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1. TOP STORIES

Situation in antiterrorist operation zone remains difficult

Pro-Russian militants continue to open fire in all sectors.

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Crimea still not getting electricity from Ukraine

Ukrenerho completes repairs at one of four damaged power lines to peninsula.

Read more in CRIMEAN ISSUE

Naftohaz stops buying Russian gas

Ukraine no longer buys Russian gas after prices on the European market drop.

Read more in ENERGY

2. ARMED CONFLICT IN EAST UKRAINE

Pro-Russian militants continue to open fire in all sectors

The situation in the antiterrorist operation area (ATO) in Donbas remains difficult, with pro-Russian militants continuing to open fire in all sectors, the ATO press centre has said.

General Staff chief **Viktor Muzhenko** has issued an instruction banning Ukrainian servicemen from returning fire in response to separatists' provocations as of 25 November 2015. The decision was taken «with a view to confirming Ukraine's unconditional aspiration to settle the Donbas situation peacefully».

There has been a cease-fire in Donbas since the beginning of the autumn. In early October shooting nearly stopped. However, starting from 18 October, when the sides had to start the pull-out of weapons in Donetsk Region, the militants of the self-proclaimed Donetsk people's republic have been targeting Ukrainian servicemen almost every day. The situation has deteriorated significantly over the past several weeks.

Militants hit civilian car approaching roadblock

The militants of the self-proclaimed Donetsk people's republic have shot at a civilian car on the Mariupol-Donetsk motorway when it approached a separatist roadblock. A civilian was wounded, the National Police of Ukraine said on 29 November 2015.

Another civilian was wounded when the militants shelled Maryinka, Donetsk Region on 25 November.

Yet another Russian «humanitarian convoy» enters Donbas

A column of lorries of the Russian Emergencies Ministry carrying so-called

«humanitarian cargo» for the rebel-held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions crossed the Ukrainian-Russian border on 26 November 2015.

It is the 45th «humanitarian convoy» sent by Russia to Donbas. Russia has been sending columns with what it describes as humanitarian aid since August 2014. All of them crossed Ukraine's border illegally.

Ukrainian intelligence identifies Russian officers in charge of fighting in Donbas

The main intelligence department of the Ukrainian Defence ministry has identified the following officers as being in charge of warfare in Donbas on behalf of separatists: the deputy head of the Russian Armed Forces' General Staff, Col-Gen **Sergey Istrakov**, and the head of the Russian Armed Forces' Centre for Territorial Troops of the Southern Military Command, Lt-Gen **Mikhail Teplinskiy**.

According to the Ukrainian Interior Ministry, there are 10,000 Russian servicemen in Donbas and 60,000 more are deployed along the border with Ukraine.

Border guards detain two Russian servicemen in Luhansk Region

On 26 November 2015, Ukrainian border guards apprehended two servicemen of the Russian Internal Troops for trespassing the border in Luhansk Region, the State Border Service has said.

The next day the Russian Interior Ministry said that the servicemen «who got lost» were handed over to Russia.

3. CRIMEAN ISSUE

Pro-Ukrainian activists continue to block power supply to Crimea

On 29 November 2015, the teams of the Ukrainian energy company Ukrenerho completed the repairs at one of the four damaged power lines, Kakhovska-Tytan, running to Crimea. However, as agreed with pro-Ukrainian activists who have been blocking the delivery of goods and electricity to Crimea, the power line will not be put back to work, the company has said.

The blockade of other three damaged lines continues.

Crimea was disconnected from Ukraine's energy system after an explosion knocked over some of the power pylons in Kherson Region. At first, the activists blocked the repair teams from accessing the damaged pylons. Later they said that one of the power lines should be repaired to cater to the needs of the peninsula's social sector.

The participants in the blockade of Crimea, many of whom are Crimean Tatars, are demanding that Russia release Ukrainian political prisoners, stop political persecution of Ukrainians in Crimea, do not impede the work of Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and foreign mass media in Crimea, and allow Crimean Tatar leaders **Mustafa Dzhemilyev** and **Refat Chubarov** to visit the peninsula.

Russia planning to supply electricity to Crimea

Sergey Aksenov, the self-proclaimed leader of Crimea, does not expect the situation with energy supply to Crimea to change until the end of December when the first line of a power bridge across the Kerch Strait is planned to be laid.

Experts said that Russia would not be able to lay a power line along the bed of the Kerch Strait in the coming months.

At the moment, the peninsula feeds from local energy sources and diesel generators brought from Russia but they are insufficient.

Top prosecutor's office opens case on power supply to «Crimean federal district»

The Prosecutor-General's Office of Ukraine has opened a criminal case over the signing of the contract to supply electricity to Russia-annexed Crimea by the Ukrainian state-owned company Ukrinterenerho and the Russian Inter RAO, Prime Minister **Arseniy Yatsenyuk** has said.

