

## **Background Paper / Fact Sheet on DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Biological Threat Reduction Program) - Ukraine**

Background: The Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, is implemented by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since 2005, the program assisted the Ukrainian government in converting former Soviet biological weapons (BW) research facilities to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and reduce the threats posed by dangerous pathogens, whether they are naturally-occurring, accidental, or intentional.

### Key Facts:

- BTRP's priorities in Ukraine are to help them consolidate and secure pathogens and to continue to ensure Ukraine can detect and report disease outbreaks before they pose security or stability threats. All of BTRP's efforts are peaceful in nature and subject to rigorous export-control measures and vetting processes. BTRP sponsors no gain of function research or "human experimentation."
- Ukraine is a State Party to Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). In accordance with an August 2005 CTR agreement, the DoD has been funding security upgrades at Ukrainian biological laboratories where collections of pathogens are kept.
- BTRP has supported 46 laboratories, facilities and diagnostic sites for the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. BTRP has also provided the Ministry of Defense with 3 mobile diagnostic laboratories, with the goal of enhancing the system of disease surveillance and emergency preparedness in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. All of this assistance improved Ukraine's COVID-19 response.
- All of these are Ukrainian facilities owned and operated by the government of Ukraine, which aims to improve human and animal health capacity for the people of Ukraine.
- On a daily basis, Russia propagates, either directly through state-run media outlets or through the use of surrogates, disinformation aimed at BTRP's laboratory and capacity building efforts in former Soviet Union countries. The Lugar Center in Georgia and the Central Reference Laboratory in Kazakhstan are the primary targets, but more recent disinformation efforts have targeted laboratories in Ukraine. Through these disinformation campaigns, Russia falsely claims the United States, and specifically DTRA, is developing biological weapons in laboratories in these countries, as well as killing local populations with purposeful releases of biological agents.
- Russia illegally took possession of two Ukrainian-owned labs that BTRP upgraded in 2014 and continues to deny Ukrainian access to these facilities. To date, we are unaware of any attempts to use these facilities for disinformation purposes.
- BTRP is just one of many organizations providing equipment and training to these facilities. Other supporters include, among others, the European Union, World Health Organization, international universities and research institutions, as well as other U.S. interagency partners.
- Even though BTRP has had an active biological engagement with the government of Ukraine since 2005, there are many Ministry of Health and Ministry of Defense facilities that have not asked for, or received equipment or training from the United States.

**DRAFT MEDIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS****1. Why are there DoD labs in Ukraine?**

*DoD does not own or operate labs in Ukraine. All the facilities receiving BTRP assistance are Ukrainian owned and operated, and these facilities receive training and equipment from a large array of partners to include the European Union and its individual members, the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the US Department of State, US Department of Agriculture, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, and the US Department of Defense. During the Soviet era, certain select laboratories in Ukraine held the most dangerous pathogens in various collection sites. These materials were held under antiquated and inadequate safety and security conditions. The fall of the Soviet Union only exacerbated these vulnerabilities and exposed significant proliferation threats. DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program was created to reduce the threat of WMD material, including biological threats. CTR worked cooperatively and peacefully with the government of Ukraine to increase biosecurity and biosafety at these sites to ensure these dangerous pathogens did not pose a risk to the people of Ukraine or the region. This relationship with Ukraine continues today and Ukraine uses the laboratory improvements provided by the United States to support broader public and veterinary health goals, such as monitoring the spread of COVID-19, preparing for and controlling African Swine Fever, which helped Ukrainian farmers protect their herds from infectious diseases, and protecting the food supply in Ukraine - just to mention a few of the many benefits that accrued from this partnership.*

**2. How can you prove that you weren't doing offensive biological weapons work?**

*The United States is a States Party and depository for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with its obligations under that treaty. The United States does not develop biological weapons, and any assistance we provide to foreign partners has strict protocols, to include a rigorous vetting process, that ensures all activities are peaceful in nature. As the U.S. has pointed out many times, injecting maximum transparency into ALL BWC member state initiatives within the convention is paramount.*

**3. What did you do with the material from the former Soviet BW program?**

*At the request of many former Soviet Union countries, to include Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, the United States (through the Congressionally-funded and mandated Cooperation Threat Reduction program) eliminated or secured stockpiles of dangerous pathogens from the legacy Soviet biological weapons research and development enterprise. For example, in Uzbekistan, the United States eliminated nearly 12 tons of weaponized Anthrax from an island in the Aral Sea. This work was a cooperative effort with the government of Uzbekistan and demonstrates a true partnership in reducing the threat of dangerous pathogens – either from an intentional act or accidental release.*

