

Ukraine Launching Preparatory Strikes Ahead of Counteroffensive – CNN

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Military Media Center / Ukrainian Ministry of Defense

Ukrainian forces have launched preparatory strikes on Russian military targets ahead of their highly anticipated counteroffensive, CNN [reported](#) Friday, citing a senior unnamed U.S. military official.

“Shaping” operations prepare the battlefield for advancing forces by attacking weapons depots, command centers and armor and artillery systems. CNN describes these operations as a standard tactic employed ahead of major combined operations.

The strikes could continue for “many days before the bulk of any planned Ukrainian offensive,” CNN cited the U.S. official as saying.

Shaping operations “can also be designed to confuse the enemy,” according to the broadcaster.

The tactic resembles those used in Ukraine’s previous successful recapture of southern and

northeastern territories from occupying Russian forces last year.

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Before reclaiming the southern city of Kherson in November, Ukrainian forces performed shaping operations by launching HIMARS rocket systems on bridges, ammunition stores and command centers.

Kyiv has spent months readying an effort to claw back ground in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the south.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday an immediate counteroffensive would prove costly without the arrival of additional Western equipment.

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, accused Zelensky of being "dishonest" and claimed that Ukraine's counteroffensive "is in full swing."

On Friday, Prigozhin's press service [published](#) a statement inviting Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to Bakhmut, the flashpoint of fierce battles for months, to assess the "difficult operational situation" on the battlefield in person.

Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar [said](#) Friday that Ukrainian forces had not lost any positions in Bakhmut and have instead advanced 2 kilometers toward the embattled city this week.

It was not immediately possible to verify her claims.

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