Earlier he ordered an office investigation into the signing of this contract, which revealed that the document contains a clause on the supply of electricity not to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea but to the «Crimean federal district».

Russian FSB summons Dzhemilyev's wife for interrogation

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) has summoned **Safinar Dzhemilyeva**, the wife of the former head of the Crimean Tatar self-styled government Majlis, **Mustafa Dzhemilyev**, for an interrogation.

She said that the case was opened against **Mustafa Dzhemilyev** for allegedly assisting a terror act, that is for knocking over the power lines in Kherson Region by an explosion, and she was expected to testify in the case.

The interrogation was due to be held in Simferopol on 25 November however Safinar refused to testify against the relative.

Russian border guards briefly detain Ukrainian activist in Crimea

Veldar Shukurdzhiyev, an activist of the Ukrainian Culture Centre of Crimea, was detained by the Russian Border Service and the FSB on 24 November 2015 when he was entering the peninsula. They did not explain the reasons for the detention. After an inspection which lasted for seven hours, he was allowed to enter Crimea.

On 29 November, Shukurdzhiyev said that some unidentified individuals attempted to enter his apartment in Simferopol.

Shukurdzhiyev was earlier detained at a tribute to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko in Simferopol. Later a Crimean court punished him and several other activists for using Ukrainian insignia, such as yellow-and-blue flags and ribbons, during the tribute.

Self-proclaimed Crimean leader bans Ukrainian mass media on peninsula

The self-proclaimed leader of Crimea, **Sergey Aksenov**, has demanded that the local information ministry disconnect all Ukrainian mass media from the peninsula's broadcasting networks.

4. INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL**UKRAINE-USA****Obama authorizes 300m dollars in military aid for Ukraine**

On 25 November 2015, US President **Barack Obama** signed a defence bill into law authorizing 300m dollars in military aid for Ukraine to be allocated in the course of the 2016 financial year. Out of this amount, 50m dollars can be spent on providing Kiev with defensive weapons.

There is a separate clause on the provision of lethal aid to Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons, mortars, large-calibre weapons and ammunition, grenade launchers and grenades, and light firearms.

UKRAINE-RUSSIA**Russia launches criminal case against Ukrainian pilot's sister**

Russian law-enforcement agencies have initiated a criminal case against **Vira Savchenko**, the sister of jailed Ukrainian pilot **Nadiya Savchenko**, under the «contempt of court» article, lawyer **Ilya Novikov** has reported.

Russian court upholds verdict against Ukrainian activists

The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on 24 November upheld the judgments passed on Ukrainian filmmaker **Oleh Sentsov** and activist **Oleksandr Kolchenko**, who were sentenced to 20 and 10 years in prison, respectively, on the charges of plotting terrorist attacks in Crimea. Thus, the sentences came into force.

For their part, Sentsov and Kolchenko deny all the charges. The defence of the Ukrainian citizens will appeal against the verdict in the European Court of Human Rights.

Russia ignores request for extradition of Ukrainian ex-premier

An assistant to the Ukrainian prosecutor-general, **Vladyslav Kutsenko**, has said that the Russian Prosecutor-General's Office has not yet responded to the request for the extradition to Ukraine of former Prime Minister **Mykola Azarov**.

It should be recalled that in January 2015 Interpol put Azarov on the international wanted list. Also, a number of criminal proceedings were opened against the former prime minister.

In February 2015, Ukraine's Prosecutor-General's Office requested the Russian counterpart to detain and take into custody the former prime minister with the purpose of his subsequent extradition.

UKRAINE-BELARUS**Ukraine to impose prohibitive tariff on Belarusian goods**

The Ukrainian interdepartmental commission for international trade has decided to introduce a special tariff of 39.2 percent for goods imported from Belarus starting from 20 January 2016.

The decision was made in response to «discriminatory and unfriendly actions by the Republic of Belarus» against Ukrainian confectioneries and breweries.

It should be recalled that on 27 August 2015 Belarus introduced a compulsory state sanitary and hygienic examination of Ukrainian products, thus blocking their exports.

UKRAINE-WORLD

Islamic State lists Ukraine among its enemies

Islamic State (IS) has published a list of 60 countries that make up the coalition against this terrorist organization, The Mirror, Britain's tabloid newspaper, has reported. Ukraine was mentioned among the countries comprising the anti-IS coalition.

5. DOMESTIC POLITICAL

Local elections held in Mariupol, Krasnoarmiysk

Local elections were held in the cities of Mariupol and Krasnoarmiysk in Donetsk Region on 29 November, with voter turnout averaging at 37 percent. On 25 October, the voting in these localities failed due to the absence of ballot papers.

The ENEMO election observation mission noted that the elections in Krasnoarmiysk and Mariupol had generally been held in accordance with the law and without disruption. According to observers of the Opora civil network, the elections were held without any systemic violations.

