



In Ukraine, “There’s Something Happening There”

Description

The sixties band, Buffalo Springfield, had a hit song that I think captures the dramatic developments in Ukraine and Russia over the last 36 hours — [“There’s Something Happening Here:”](#)

The collapse of Ukrainian resistance in Soledar was confirmed even by some of the staunchest supporters of Ukraine, which means that Bakhmut is expected to fall under Russian control in the next few days. Russian forces are moving from the South, the North and the East and are creating a potential cauldron that will leave Ukrainian soldiers in Bakhmut surrounded.

Remember my last article? I credited CNN with getting something right. Well, you can relax, CNN is back to pushing propaganda and failing to understand what is going on:

Russia’s Defense Ministry announced yet another realignment of the commanders leading the war in Ukraine on Wednesday, as criticism mounts over its handling of the stalled campaign.

It said that General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, would become the overall commander of the campaign, with the current commander, Sergey Surovikin, becoming one of his three deputies. . . .

Mark Galeotti, senior associate fellow with the Royal United Services Institute, said “it is a kind of demotion [for Gerasimov] or at least the most poisoned of chalices. It’s now on him, and I suspect Putin has unrealistic expectations again.”

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/11/europe/russia-valery-gerasimov-ukraine-commander-intl>

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Yes, Chief of General Staff General of the Army Valery Gerasimov was named the commander of the Joint Group of Forces and Sergei Surovikin named Commander-in-Chief of Aerospace Forces General of the Army. This was not a command shake up because of unhappiness with Surovikin’s performance over the last three months. Just the opposite — I believe it signals that

Russia is setting the table for a major escalation in its operations to eliminate the Ukrainian military threat.

Letting Surovikin focus on the “Aerospace Forces” means that Russian air and space operations are likely to kick into overdrive. Until now, the Russian Air Force has played a minimal role in the battles during the last 11 months. Putting Gerasimov in charge of the Joint Group of Forces is a clear signal that the command task going forward is going to be more complex and comprehensive. Cue Bachman Turner Overdrive, You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet:

Let me give you a couple more relevant pieces of intel. Let us start with a large movement by the Russian Navy in the Black Sea:

This morning Russian Navy ships and submarines left their base at Novorossiysk, in the Black Sea, en-masse. This is highly unusual and may indicate ongoing operations.

Sources seen by Naval News confirm the exodus. The group included the Project 11711 Ivan Gren class landing ship, Pyotr Morgunov, the largest amphibious ship in the Black Sea.

It also contained all three Project 636.3 Improved-Kilo class submarines which were present at the base. Analysis suggests that other warships were also sailing, leaving only a few warships and support vessels in the port. It is likely the most empty that Novorossiysk has been in many months.

<https://archive.ph/2023.01.11-191333/https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/01/sudden-surge-in-russian-navy-ships-and-submarines-in-black-sea/#selection-703.0-715.293>

At the same time, Russia is continuing to build up its military forces in Belarus:

[Personnel, weapons, military and special equipment of the Russian armed forces will continue to arrive in Belarus.](#)

Over the weekend, the Belarussian Ministry of Defense announced that a significant tactical flight exercise between Belarussian and [Russian forces](#) would take place from late January to early February. The [Russian military](#) has deployed more than a dozen helicopters in Belarus, including Mi-8 transport and Mi-24 and Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopters. According to the British Military Intelligence, some of the helicopters sport the “Z” war marking that Russian forces are using on the ground in Ukraine.

“The new deployment of Russian aircraft to Belarus is likely a genuine exercise, rather than a preparation for any additional offensive operations against Ukraine,” the British Military Intelligence [assessed](#) in its latest estimate of the war.

<https://www.19fortyfive.com/2023/01/ukraine-war-update-russia-masses-forces-in-belarus-leopard-tanks-to-ukraine/>

One more thing –Where are the Chechens? If you followed the battle of Mariupol in May the social

media channels were filled with video of the bearded Russian muslims shouting Allahu Akbar as they crushed the Ukrainian Azov battalion. Now, nothing. They are out there somewhere in substantial numbers but have not yet been operationally deployed in force. Are they gearing up for a new offensive?

Put yourself in the shoes of the Ukrainian General Staff. On the eastern front your soldiers are being slaughtered and losing critical territory to Russia. The Bakhmut/Soledar line of defense has been breached. You need to reinforce the Kramatorsk/Slovvyanksa line but there are limited numbers of trained troops.

At the same time, you have to wonder if the Russians are going to launch an amphibious/aerial assault on Odessa. Do you have enough forces or available reinforcements to fortify and defend Odessa. Then there is the build up in Belarus. Belarus and Russia have assembled enough ground and air forces to pose a credible threat to Kiev.

Where will Russia strike? That is why Gerasimov has assumed overall command of these Joint Forces. He could use feints by forces in the North and South to pin down Ukrainian troops and launch a major attack from the East. Or he could order full attacks from the North, South and East. He has other options as well.

The West and Ukraine claim that Russia cannot mount a credible offensive operation until Spring. I don't know if the West is putting that message out as part of a propaganda campaign to convince Russia that Ukraine is not prepared for a Winter offensive or if they genuinely believe that. The only thing I know for certain is that Russia, like a World Champion Poker Player, is hiding its cards and only showing Ukraine what it wants them to see. Is Russia going to go all in or will it continue grinding?

By Larry Johnson

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
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Date Created

01/13/2023