



(U//FOUO) The below information is current as of 1200 ET/1700Z.

(U) RUSSIA/UKRAINE

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY/FISA)

UAF in Bakhmut Almost Encircled; HUR Plans to Send in Elite Unit to Stabilize Catastrophic Situation

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY/FISA) Ukrainian forces as of 25 February were almost operationally encircled by Russian forces in Bakhmut, Ukraine and Ukrainian Main intelligence Directorate (HUR) Chairman Kyrylo Budanov on 28 February ordered that an elite HUR combat unit be deployed there for 2 weeks to stabilize what he considered a "catastrophic" situation. Ukrainian Presidential Office Deputy Roman Mashovets on 25 February provided Ukrainian Presidential Office Chief of Staff Andriy Yermak with an update, which assessed that the situation in Bakhmut was rather difficult. According to Mashovets, there was only one UAF supply road to Bakhmut, which was subject to shelling, as well as a couple of foot crossings to the left bank of an unspecified river in Bakhmut. He asserted that the contested area had a "204.8 elevation" and that, if the Russian forces gained full control of it, then they would have almost the entire section west of Bakhmut and a direct line of sight to the UAF supply road. Also, if Russian forces were to take control of an unspecified filtration station, then the supply road would again be under a direct line of fire. Mashovets reported that, for those reasons, the morale in Bakhmut was low, with the Ukrainian forces under the impression that they were almost operationally encircled. Budanov on 28 February explained to UAF Ground Forces Commander Lt. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyy, HUR First Deputy Chief Maj. Gen. Oleh Ivashchenko, and a HUR officer identified only as Vova that HUR would bring in units to Bakhmut for a brief time to stabilize the situation. Budanov later relayed to Vova that the situation in Bakhmut was "catastrophic" and Syrskyy declared a need for HUR's Kraken unit to prevent the UAF from losing Bakhmut. Also that day, Syrskyy asserted to Budanov that Ukrainian forces desperately needed to reach Yahidne, Ukraine because an unspecified road was the UAF's "last breathing tube." (COMMENT: This is possibly the supply road that Mashovets referenced.) Budanov ordered Vova to send one of "Shaman's" units to Bakhmut for no more than 2 weeks, instructing him to bring in only the unit's combat element and not its command post. (COMMENT: "Shaman" likely refers to the call sign for HUR officer Ihor Polonskyy. It is unclear if "Shaman's" unit and the Kraken unit are the same.) Vova criticized UAF leadership for insisting on sending a "combat element" to the front lines in Bakhmut without proper command and control, noting that the UAF needed clear control on the ground and that the Kraken unit has demonstrated that it has enough power and resources to establish it.

(U) 3/00/122312-23

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY/FISA)

Ukraine Learns of Alleged Russian Plot to "Throw" So-Called Special Military Operation By 5 March

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY/FISA) Ukrainian Presidential Office Chief of Staff Andriy Yermak on 17 February learned of an alleged Russian plot to "throw" the so-called "special military operation," presumably in an attempt to sabotage Russian President Vladimir Putin. According to Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) member Yelyzaveta Bohutska, who received the information from an unidentified Russian source with access to Kremlin officials, Russia planned to divert resources from Taganrog, Russia to Mariupol, Ukraine and focus its attention on the southern front. According to Bohutska's source, the plan for "the offensive" (no further information) was suspected to be a strategy devised by Russian National Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev and Russian Chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov to sabotage the Russian President Putin. According to Bohutska's source, Gerasimov opposed the offensive. He informed Putin that the Ukrainian Armed

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