Court declares lawful opposition candidate's victory in Kryvyy Rih

The Dnipropetrovsk administrative court of appeal on 25 November made the final ruling confirming the victory of **Yuriy Vilkul** (Opposition Bloc) in the mayoral election in Kryvyy Rih.

As it was reported, Vilkul won the mayoral runoff in Kryvyy Rih, as evidenced by the information posted on the website of the Central Electoral Commission.

Self-Help party candidate **Yuriy Myloboh**, who showed the second result in the election, filed complaints against violations recorded during the electoral process.

Activists who do not agree with the mayoral election results set up tents outside the city council building, demanding that the local election commission's decision be cancelled.

Interpol refuses to put Ukrainian ex-officials on wanted list – prosecutor's office

The Prosecutor-General's Office of Ukraine has said that Interpol has refused to put on the international wanted list officials from the team of ex-president **Viktor Yanukovych** who are suspected of being involved in killing protesters on Maydan (Kiev's Independence Square), which makes it impossible to arrest them in absentia.

Embattled official appointed deputy chief of National Police

Former Deputy Interior Minister **Vasyl Paskal** has been appointed as first deputy chief of the National Police and chief of the Criminal Police.

This appointment aroused sharp criticism among the public, as Paskal held senior positions at the Interior Ministry under the presidency of **Viktor Yanukovich**.

Later Paskal tendered his resignation.

Parliament lowers quorum for limited liability company meetings

The Ukrainian parliament on 24 November passed a law that lowers from 60 to 50 percent the number of participants required for a meeting of a limited liability company to be recognized as legitimate.

6. ECONOMY

EBRD acquires 29 percent in Raiffeisen Bank Aval

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is about to become a 29-percent shareholder in Raiffeisen Bank Aval, according to a joint press release.

The EBRD and Raiffeisen Bank International on 3 December 2015 will participate in a capital increase of 3.15bn hryvnias (122m dollars) in Raiffeisen Bank Aval, which will boost the bank's Tier 1 ratio.

Investment in Ukraine's agriculture grow 18.1 percent over nine months

Ukrainian Agrarian Policy and Food Minister **Oleksiy Pavlenko** has said that over nine months of the current year capital investments into Ukraine's agriculture increased by 18.1 percent to 17.2bn hryvnias (728.8m dollars).

7. ENERGY

Ukraine stops buying gas from Russia

Russia's Gazprom on 25 November stopped natural gas supplies to Ukraine because the Ukrainian state-run energy company Naftohaz Ukrayiny did not submit any orders, according to Gazprom's press service.

Ukrainian Prime Minister **Arseniy Yatsenyuk** said that Kiev had refused to buy Russian because the European market price was more attractive.

Earlier, Naftohaz head **Andriy Kobolev** expressed confidence that Ukraine would have no problem with passing through the winter season without Russian gas.

In addition, the press service of Naftohaz said that that Ukraine's refusal to buy Russian would not interrupt gas transit to Europe.

The company also noted that the negotiations on the new price of Russian gas for Ukraine for the first quarter of 2016 were expected to be held in December.

Fitch raises Naftohaz's rating

Fitch Ratings has revised upwards the long-term issuer default rating of the Ukrainian state-run energy company Naftohaz Ukrayiny in foreign currency from 'CC' to 'CCC'.

However, according to Fitch's analysts, Naftohaz's operational deficit will remain

high in 2015, as domestic gas rates are still insufficient to cover the price of imported gas.

However, as evidenced by Naftohaz's financial report, the company showed a net profit of 200m hryvnyas (9.4m dollars) in January-September 2015 compared with a loss of 42.2bn hryvnyas (3.3bn dollars) incurred during the same period of the previous year.

Ukrtransnafta shareholders appoint new director-general

Shareholders of Ukrtransnafta company at a general meeting on 26 November appointed **Mykola Havrylenko** as the company's director-general.

It should be recalled that on 21 October a special commission of the state-run energy company Naftohaz Ukrayiny declared Havrylenko as winner in the competition for the position of Ukrtransnafta's director-general, and the Cabinet of Ministers approved his appointment on 18 November.

Government, Akhmetov win lawsuit in Dniπροenerho case

The Kiev Economic Court on 25 November dismissed the claims filed by Business-Invest company associated with **Ihor Kolomoyskyy's** Privat Group, which challenged the lawfulness of the privatization of 50 percent of shares in Dniπροoblenerho.

The defendants in the case were the Cabinet of Ministers, the State Property Fund and DTEK Holdings Limited of **Rinat Akhmetov**, which paid 660.1m hryvnyas (130.7m dollars) for the stake in 2012.

Founded in July 2010, Gorshenin Weekly is a weekly digest of expert analysis covering the most important political, social and economic events in Ukraine. It is the key source of information about opinion polls carried out by the Gorshenin Institute as well as the best professional commentaries on recent developments.

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