protection over the Black Sea. The ship is basically a carrier killer and its most potent armament of P-500 missiles is specifically designed to kill other large warships. But since Ukraine has no real navy left the loss is only one of prestige, not of actual current combat capability. However it does weaken Russia against future/potential NATO intervention and makes Russia's 'deterrence' in the Black/Mediterranean Sea areas much less effective. But with all that said, the official reports from MOD indicate the main missile payloads on the ship are undamaged and so there is a small chance that the damage in general was such that it could be repaired in a semi-timely fashion. We'll have to see.

Of course this all comes on the heels of a new wave of Ukrainian attacks on Russian soil, after days ago the order was reportedly given by Zelensky for the armed forces to begin attacks on Russian soil. Afterwards, Russia released a statement that if Ukraine continues over-the-border strikes, Russia will begin targeting Ukrainian leadership in Kiev and elsewhere, something they have obviously refrained from doing previously.

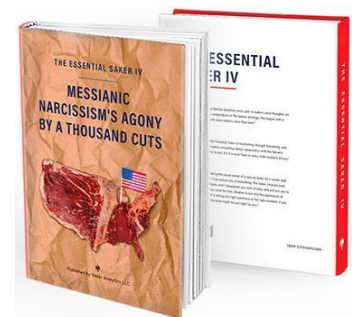
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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
APRIL 24TH



Not only did Ukraine initially strike the oil depot in Belgorod, but they then shelled some farms and settlements on the Russian side of the border. Then two days ago, after Zelensky's order, a Ukrainian sabotage DRG group snuck over and blew up a Russian railway bridge in Nezhegol, Belgorod region.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/12/key-russian-railway-bridge-destroyed-in-belgorod-border-region-with-ukraine>

Of course western sources inflate its importance to "key bridge" which it's not, nor did the Ukrop forces manage to blow it up, in fact having failed and mostly 'damaged it'.

"Apparently – the work of the Ukrainian DRG. There was not enough wearable mass of explosives or time for a serious undermining – but near the abutment they were able to blow up the RSHP, without visible damage to the power structure of the bridge spans. For a day or two of work for the restorers."

Now today there is new additional attacks where Ukrainian helicopters have shot up a village/settlement in a Russian region north of Kiev. For the first time there are now wounded casualties (no killed), with one Russian person said to have their leg torn off in the attack. Now keep in mind the village of Kimovo that was attacked is 5km from the Ukrainian border. A Mi-24 would travel this distance in about 1 to 2 minutes or less, and the location can also be shelled from within Ukraine itself, so this is not a deep border breach.

And another village was reportedly shelled as well: <https://www.rt.com/russia/553876-village-shelling-ukraine-belgorod/>

In short, Ukraine has taken up Russia's challenge and threat of attacks on its leadership. The question is why? There are several possible reasons:

1. Zelensky and co. are not really in charge of the nationalist forces and in fact the nationalists want to escalate as much as possible even at the expense of Ukrainian leadership being hit, because after all that would actually serve their purpose of escalation since they know such a hit on the leadership would create more international support.
2. Zelensky and the leadership believe themselves safe enough from these strikes as they've all bunkered up, and Zelensky mostly lives in Poland now anyway apart from when he has to make a photo-op appearance in Kiev (as for Boris Johnson, etc) and so is not worried about such 'strikes against leadership'.

This brings us to the greater point of all this – the Moskva cruiser (let's assume Ukraine had SOME hand in this), the cross-border strikes. All of these are 'prestige' incidents. Not a single one of them is actually aimed at crippling the Russian military nor are objectives for Ukrainian military victory. The new cross-border attacks were on civilian targets in villages. The Moskva I've already explained above has no real relevance to the actual Ukrainian conflict as Ukraine has no navy of their own, nor does the Moskva launch missiles at ground targets.

This underlines the thesis we've established in earlier SitReps, which is:

- Ukraine's chief strategy at this point has devolved into a 'psychological war' of prestige targets and sowing political controversy within Russia
- Ukraine absolutely needs the 'image' and illusion of victory to keep the morale of its own diminishing armed forces afloat, after every single major Russian victory.

To the above point, we know that in the past two days, Russia has won a major victory in the mass-surrender that occurred in Mariupol. This was a huge psychological blow to the UAF and the UAF leadership clearly needed an immediate boost to its morale. They require "media victories" they can show to their soldiers to continue the illusion that the UAF is actually winning against Russia.

