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Topics:

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Ukraine – European Union

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Hungary's EU Presidency as a symbol of discrediting the European Community*



Photo: Getty Images

On 1 July, Hungary's presidency of the EU Council began, and it has already brought many unpleasant challenges to Ukraine. For example, on 2 July 2024, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán visited Kyiv. This was his first visit to Ukraine since 2015, but it did not bring positive news at all. The Hungarian prime minister met with Volodymyr Zelensky, and after the talks, they held a joint briefing. First of all, Orbán called on Ukraine to cease fire on the frontline and then start peace talks. He voiced his idea of peace: "I asked Mr President to think about the possibility of a pause in the fighting, a ceasefire and the continuation of negotiations. A ceasefire could accelerate the pace of these negotiations." Orbán also promised to prepare a report to EU ministers on his meeting with Zelensky. In response, Zelensky stressed that Ukraine needed a "just peace" and did not publicly respond to Orbán's offer. Many Ukrainians believe that any ceasefire will strengthen Russia's control over the occupied territories, so negotiations should be conducted from a position of strength.

Zelensky, for his part, noted that Ukraine was the first country Orbán visited after Hungary took over the EU presidency. He also said that the meeting was constructive. The President thanked Hungary for hosting Ukrainian refugees and providing humanitarian aid.

According to Zelensky, Hungary's participation in the summit in Switzerland and support for the communiqué demonstrate "Hungary's readiness to be effective in returning real and lasting security to our country and the entire region." Zelensky expressed his desire to hold the Second Peace Summit this year and hopes for Hungary's "leadership" in its preparation. He stressed the importance of Hungary's effective EU presidency and said he had discussed cooperation at the EU level with Orbán.

Orbán said his visit to Ukraine had been long planned, and they had agreed to meet during the EU summit in Brussels a few days ago. According to him, Ukraine and Hungary have many issues that need to be resolved. The prime minister noted that Budapest plans to sign a

cooperation agreement with Kyiv, similar to those with other neighbouring countries, and will help reform the Ukrainian economy. He also mentioned the issue of the Hungarian national minority, noting that he "sees good chances" for its resolution.

Orban promised to finance the opening of a Ukrainian school in Hungary. He stressed that the war in Ukraine "intensively affects the security of Europe" and highly appreciated V. Zelensky's initiatives to achieve peace. At the same time, Orban noted that these initiatives would take a long time due to the complexity of international diplomacy.

Of course, this moment fully demonstrates that this visit is by no means positive for Ukraine. Even more negative was the fact that on 5 July Orban visited Putin in Moscow. At the outset, Putin said that he and Orban would have the opportunity to discuss "all the nuances" of the situation in Ukraine, stressing that Orban had arrived in Moscow as the leader of the country that holds the EU Council presidency. The Kremlin said that Orban, who had recently returned from Kyiv, did not pass on any messages from Zelensky to Putin.

Orban's meeting with Putin provoked a sharp reaction from European leaders. European Council President Charles Michel said that Hungary had no authority to negotiate with Moscow on behalf of the EU over the war in Ukraine, stressing that the European Council's position was clear: "Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim. No discussion on Ukraine can take place without Ukraine".

Other European leaders also condemned Orban's trip to Moscow. Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo called it "disturbing news", while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that "appeasement will not stop Putin", stressing the importance of unity and determination to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.¹

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell stressed that Orban's visit to Moscow is taking place exclusively within the framework of bilateral relations between Hungary and Russia. He also recalled that the International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant for Putin for his role in the forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia. Zelenskyy noted that the Ukrainian side had not been informed of Orban's visit to Moscow.

The British newspaper The Guardian notes that Orban's trip to Moscow is likely to cause even more concern in Brussels and other member states, where many are already shocked that a leader who has done everything in recent years to undermine European unity and the rule of law is now the bloc's chief representative for the next six months.

