



Overcoming the transparent battlefield – Ukrainian operations in Kursk



FIRST INCURSION ON RUSSIAN TERRITORY SINCE WWII

Ukraine's attack into Kursk meant to achieve...

- Boost Ukrainian morale in light of the 2023 counteroffensive
- Challenge Russian logistics by disrupting road and rail networks
- Draw Russian forces away from other areas of Ukraine
- Increase ability to strike Russian Airbases with drones and long-range fires
- Strengthen Ukraine's negotiating position (land and prisoner swaps)

Ukraine achieved operational surprise by...

- Compartmented planning and preparation
- Penetration point selected because of lack of defenses and obstacles
- Selected an area manned by conscripts
- Reinforced Russian belief Belgorod was the target
- Developed an ad hoc force structure that complicated Russian analysis

Ukrainian forces isolated the battlespace by...

- Massing from disparate training areas on carefully selected terrain
- Operations capitalized weather and terrain for concealment
- Counterreconnaissance paired with bounding electronic warfare
- Drone blitzkrieg filled some roles assigned to attack aviation
- Brought air defense (including drones in anti-drone and air defense) forward quickly to protect formations.
- Conducted counter-mobility to deny Russian counterattacks



Ukrainian M2 Omega UAS targets Russian spotter drone



What next from Russia...

- Continued prioritization of operations in the Donbas
- Adjustments to response command and control (FSB led counterterrorism operation)
- Potential for increased nuclear messaging and exercises
- Possible mobilization
- Continued fratricide by attack aviation and UAS will challenge Russian air-ground coordination

Ukraine's attack into Kursk was demonstrably more successful than the 2023 counteroffensive. Success built on successful combined arms integration (at a smaller scale), and operational surprise built into the plan from its onset. Russia's response highlights continued challenges integrating ground forces, air forces, and interagency organizations.