One of the key revelations of the past week was that some of the captured soldiers had a complete ignorance of other major important setbacks that occurred in the same time period. It is clear they are being kept completely in the dark by their own leadership.



Click on the icon for an explanation of feast of the The Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

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UAF soldiers in Lugansk had no clue Mariupol was surrendering and vice versa, POWs in Mariupol seemed to have little clue as to the condition of any other part of their forces apart from the fake psychological reinforcement that they are 'winning' or 'help will arrive soon', etc.

So let's look again in a broader scope at the Ukrainian's current objectives in general. They know they can't win militarily, so what is it they're **really** trying to accomplish lately?

I posit the following main objectives:

- To prolong the conflict long enough that an accumulation of 'tragedies' (by way of falseflags) can mount political consensus against Russia more and more towards an eventual presumed goal of NATO intervention.
- To psychologically affect Russia's political class (the ones that lean westward, 5th columnists, etc) into putting increasing pressure on Russia's leadership, thereby creating tension, disagreement/conflict, etc., with the eventual "ideal" goal of the complete rebellion of one side of Russia's political class against Putin and his 'siloviks'.
- The presumed goal of also affecting Russia's citizenry by demoralizing them to such a way that they would revolt against Russian leadership. However this goal by far is the least realistic as the West has greatly overcalculated in how much they can influence the Russian 'narod'. The increasing confirmed atrocities from the Ukraine side, which now even openly target Russian civilians, is something that continues only to galvanize Russian solidarity for their troops and leadership. In fact the *only* anger Russian citizens are currently reporting is that Putin and the leadership are going **too soft** on Ukraine.
- To slowly affect Russia's allies into viewing Russia as weak, militarily incapable, etc, and demoralizing the allies (particularly the ones closer to being 'on the fence') into decreasing their support for Russia's SMO and becoming gradually more critical of the SMO on the world stage (via supporting UN resolutions against Russia, etc). Also combine this with the first point – the hope that the prolongation of conflict can allow the accrual of enough tragedies (falseflags) for Russian allies to start reconsidering their support.
- To keep afloat the morale of UAF troops under the illusion that Ukraine is winning, by amplifying militarily insignificant 'achievements' into a status of relevancy.

Like I said earlier, it's no 'coincidence' that right after the single largest surrender not only of the current conflict but probably of modern history, there is suddenly all sorts of Ukrainian sabotage activity – maybe the Moskva hit – but at the least the cross-border attacks on Russian civilian / village targets. It's obvious to anyone with a brain that Ukraine is desperate to go 'tit-for-tat' on Russian 'psychological victories' in order to keep morale afloat in its troops, which by the way are surrendering more and more all over the place. Not only was there an ADDITIONAL surrender in Mariupol today, but there was another large surrender in Lugansk as well (this is on TOP of the earlier Lugansk surrenders from 2-3 days ago).

In fact, their morale is so low, that some units have resorted to selling their tanks to Russia for Rubles.

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00:00



“It is significant that the Ukrainian military is happy to accept Russian rubles as payment, obviously assuming that this currency will soon become their main one.”

The problem for them is, Russia continues to accrue actual battlefield victories, while Ukraine desperately fights to keep morale afloat with fake psychological ones. On the topic of real victories we have several in the new cycle.

Let’s start with the surrenders. We now have confirmation the British mercenary Aiden Aslin / Cossackgundi is apprehended, and the famed “warrior” is now claiming – “I did no actual fighting!”

<https://twitter.com/MapsUkraine/status/1514612970050842626>

His family, meanwhile, begs for him to be treated kindly (read: opposite to how Russian POWs are treated)



Unconfirmed reports from the DPR state that he will NOT be viewed as an official enemy combatant / POW adherent to Geneva codes, but as a mercenary.

Other videos of the mass surrenders that occurred that might not have been seen yet:

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/GSxwz3BDD3cr/>

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/oclLorNO4pgj/>

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/VlaPo16Xwz84/>

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/pCx9sE4xLFHH/>

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/PfKtNt0jBLQ7/>

LDPR now report they have around 3000 total POWs of the UAF. Presumably Russia itself has many more as well.

An American mercenary is also said to be caught:

<https://twitter.com/MapsUkraine/status/1514559272633384962>

As for Mariupol, the map currently looks something like this:



A small swath of Primorski district by the captured port in SW. Then the Illych Factory (north area) and Azovstal factory (south) is all that's left. During the breakout attempt where mass amounts of UAF marines were caught, some of them reportedly made it from the Illych to the Azovstal to consolidate there, while others attempted to scam north to freedom. They were hunted by drones/artillery and gunned down.