This is not the first Hungarian problem for Ukraine. Back in January, Ukraine received a list of 11 demands from Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto that Ukraine must fulfil. Negotiations on this list have been going on for five months, but the Hungarian side insists on keeping its contents confidential. Some of them are known, and some of them, in the Hungarian interpretation, are absolutely unacceptable to Ukraine. They are guaranteed to be rejected by both the parliament and Ukrainian society. The implementation of this list was linked to Ukraine's movement towards the EU, which further cemented its status as an ultimatum.

In essence, Hungary is demanding that Ukraine reverse the legislative changes regarding minorities that it introduced after the Revolution of Dignity and return to the norms that were in place during the Yanukovich era. Hungarian officials, including Szijjártó, argue that Ukraine has allegedly curtailed minority rights, which is prohibited by both the Ukrainian Constitution and international norms.

Hungary's most problematic demands include: the introduction of political representation of the Hungarian minority in parliament; the abolition of the requirement for all elected officials to know the state language and speak it at council meetings; the automatic recognition of all settlements in Zakarpattia as "traditionally Hungarian", regardless of the actual number of Hungarians living there, and the abolition of the 10% minority share; and

¹ Орбан прилетів до Путіна після візиту до Зеленського. Чому в ЄС лютують.05.07.2024
<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c3gvwkwpdveo>

the use of Hungarian national symbols without any restrictions.

At the same time, Hungary is trying to implement its anti-Ukrainian plan at the international level, building a camp of Ukrainian opponents around it. Thus, Viktor Orbán's negotiations with the group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) began last autumn, when Orbán and ECR leader Georgia Maloney discussed the possibility of Orbán's Fidesz party joining this group. The reason was that after being expelled from the European People's Party in 2021, Fidesz was left out of European politics and had no influence on discussions and decision-making, which became increasingly unacceptable to Orbán. After a failed attempt to unite with Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party, Orbán began to assemble a new pan-European alliance called Patriots for Europe. This bloc became the third largest in the European Parliament with 87 members, surpassing Maloney's group, which lost several members to the Patriots.

The members of Orbán's newly formed group share a common feature: a sceptical attitude towards Ukraine. During the European Parliament's vote on Ukraine policy, the majority of the Patriots and Europe of Sovereign Nations opposed continued support for Kyiv. There are chances that the Europe of Sovereign Nations will join Orbán's group, which will further strengthen his position.

Although Orbán has only 11 out of 87 votes in his group, he remains the leader due to his status as prime minister. However, **Orbán's influence in EU structures remains limited.** The first decisions of the European Parliament showed that the Hungarian prime minister and his allies remain pariahs in the EU, and their views continue to be ignored. Many MEPs even called for Hungary's voting rights in the EU to be revoked.² Despite his efforts, Orbán remains isolated in European politics. His strategy of gaining influence through cooperation with more powerful players, including Donald Trump, has not yielded the expected results.

Orbán also used Hungary's rotating presidency of the EU Council to promote his "peace trips" to Ukraine, Russia and China, presenting them as a mission on behalf of the EU. This was strongly opposed by other member states and the EU leadership.

But the EU Council presidency has opened many doors for him, which he is now boldly using. At the same time, he violates European requirements, making the European leadership look completely powerless. Despite the fact that most European countries and officials oppose Hungarian policy, they have no mechanism to counter it. ***Therefore, developing one should be a priority, otherwise the EU may face further manipulation and weakening. Kyiv should also prepare for a period of diplomatic political tactics, one of which is a tough symmetrical response, such as Ukraine's sanctions to block Russian Lukoil oil transported to Hungary.***

² Ізоляція Орбана. Чому спроби угорського лідера отримати вплив у ЄС так і не дали йому переваг. 18.07.2024 <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/articles/2024/07/18/7190450/>

Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

- **THEME ANALYSIS:** *The Washington NATO summit proposed to build a "bridge" to which Ukraine is not allowed to enter*



Source: Getty Images

The 75th NATO Summit has ended in Washington. As expected, Ukraine did not receive an invitation to join the Alliance, but the final communiqué contains a promise to support the country on its *"irreversible path"* to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership. Instead of accepting Ukraine's application for membership, NATO countries pledged long-term security assistance to Ukraine, including pledges of €40 billion by 2025, which all members are expected to make. For example, Italy will contribute €1.5 billion and Portugal €220 million.

