

The completely different war

I am in Kursk and want to report here on my first impressions, because the war in Kursk is very different from what I know from the Donbass.



by Anti-Spiegel

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I am currently in Kursk to get an idea of the situation on the ground and would like to share my first impressions here. The first thing I noticed in Kursk were the air raid sirens. In Kursk, it seems like there are air raid sirens every hour and sometimes you can hear anti-aircraft guns firing. That is a big difference to Donetsk, for example, where I never heard air raid sirens but always heard explosions.

The city of Kursk itself seems peaceful and life goes on as normal. If it weren't for the constant sirens, as a foreigner you wouldn't even notice that there is a war going on nearby. However, restaurants are now closing earlier because there are fewer customers, and many people prefer to stay at home at the moment.

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It's different when you leave the city. I was with a group of volunteers who bring humanitarian aid to people in the countryside and to soldiers. In Russia, a lot of donations are made to the soldiers and

volunteers bring it to them practically directly at the front. We mainly had drinking water and drones with us.

I've heard before how much the war has changed. A year ago I was on [the front line](#) in Donbass, which was of course scary because you constantly hear explosions and the whistling of artillery shells over your head. But in general you had a certain feeling of security in the trenches because it was quite unlikely that a grenade would "fall directly on your head", as they say here.

This has changed thanks to drones. Kamikaze drones are hard to see, and when you do see them, it is usually too late. And they are aimed specifically at soldiers in trenches or moving cars. That is the first thing that was different from Donbass: We already put on protective vests and helmets in Kursk because there is a risk that you could be suddenly and deliberately attacked by a drone on the country road.

We had a jammer and a drone tracking device in our car. The device sounded the alarm several times and we had to switch on the jammer so that the drone pilot would lose contact with the drone and not be able to attack us. This gives a false sense of security, because the tracking devices are anything but 100% reliable. Incidentally, one of the drones we tracked was made in America. On the way, we also saw anti-aircraft missiles being fired repeatedly.

What makes things in Kursk even more scary is the fact that there is no clear front line in Kursk - unlike in the Donbass. The Ukrainians basically fanned out after entering the Kursk region and you never really know whether there might be a Ukrainian shock troop in the next bush. This also makes warfare in Kursk very difficult, because in fact the situation is completely confusing.

In contrast to the Donbass, you always have a sinking feeling in your stomach when you leave Kursk and head west. In addition, the drones have an ever greater range and therefore the danger of targeted fire begins 30 kilometers from the "gray zone" where the fighting is taking place.

I was not directly at the front (or what they call the front here). But when we delivered the humanitarian aid in the evening, it was already dark and we saw gigantic flashes of light on the horizon that lit up half the horizon. They probably used "Fabs" there, which are Russian aerial bombs weighing up to three tons. Another journalist from Donetsk said that he often saw these light effects at the end of the battle for Avdeevka, when the Russian army attacked the Ukrainian fortifications with "Fabs".

The displaced

What I am particularly interested in on this trip is how people here are dealing with the situation. I was in a refugee center and spoke to many people. The refugees are well looked after, they were very happy with the accommodation and food, but many complained about the authorities because there was no orderly evacuation. The authorities were obviously completely overwhelmed by the Ukrainian surprise attack on August 6th, at least people told how they had to flee on their own with a few belongings because the authorities had not organized anything. I don't know if that was the case everywhere, but I was told about a few specific places.

Many were so surprised by the attack that it was already too late for them to flee. The Russian Emergency Ministry has a hotline that people can call and report friends and relatives left behind. The ministry then works with the army to evacuate these people in special operations if they live in contested areas. However, nothing can usually be done for people who live in areas controlled by Ukraine.

A foundation has made a name for itself here, founded in 2022 by Jana Tschaikina, a young woman, and originally only provided humanitarian aid. After the attack on Kursk, however, it also put together

evacuation teams of volunteers who risk their lives to sneak through mined forests and fields to evacuate people from contested or even Ukrainian-occupied territory. I spoke to Jana and her volunteers, whose stories really send a chill down your spine. I will translate and publish the interviews.

The evacuees said that the first soldiers to arrive were poles. They behaved "bestially" and it was only when Ukrainian soldiers arrived that things became somewhat bearable, the refugees say. According to the statements I heard, the Ukrainians, provided they were regular soldiers and not units from the nationalist associations, behaved properly towards the civilians. However, according to the stories, the Poles shot at civilians indiscriminately, aiming for their legs, and then left the people to die on the streets. To my surprise, I also heard of Israeli mercenaries.

The nuclear power plant

One of the helpers I was traveling with works full-time at the Kursk nuclear power plant. Incidentally, I could see the nuclear power plant from a distance as we drove west.

The man said that the situation at the nuclear power plant is more serious than even the Russian media reports. According to him, the nuclear power plant is attacked by drones several times a day, which is far more dangerous at the Kursk nuclear power plant than at the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant. The reason is that the Kursk nuclear power plant is a Chernobyl-type nuclear power plant, which means that there is no protective concrete shell around the reactor. The Kursk nuclear power plant is therefore much more at risk from attacks than the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant.

With biting irony, the man told of the recent [visit](#) to the nuclear power plant by Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency. According to him, that was the only day on which there was no air raid warning at the plant. The Ukrainians showed "their best side" that day, but resumed shelling the next day.

So much for my first impressions of my visit to Kursk, I will report more later and also publish photos and videos.



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