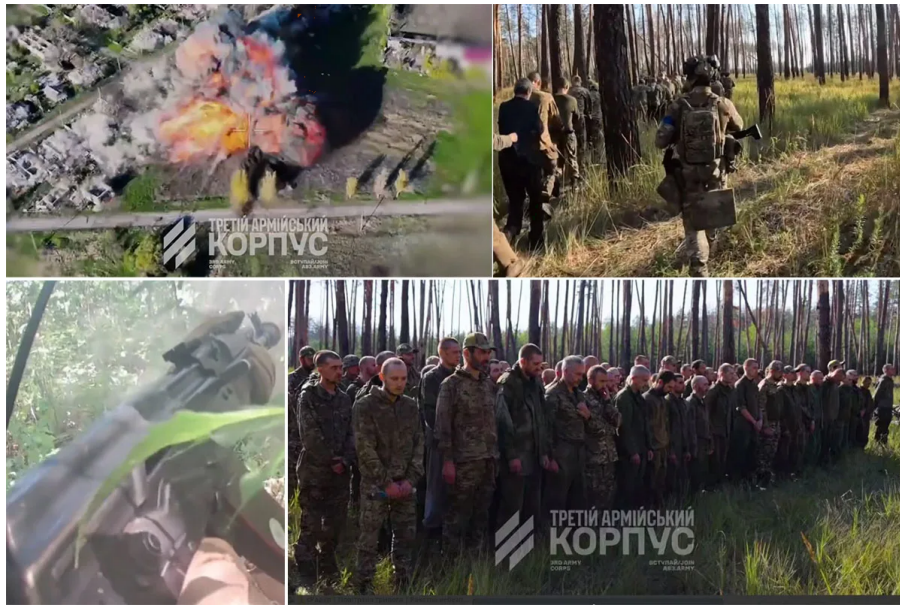




Operation Vivaldi, Phase 3: Ukraine retakes another 51 km² in Donetsk; Russian strongpoint of Nove north of Lyman falls. More than 250 Russian soldiers captured

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The third of the four announced “seasons” of **Operazione Vivaldi**, the counteroffensive conducted by the **3^o Corpo d’armata ucraino** in the northern sector of Donetsk Oblast, along the Lyman axis, has concluded.

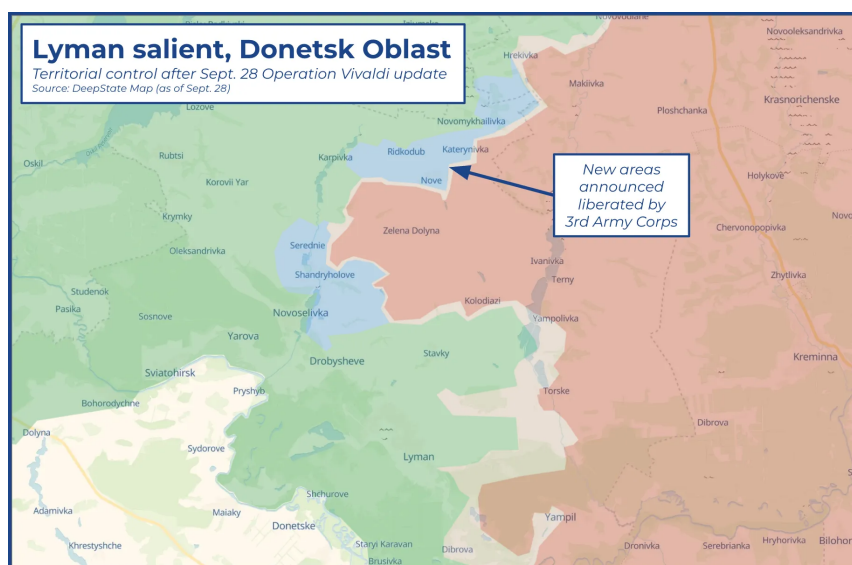
The campaign, long shrouded in operational silence, is revealing several elements that characterize the evolution of the war on the Ukrainian front: deception operations, electronic warfare, drones, unmanned ground systems, and the maneuver of assault units.

51 square kilometers recaptured

According to the 3^o Corpo d'armata, Ukrainian forces recaptured **51 square kilometers** during the third phase, bringing the total territory recovered since the start of Operazione Vivaldi to **176 km²**.