Other measures announced at the summit included the appointment of a NATO civilian representative in Kyiv and the creation of a new structure, NATO Security and Training Assistance for Ukraine, to coordinate the training and development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). Ukraine was promised critically needed air defence systems. For example, the Netherlands, the United States, Germany and Romania will provide Patriot systems, and Italy will provide SAMP-T systems. Norway will also allocate more than €90 million to Ukraine to strengthen its air defence, and Danish Prime Minister Matt Frederiksen said that her country would transfer all its air defence equipment to Ukraine. Norway has also previously promised to provide Ukraine with F-16 fighter jets, and during the summit announced the transfer of six aircraft, which are scheduled to be delivered at the end of this year. The Netherlands will allocate €300 million for the purchase of ammunition for F-16s and €20 million for the purchase of drones.

Canada announced a military aid package worth about €330 million, but its contents were not disclosed. U.S. President Joe Biden announced a \$225 million military aid package, which will include one Patriot battery, ammunition for NASAMS and HIMARS artillery missile

systems, Stinger man-portable anti-aircraft missiles, 155 mm and 105 mm AT-4 artillery shells, small arms ammunition, and more. In addition to air defence systems, Denmark will finance the purchase of 18 Bohdan self-propelled artillery systems for the Ukrainian Armed Forces, while Lithuania promised anti-drone guns and ammunition.

President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked for the new Patriot systems, but stressed that this *assistance was not enough*. He noted that Ukraine needs at least 128 F-16 fighter jets to compete effectively with Russia in the skies.

While Ukraine did not receive an invitation to join the Alliance, although the final communiqué pledges to support it on its "*irreversible path*" to Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership, the Alliance's main tasks, according to the final declaration, are deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.

The Ukraine Treaty, or "Ukraine Compact," signed at this summit, operates within the framework of bilateral agreements with the signatory countries. This is not a common concept for the entire union, and therefore, according to Valeriy Klochok, head of the Vezha Center for Public Analysis, its presentation as an achievement and a breakthrough for Ukraine can be seen as *manipulation*.³

But there are also positive aspects. For example, in paragraph 17 of the final declaration, NATO countries emphasise that they will never recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, and also refer to the situations in Moldova and Georgia. This may mean that NATO is allowing for the possibility of negotiations with Russia, while maintaining its position on Ukraine's borders.

NATO has committed to providing long-term security assistance to Ukraine. However, the **Ukrainian Treaty does not commit any country to directly contribute to the defence of Ukrainian lands and the liberation of territories. Countries promise assistance, but the scope and specific conditions are not defined.**

The Alliance has, however, declared its readiness to repel Russian attacks on NATO countries and emphasises its commitment to acting on all sides to manage risks and deter escalation. This means that NATO is trying to reduce the escalation of the conflict, but does not envisage radical changes in its policy towards Russia.

Therefore, **Ukraine should consider changing the structure of its dialogue with European countries and creating a new military and political bloc to ensure security against Russian and Chinese aggression, as NATO's official position is aimed at reducing escalation, not at taking radical actions to change the situation with Russia.**

After the NATO summit in Washington, D.C., ended and most of the allied leaders had left the city, US President Joe Biden held a press conference. He tried to prove to American voters his ability to remain the leader of the free world and lead the country for another four years, as the summit was of pre-election importance to him. However, during the press conference, Biden faced difficulties: he had physical difficulties speaking, sometimes got confused and accidentally called Vice President Kamala Harris Trump and Vladimir Zelensky Putin. These mistakes only increased doubts about his readiness to continue in office.