<https://www.bitchute.com/video/VQVnvgZX1b8H/>

Azovstal is being saved for last, after they clean up the other two. Contradicting reports state that Illych factory is fully clear while some state there are still some stragglers hanging on in its bowels and are being cleared.

Some even have the map like this, with Illych gone:

<https://twitter.com/Suriyakmaps/status/1514397409723432960>

Elsewhere:

A Russian strike completely obliterated a field camp of the AFU where many soldiers were sleeping, presumably many dead

https://twitter.com/200_zoka/status/1514003279365259276

(alt link <https://ok.ru/video/3392651463296>)

And the most important advances once again occurred in Izyum where Russian forces reportedly captured the village of Borova to secure Izyum's eastern flank:

<https://twitter.com/michaelh992/status/1514589758554529798>

-- GEROMAN -- 🇷🇺 --

@GeromanAT



FR took Borova (unconfirmed)



1:55 PM · Apr 14, 2022

191

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While simultaneously attacking Lyman
<https://twitter.com/GeromanAT/status/1514585692600475653/photo/1>

And more importantly, made large headway westward to capture Velyka
Komyshuvakha

https://twitter.com/War_Mapper/status/1514393355802791940

This would likely allow RF forces from Balakleya in the north to link up with this new salient, thus capturing a swath of territory to secure Izyum's western flank. And further puts a lot of pressure on the very strategic/important town of Barvinkove, which has been in RF's sights for a while now and may soon become the next objective.

This are fairly major captures in a single day which seems to imply that Phase 2 may be starting to kick off in a gradual way. We know Russia has not fully repositioned everything yet but on some axes they have already begun major advancements.

Here is further confirmation of my previously written thesis on the new strategies Russia will employ. From an Austrian Military source:

—



Other western sources report (from the Pentagon): *"There are 65 Russian BTG's in all of Ukraine right now focused on south and east says sr. US defense official. Recall that Russia had amassed 130 BTG's prior to invasion."*

What happened to the alleged 180 BTGs? The numbers keep dwindling, proving the accuracy of our reports that Russia never had anywhere near the numbers they claimed. By the way, 65 BTGs could represent as much as 130,000 men due to Russian brigades on paper being divided into 50% BTGs, the other 50% regular brigade structure. But as reported previously it's impossible to really tell how widespread these dispositions are.

A few other random tidbits:

"⚡_{GBGE} The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation revealed the names of 24 militants of the "Georgian Legion" who are fighting on the side of Ukraine and involved in the executions of Russian soldiers:

According to the investigation, they were Georgian citizens aged 22 to 58: Levan Fifia, Lasha Rukhaya, Levon Hayrapetyan, Vasil Alibegashvili, Erekle Amiranashvili, Veka Apresovi, Elguja Bagration, Vakhtang Barabadze, Giorgi Baramidze, Beka Basilaya, Zurab Bedoshvili, Gela Belashadze and 12 others.

! Soon you will receive yours!"

And by the way here's confirmation that the UAF continues to 'reinforce' by way of mass civilian transport as they have relatively very little 'armor' left (all armor is kept in strategic areas, cities etc for defense purposes, but has almost no fuel)

<https://twitter.com/Militarylandnet/status/1514665125692772352>

Anyway, it was a day of major military defeats for Ukraine, but a few illusory and 'symbolic' (albeit ephemeral) psychological 'victories', which is pretty much characteristic of the conflict so far. Once Mariupol falls and Phase 2 kicks off in full stride, the UAF will be decimated with with an unprecedented scale. But there are some dark clouds on the horizon in the form of massive NATO/U.S. arms escalations which we will expound on next time.



p.s. there are several new videos of **extremely** gruesome kills of Ukrainian military in the past day. Not only was a new Su-25 shot down <https://www.bitchute.com/video/bnqF4lYfir4g/> (vid without the gruesomeness) and photos of the pilot appeared which are extremely nasty, but a Russian Spetsnaz force ambushed some Ukrops near Kharkov with very disturbing results which I won't post (if anyone is interested I can maybe show you where to find it). In short, the UAF continues to suffer very horrid losses each day.

Here's one that's not too bad though (still 18+):
<https://www.bitchute.com/video/C1aTkj4lGtwJ/>

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