

Special assessment of Russian salient in eastern Ukraine



Mobilized Russian servicemen in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region
● IVAN NOYABREV/TASS



By Mick Ryan
Retired Australian
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OPINION

In his just-published interview with *The Economist*, the Deputy Head of Ukrainian Military Intelligence (HUR) Major General Vadym Skibitsky tells us that "things are

as difficult as they have ever been since the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion. And they are about to get worse...our problem is very simple: we have no weapons. We always knew April and May would be a difficult time for us."

The aim of this quick assessment is to examine the Russian advances, particularly the Ocheretyne salient and the opportunities and risks it poses for the Russians in the short term.

The current grim situation on the front line will take some time to turn around. And things may get worse for the Ukrainians in the east before they get better. As Konrad Muzyka of Rochan Consulting wrote this week, "We have reached the point where the situation on the front is the worst since March 2022. The numerical advantage of the Russians is constantly growing, as is the number of attacks. Ukraine did not survive the darkest hour. It's just about to start."

It has been clear for some time that the shortages of manpower and firepower have combined to force the Ukrainian high command to choose between retaining territory and keeping their depleted Army functioning while they reconstitute over the coming months. I explored this military and political challenge in a post back in early April. It is the eastern Ukraine frontline that is causing the most concerns at the moment, at least for ground operations — and recent step-ups in Russian attacks on

Kharkiv are also a big concern. Two key sectors of this eastern front have seen Russian advances in the past month. While these might appear to be separate axes of advance, there is the possibility of the Russians using them as the southern and northern arms of a double envelopment of Ukrainian positions and forces in eastern Ukraine.

The full article first appeared on *Futura Doctrina*.

Ukraine tightens military procurement after corruption shakeup



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PERSPECTIVE

Ukraine's Defense Ministry has overhauled its procurement system and boosted cooperation with NATO eight months after corruption allegations led to a shakeup in its leadership, a top security official said. Last September, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov after accusations of graft in military procurement by subordinates on his watch prompted public outrage and criticism from wartime allies. Yuriy Dzhygyr, a deputy defense minister, said a new vetted procurement system has helped "liquidate corruption risks."



A handout photograph published on January 23, 2023, by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, shows NABU staff members next to the money that was seized tackling corruption.
● AFP

Russia's attack has "highlighted a number of specific corruption risks in the department," Dzhygyr said in a written response to Bloomberg News. Corruption remains a concern for Ukraine's wartime allies as they contribute weapons and funding to help stave off Russia's attack. Donors including the International Monetary Fund and the European Union have demand-

ed a raft of anti-graft measures as a central condition for assistance. Ukraine's agriculture minister last month became the country's first cabinet member to be detained as part of a crackdown tied to corruption allegations. Last year, Zelenskyy also fired all of the army's top draft officers following media reports of graft. The sweep has led to a "two-stage

mechanism" in procurement at the Defense Ministry, Dzhygyr said. The ministry sets procurement policies, controls, and checks quality, while two state companies oversee procurement in an effort to scale back potential risks, he said.

Cleaning up

The Kyiv-based ministry also bol-

stered its involvement in a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) program to help countries advance defense reforms and meet anti-corruption commitments, the deputy minister said.

Dzhygyr, who consulted on public finance reform in Ukraine and abroad before joining the ministry in September, said accounting firm KPMG will evaluate in-house auditing to improve risk management and compliance.

Ukraine ranked 104 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index in 2023, though it climbed up from 116th place the year before, putting it on par with Brazil and Serbia.

On the defense budget, Dzhygyr said the cost for Kyiv's mobilization drive aimed at bolstering its depleted military ranks will depend on monthly conscription levels — a factor of incoming aid — and rotation decisions. He put the cost for maintaining one soldier without weapons at 1.2 million hryvnia (\$30,000).

The ministry is also working with US counterparts as part of an effort to address concerns over how Ukrainian forces are storing and deploying Western ammunition, Dzhygyr said, citing six inspections at military facilities that looked into how certain types of weapons were stored.

"The process is on, it has become a routine now," Dzhygyr said. "The mechanism is working."

The article first appeared on *Bloomberg*.