In fact, the Washington (2024) NATO summit showed the precarious position of the organisation, which is completely dependent on the internal political processes in the United States. **Therefore, its main issue was not the construction of a multi-echelon defence in case of war with Russia, but the future of the Alliance in case Donald Trump comes to power in the United States.** This issue has been discussed at various levels, from the current president, Joe Biden, to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and European leaders. Biden has publicly stated that his defeat and Trump's victory would mean disaster for NATO and the world. He recalled how Trump had threatened to withdraw the US from NATO during his presidency and suggested that Trump could weaken the Alliance and force Ukraine to

³ «Закладають підґрунтя для переговорів». Що приховують підсумкові документи саміту НАТО і які небезпеки для України — інтерв'ю з Клочком.12.07.2024. <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/samit-nato-yaki-ye-nyuansi-pidsumkovogo-komyunike-klochok-novini-ukrajini-50434390.html>

cede territory to Russia.

In the United States, there is almost a consensus among Democrats and members of the Biden team that Trump's return would be a disaster for the country, the world, and NATO. This view is shared not only by Democrats, but also by some Republicans who are concerned about the possible consequences of Trump's policies. There is also concern in Europe about a possible Trump victory. Key European capitals have already begun preparing for a change of power in the US, considering it highly likely. At the same time, European leaders are refraining from commenting publicly to avoid accusations of interference in the US election. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg tried to allay fears of a US withdrawal from the Alliance. He gave three main reasons for his confidence: Leaving NATO would harm the US and Trump's administration. Congress will not allow Trump to do so. The Alliance has changed so much that Trump himself may not want to leave.

However, while the US is still the centre of NATO, this does not mean that its position guarantees consensus among members. There are NATO countries, such as Hungary, whose leaders are not only not afraid of, but dream of, a Trump election victory. This creates additional challenges for the unity and stability of the Alliance. Hungary's policy under the leadership of Viktor Orban remains complex and controversial, especially with regard to relations with Ukraine and NATO. Since 2017, Hungary has regularly blocked NATO decisions related to Ukraine.

During the last NATO summit in Washington, D.C., the Alliance leaders adopted a new formula for relations with Ukraine, declaring Ukraine's **"irreversible"** progress towards membership. Orban did not object to this decision behind closed doors. However, he publicly stated that "Ukraine should not join NATO", calling it an escalation. One of the popular assumptions is that Orban is waiting for Donald Trump to win the US presidential election, hoping for a change in policy towards Ukraine. This suggests that **NATO's priority is not Ukraine's victory, but rather the containment of Russia through Ukraine**. The summit was aimed more at the internal situation in the United States than at strengthening and integrating Ukraine.

The peculiarity of the Washington (2004) NATO Summit was ***that Ukraine's security agreements became a substitute for NATO membership***. They orientate Ukraine towards individual defence without a guarantee of collective defence. The Washington NATO Summit (2024), instead of the slogan "the door to NATO is open for Ukraine", proposed the formula of a "bridge". The essence of the "bridge" is that it is Ukraine that must deter Russia's aggressive intentions, as the NATO "deterrence" strategy has lost its effectiveness, forcing NATO to switch to the "ostrich" strategy, which aims to avoid war with Russia at all costs, and therefore does not imply victory over it.

Instead of NATO, Russia must be defeated by Ukraine, and only then can NATO consider Ukraine's application for membership in the Alliance. To do this, NATO must strengthen Ukraine's combat capabilities and make it capable of withstanding Russian aggression. The **"bridge"** in this sense would be a unilateral movement of logistical support to provide Ukraine with a limited amount of weapons and financial assistance to the extent that the Alliance decides to provide it. Thus, **NATO's limited support for Ukraine is intended to ensure a limited and fragile peace and precarious security for Ukraine, where the bridge to NATO membership will be closed to it.** This is supposed to build a one-way bridge between NATO and Ukraine, which in a critical situation of Russian advance could be undermined to avoid a clash with Russia.