**4. If these efforts in Ukraine are peaceful, why do these labs still contain samples of anthrax, plague, and other dangerous agents?**

*All of these pathogens are common in agricultural and natural settings and readily found in the environment of Ukraine. These and other pathogens are studied in veterinary and public health research labs around the world to improve early detection and diagnostic capabilities to contain*

*and prevent outbreaks of diseases – such as COVID-19. Ukraine's capability to understand endemic pathogens is an essential step of disease surveillance, as required by the WHO and other international health organizations. Furthermore, BTRP encourages Ukraine and all partners not to store any biological materials beyond what is required to perform diagnostics. Moreover, BTRP has provided to Ukraine molecular diagnostic equipment, supplies, and know-how to avoid the typical, Soviet-era style of diagnostics, which involves growing viruses and bacteria—a clear proliferation risk. By employing PCR and sequencing technologies, BTRP enables Ukraine to detect viruses and bacteria without propagating infectious diseases.*

**5. Is it true you performed human experimentation?**

*DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) does not conduct any human experimentation - period. All BTRP projects are focused on enhancing peaceful foreign partner biosecurity, biosafety, and detection activities – to detect disease outbreaks and stop a pandemic before it happens. As an example, BTRP does fund disease investigations where Ukrainian partners collect clinical samples from humans and/or animals to conduct diagnostic testing and epidemiological analysis. BTRP insists that foreign partners, like Ukraine, establish internal review board processes guided by national regulatory frameworks before any diagnostic or epidemiological study is conducted—whether with human or animal samples.*

**6. Other than DoD, who else provides funding to these labs?**

*DoD's CTR Program does not provide US taxpayer funding directly to the laboratories. Furthermore, the laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the host country. DoD provides equipment and training that is in compliance with BWC protocols and International Health Regulations. However, the DoD CTR program does competitively award grants to foreign partners for biosurveillance studies aimed at detecting and diagnosing disease outbreaks. At their request, we partner with them because they value our expertise and experience – especially in terms of our biosafety and biosecurity protocols. While we know that some governments receive funding, capacity, and training from the European Union and other academic, governmental, and commercial sponsors, you will have to ask the countries that own the laboratories to confirm other funding sources.*

**7. How do you know that these labs are not performing illegal activities without your knowledge?**

*Ukraine is a responsible steward and owns and operates these facilities. The facilities are much more open and transparent than during the Soviet era. Scientists are encouraged to publish their research results, partner with international colleagues, and widely distribute their research findings. They operate in a capacity similar to university labs on campuses around the world. Furthermore, all DoD provided equipment and training with foreign partners is subject to US export control processes, DoD audits, and US acquisition laws and regulations to ensure transparency and compliance with both US and International Health Regulations.*

**8. If nothing illegal is going on, why all of the secrecy?**

*There is nothing secretive about DoD's capacity building efforts with foreign partners. In fact, we urge you to view BTRP promotional videos to see how the United States is transparent with all its biological engagement activities. In sum, DoD's peaceful efforts are designed to prevent*

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*the proliferation of disease-causing pathogens, and prevent outbreaks of diseases that impact everyone. DoD's efforts with foreign partners are designed to be as transparent as possible, while at the same time protecting intellectual property and intellectual rights. DoD's efforts with foreign partners also comply with US acquisition rules and regulations, ensuring maximum competition with US and foreign contractors who perform the work on behalf of the government. The US government must preserve a competitive playing field to ensure US taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely. While this may appear to be secretive, the actual work performed is not and information is publicly available.*

*BTRP 101 (ENG) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEE4-WuJYRA>*

*BTRP 101 (UA) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ9cCqChMLs>*

*Research Culture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03tPlwJ9UTo>*

*International Outreach <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djA1bfB2c-Q>*

*Zoonotics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nocfl-kLlLw>*

*Lugar Center: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv\\_WYnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv_WYnE)*

**9. How much did the U.S. invest in these facilities in Ukraine?**

*The United States, through DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction program, invested in approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005. These activities have included building or renovating laboratories and providing laboratory equipment and training to help Ukraine's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture to conduct safer and more effective disease detection, to help Ukraine's Ministry of Defense to protect the health of the Ukrainian Armed forces, and help Ukraine conduct peer-reviewed biosurveillance studies to understand pathogens that are endemic in Ukraine and spot indicators of an outbreak.*