The Ukrainian command announced the liberation of **Nove, Ridkodub, and Katerynivka** and the restoration of full control over **Karpivka and Novomykhailivka**, all settlements located north of Lyman. The Institute for the Study of War also recorded Ukrainian advances in the sector and the five localities that came under Kyiv's control.

Among them, **Nove** was the primary objective of the third "season." The Corps commander, Brigadier General **Andrii Biletskyi**, described it as a «key node» for Russian forces on the bridgehead, emphasizing the importance of the high ground surrounding the settlement for controlling the tactical initiative in the area.



Deception before the attack

One of the most interesting aspects of the operation concerns the deception conducted before the main attack.

According to Biletskyi, the Russian command had been led to believe that the main Ukrainian effort would be directed along the **Shandryholove-Zelena Dolyna** axis. Russian forces reportedly committed their reserves to a series of counterattacks in that sector while the main Ukrainian action against Nove was being prepared.

«The enemy was convinced that the main direction of the attack was Shandryholove–Zelena Dolyna», Biletskyi explained. According to the commander, Russian forces did not identify the true axis of the Ukrainian effort in time.

The ISW believes that the operation effectively combined diversionary actions, battlefield preparation, and local superiority in the use of drones.

BTRs converted into unmanned kamikaze vehicles

To breach the most heavily fortified Russian positions, the 3rd Corps employed a solution developed directly by its own units: old **Soviet-origin BTR-60s converted into explosive-laden unmanned ground vehicles**.

The vehicles were directed against some of the most robust Russian fortifications, reducing the need to expose crews during the initial stages of the assault. Their use forms part of Ukraine's broader employment of robotic ground platforms for transport, mine-laying and mine-clearing, and attack missions.

The ISW also notes that the ability to bring ground vehicles up to Russian fortifications indicates that Ukrainian forces had managed, at least locally, to reduce the effectiveness of Russian drone-based reconnaissance and interdiction.



A Soviet BTR-60 converted by the Ukrainian 3rd Corps into an unmanned ground vehicle and loaded with explosives. During Operazione Vivaldi, vehicles of this type were used against Russian fortifications in the Nove and Katerynivka sector. Still from a video by the Ukrainian 3rd Corps.

The role of assault units and the Border Guard

According to the Ukrainian command, the **3rd Assault Brigade** played a central role in the third phase.

The **3rd Border Guard Detachment named after Colonel Yevhen Pikus**, meanwhile, reestablished full control over Ridkodub and quickly organized new defensive positions. The **10th Mobile Border Guard Detachment “DOZOR”** also took part in the assault operations.

Kyiv claims 2,000 Russian casualties and more than 250 prisoners

According to the Ukrainian command, Russian forces reportedly suffered **around 2,000 personnel casualties** during the third phase, while **more than 250 troops were reportedly captured**. The prisoners reportedly included officers, specialists, and artillerymen.

Biletskyi also maintains that, in some cases, **entire Russian units surrendered along with their officers**.

Despite the difficulty of independently verifying the exact number of prisoners, the numerous images and videos released by the Ukrainian 3rd Corps show substantial groups of Russian troops captured during the operations, **providing visual corroboration for Kyiv's claims**.



A group of Russian servicemen taken prisoner by Ukrainian forces during the third phase of Operazione Vivaldi. According to the 3^o Corpo d'armata ucraino, more than 250 Russian soldiers were captured during the operations. Video frame from the 3^o Corpo d'armata ucraino.

Toward the fourth “season”

The operation's name is no coincidence. When the Ukrainian command made the counteroffensive public on September 15, Biletskyi noted that **Vivaldi has four seasons**, suggesting that the operation would be divided into four phases.

With the third now complete, a fourth "season" remains to be revealed.

Operationally, the results announced north of Lyman have enabled Ukrainian forces to reduce the depth of the Russian penetration and regain the initiative in several sectors of the bridgehead. The ISW has already described the overall Ukrainian operations in the area as significant for thwarting the Russian attempt to advance toward Lyman and contribute to the northern envelopment of the Sloviansk and Kramatorsk defensive belt.

Operazione Vivaldi above all demonstrates how, on the Ukrainian front, ground maneuver is becoming increasingly dependent on the integration of **operational deception, intelligence, drones, electronic warfare, deep strikes, robotic systems, and assault infantry**.