Source: Army FM

■ Changes at the front

Trend: *The limited supply of Western weapons to Ukraine contributes to the further advance of Russian troops on the strategic directions of the Eastern Front.*

The *Pokrovske and Kramatorsk directions* have become the most threatening, where Russian troops have achieved the greatest success in their offensive. Russians remain most active in the Pokrovsk direction, where up to 30 combat engagements of varying intensity take place every day. Heavy fighting is taking place in the area of Novooleksandrivka, Novoselivka Persha, Vozdvyzhenka and Progress. Over the past two days, the Russian proxies managed to quickly turn the tide of the battle for Progress. On 20 July, due to the lack of sufficient infantry, Ukrainian forces had to withdraw. Now the village is captured by the enemy. This forces the other brigade, which is stationed along the railway, to turn its positions to the flank. In addition, there is a risk of encirclement.

In the Pokrovsk direction, the enemy's further advance has two goals at once. "The first is to approach or cut the Pokrovsk-Kostiantynivka road. In addition, there is an altitude of 229.0 west of Vozdvyzhenka. The second is to move along the ridge along which the railway runs with further access to the altitude of 224.8 and Novohrodivka," Deep State noted. It is also reported that Russians have advanced in Krasnohorivka, Pishchane, near Lozuvatske, Novooleksandrivka, Progress and Andriivka. Russians have advanced near Karlivka.

Russians continued to be active in the *Toretsk direction*. In general, the Russian Federation conducted systematic attacks on the positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the areas of Northern and New York. He carried out air strikes with drones. The occupiers also bombed Pivnichne, Diliyivka, New York and Toretsk and made advances in Zalizne.

In the Kramatorsk direction, our defenders continue to repel enemy attacks in the areas of Klishchivivka and Kalynivka and stopped the enemy's attempts to break through our

defences. Russia-backed militants made their main efforts in the area of Chasovyi Yar.

In the Kharkiv direction, numerous Russian attacks near Hlyboke were repelled, and a battle is currently underway near Vovchansk.

In the Kupyansk direction, the enemy unsuccessfully tried to advance towards Ukrainian positions near Hlushkivka and Petropavlivka. Enemy attacks continue near Stelmakhivka, Makiivka and Pishchane.

In the Liman direction, the enemy continues fighting near Nevske, Makiivka and in the direction of Lozova.

In the Siversky direction, the enemy tried to break through our defences in the areas of Vyymka, Spirne, Pereyizne and Verkhnekamianske. The situation is under control.

■ *Military assistance*

USA. During a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in France, Biden announced a new military aid package for Ukraine. It is about \$225 million worth of weapons. It includes:

- missiles for the HAWK air defence system;
- anti-aircraft missiles Stinger;
- ammunition for HIMARS rocket artillery systems;
- 155-mm howitzers;
- 155 mm and 105 mm artillery shells;
- 81-mm mortar systems;
- M113 armoured personnel carriers;
- trailers for transporting heavy equipment;
- coastal and river patrol boats;
- anti-tank missiles (TOW);
- Javelin and AT-4 anti-tank systems;
- ammunition for small arms and grenades;
- explosive munitions;
- night vision devices;
- spare parts and other auxiliary equipment.

Poland. The 45th package, which includes a large amount of ammunition for Ukraine, is currently being implemented. The Polish government has made a decision that will speed up the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

Spain will send Ukraine an additional battery of Hawk air defence systems. A new aid package from Spain will include an additional battery of the MIM-23 Hawk air defence system. The delivery is scheduled for September. It has already begun transferring 10 Leopard 2A4 battle tanks, excavators and many anti-tank missiles to Ukraine.

The Netherlands and Denmark will deliver 14 German Leopard 2A4 tanks to Ukraine by the end of the summer. They have previously undergone a major overhaul.

The Czech Republic is launching another project to purchase ammunition. The Czech government is preparing to launch a new initiative to procure

Germany has handed over another batch of Patriot missile and air defence systems to Ukraine.

Greece plans to upgrade 82 F-16 fighter jets to Block-70 and transfer 30 of them to Ukraine. In return, it plans to buy 24 fourth-generation Rafale fighter jets from France.

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *Terror as a strategic information and psychological weapon against humanity and humanism*

The morning of 8 July for Ukraine began with a new wave of terror from the Russian Federation. While Russian channels were congratulating Ukraine on Family Day and proclaiming family values as the foundation of their society, the Russian army cynically attacked the civilian population of Ukraine, demonstrating its hypocrisy. Russian media and telegram channels tried to justify these actions by repeating the usual narratives. Immediately after the strike on civilian targets, the Russians claimed to have "achieved their objectives", claiming to have hit "Ukrainian military industry facilities and Ukrainian army air bases". They accused Ukraine of lying, denying that the strike had targeted civilian infrastructure.⁴

In fact, numerous pieces of evidence from both Ukraine and the international media indicate that civilian objects were targeted. According to international humanitarian law, even when shelling military objectives, methods that minimise civilian casualties must be used. The use of inaccurate weapons that endanger civilians is prohibited. Kremlin telegram channels regularly justify shelling by claiming that the target was "Ukrainian Armed Forces depots", but do not provide any evidence. To lend legitimacy to their claims, they have invented the idea that a meeting of "important people" was taking place near the Okhmatdyt hospital, which they destroyed with a missile strike.

Russia has been using the tactic of justifying its actions since the First Chechen War (1994-1996). In 1995, the then-head of the Russian Air Force stated that the strikes were carried out "only on military targets" and not on civilian buildings in Grozny. This narrative was repeated after the bombing of civilian targets in Georgia in 2008, as well as during the aggression against Ukraine since 2014.

Another element of Russia's propaganda methodology is to shift the blame for the shelling to Ukrainian air defence. Along with photos of the destroyed Okhmatdyt medical facility, Russian propagandists spread the thesis that "Ukrainian militants are deliberately shelling the civilian population of Ukraine to blame the Russians". In particular, it is claimed that the hospital was hit by an AIM-120 air defence missile from the NASAMS system used by the Ukrainian side. However, the videos distributed by the Russians themselves clearly show the missile hitting the hospital. According to the SBU, Okhmatdyt was hit by an X-101 strategic cruise missile. At the site of the hit, fragments of the rear hull of the X-101 with a serial number and part of the rudder of the same missile were found.

The strike by the X-101 missile was also confirmed by independent international investigators Bellingcat and Fabian Hoffman, a missile technology specialist at the University of Oslo. Bellingcat experts checked the Russian version of the AIM-120

⁴ Від «ураження українською ППО» до «постановки»: як змінювалася риторика росіян навколо обстрілу «Охматдиту». 12.07.2024. <https://voxukraine.org/vid-urazhennya-ukrayinskoju-ppo-do-postanovky-yak-zminyuvalasya-rytoryka-rosiyan-navkolo-obstrilu-ohmatdytu>

missile, but found no evidence.

"The defence forces did not deliberately shoot down Russian missiles" is another Russian lie. On 8 July, the Russian army of terror launched a combined missile attack on Ukraine using air-, sea- and land-based missiles. A representative of the Ukrainian Air Force, Yuriy Ihnat, explained that during the attack on 8 July, cruise missiles were flying at extremely low altitudes. This makes it difficult to detect and destroy Russian missiles, and increases the potential damage if they are shot down. In addition, the missiles are equipped with additional features, including radar and heat traps.

"The strikes on Ukraine were a planned decision before the NATO summit," was the nonsense the Russians came up with. For several hours after the shelling, Russian channels continued to lie outright and come up with more and more excuses for their war crime. For example, several of the telegram channels accused Ukraine of "staging" the attack. They claimed that the shelling of Okhmatdyt was a "staged Ukrainian provocation" to "warm up" the NATO summit, get more money from partners and "increase the degree of hatred in the masses".

In addition, the propagandists called Ukraine's statements about the shelling "media screams" because no children were allegedly injured. According to the latest data, 33 people, including 5 children, were killed in the shelling in Kyiv on 8 July, and 121 people were injured, including 10 wounded children. In Kryvyi Rih, 10 civilians were killed and 47 others were injured. In Dnipro, one person was killed and 12 injured. Ukraine's accusations of "staging" are not new. This thesis was actively promoted by the Russians after the war crimes in Bucha, when the whole world saw the same "face" of Russia. At that time, Kremlin channels published nonsensical reports about the "staging", the "evidence" of which was reduced to loud statements "it was all Ukrainians" without any real evidence.

Continuing to justify the crime, the propagandists claimed that instead of children, members of the Defence Forces were treated at the Okhmatdyt hospital. As "proof", they cite a video of the military and employees of various services helping to deal with the consequences of an enemy attack in a building opposite the hospital. In fact, there have been no reports of any injured or killed soldiers as a result of the attack in Kyiv. Instead, there are numerous photos and videos of wounded civilians, including medical staff and children, who were in room 627 at the time of the attack. As a result of the attack on Okhmatdyt, 8 children were injured. One boy died on 10 July; he was in intensive care at the time of the attack, and was later transferred to another hospital in Kyiv.

Although some telegram channels did admit that there were children in the hospital. However, they immediately accused Okhmatdyt of allegedly "not even trying to get the children into the bomb shelter". The air raid alert was sounded in Kyiv at 9:52 a.m., and the first reports of explosions began to appear at 10:27 a.m. Immediately after the alarm, the hospital stopped working and began evacuating patients to the shelter. Okhmatdyt's director, Volodymyr Zhovnir, explained that this was a rather difficult process, especially for children in intensive care. At the time of the attack, three complex surgeries were underway. According to the head of one of the departments, Valeriy Bovkun, the operation started before the air raid and could not be interrupted. The child was not injured, as the surgeons who performed the operation covered her with their bodies.

First and foremost, the Russians are trying to shift the responsibility for their crimes onto the victim - Ukraine - and divert attention from the real facts. The tactics used to justify the 8 July shelling are similar to those used to justify previous attacks. Propagandists use contradictory versions to confuse the audience. This allows them not only to justify the crime, but also to blur reality so that the truth is lost in the large flow of information. The voice of propaganda is heard not only on Russian channels but also

on Western social media. For example, Kremlin supporters in the West, such as Jackson Hinkle, promote Russian fakes about "Ukrainian air defence hitting a hospital".

Russia's 8 July missile attack is part of a strategy of intimidation and demoralisation. Russia is trying to demonstrate to Ukraine what awaits it if it refuses to negotiate on Russia's terms. Such attacks are aimed at imposing Russian rules on the world and forcing Ukraine to the negotiating table. It is noted that some Ukrainian bloggers have already called for negotiations, even at the expense of Ukrainian territories. **Russia continues to stick to its main tactic - terror. There are no borders for it and it is ready to do anything to exterminate its opponent.** It wants to kill Ukrainians morally by cannibalistic actions, so that they put down their weapons and surrender.

The crime in Okhmadyt shows that peace in Europe is impossible without Ukraine's victory. To achieve peace, it is necessary to continue military support, strengthen sanctions and hold Russia accountable for war crimes. In the West, we should fight disinformation, block pro-Russian media and strengthen the moderation of fake content on social media. **The world needs to know the truth: Russia is a terrorist state. If crimes go unpunished, they will be repeated again and again.**