**DRAFT PRESS RELEASE – CTR ACTIVITIES AND BIOLOGICAL THREAT REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP WITH UKRAINE**

The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program is a Congressionally-founded and directed program created to rectify the WMD security gap left after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Ukraine, CTR facilitated the removal of Ukraine's 1,800 nuclear warheads and helped return them to Russia. CTR also worked with the government of Ukraine to eliminate WMD delivery systems and infrastructure such as missiles and missile silos. CTR has worked with the government of Ukraine to identify legacy Soviet Biological Weapons (BW) sites and help eliminate and secure dangerous pathogens from that era. Over the years, this partnership expanded into helping Ukraine's government upgrade its public and animal health detection, diagnostic, safety, and security capacity. This investment in Ukrainian public health capability undoubtedly saved innumerable Ukrainian lives during the ongoing pandemic as a result of enhanced diagnostic and response to SARS COV-2. It also helped the Ukrainian government detect and respond to multiple outbreaks of African Swine Fever, a disease that is highly contagious and lethal to pigs and can cause severe economic disruption.

The United States has made a full and comprehensive declaration of our past biological weapons program, which ended in 1972. Our country is a State Party and depository of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with all of its provisions. The United States does not develop biological weapons, nor does the United States enable partner countries to do the same. The laboratory upgrades and training provided by the United States to Ukraine, and other partner countries, is a frequent target of Russian disinformation campaigns, making unscrupulous and baseless claims that the United States is developing biological weapons, and even worse, killing people in partner countries. These claims are outright lies, designed to drive a wedge between the successful biological threat reduction efforts of the United States and its partner countries.

The laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the government of Ukraine. The Department of Defense, through the CTR program, continues to partner closely with Ukraine to improve public and veterinary health and safety.

**From:**

(b)(6)

**Sent:**

Tue, 12 Apr 2022 03:25:00 -0400

**To:**

Anderson, Matthew D CTR DTRA OI (USA);Angell, Michael A CTR

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Apr 12, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your April 12, 2022 news.

COMPETE

1. Sweden and Finland Make Moves to Join Nato  
(Guardian, Jon Henley, 11 Apr 22)...

Sweden's ruling party has begun debating whether the country should join Nato, and neighbouring Finland expects to reach a decision within weeks, as Moscow warned that the Nordic nations' accession would "not bring stability" to Europe. Both countries are officially non-aligned militarily, but public support for Nato membership has almost doubled since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to about 50% in Sweden and 60% in Finland, multiple opinion polls suggest. Sweden's centre-left Social Democrats, led by prime minister Magdalena Andersson, said their "security review" was about more than just joining the 30-nation alliance, adding that the party could decide to apply even without the backing of members. Having stressed at the outbreak of the war that non-alignment had "served Sweden's interests well", Andersson said she was "ready to discuss" the policy in light of Moscow's aggression, and in late March said she "did not rule out" joining Nato. "When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden's security position changed fundamentally," the party said in a statement on Monday. The Social Democrat general secretary, Tobias Baudin, said the security review would be complete "before the summer".

The question is expected to be a key issue in parliamentary elections due on 11 September, with centre-right opposition parties already saying they would back a Nato application and the far-right Sweden Democrats also open to the idea. Finland, which shares a 1,340km (830-mile) border with Russia and, like Sweden, is a Nato partner after abandoning its position of strict neutrality at the end of the cold war, is expected to outline its decision regarding the alliance before midsummer. Alexander Stubb, a former prime minister of Finland, told AFP it was "a foregone conclusion" that Helsinki would apply to join Nato, probably in time for a June Nato summit in Madrid.

A government-commissioned national security review is due to be delivered to parliament next week to help Finnish MPs decide on the question before they vote, with one recent poll suggesting only six of the country's 200 MPs were opposed. "We will have very careful discussions, but not taking any more time than we have to," the country's prime minister, Sanna Marin, said last week. "I think we will end the discussion before midsummer," she said.

Both countries have received public assurances from the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, that their applications would be welcome, as well as expressions of support from several members including the US, UK, Germany, France and Turkey. But the move would almost certainly be seen as a provocation by the Kremlin, whose spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said on Monday that the alliance was "a tool geared towards confrontation" and that their possible accession "will not bring stability to the European continent".

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2. Ukraine War: Russia Warns Sweden and Finland Against Nato Membership (BBC, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia has warned Finland and Sweden against joining Nato, arguing the move would not bring stability to Europe. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "the alliance remains a tool geared towards confrontation". It comes as US defence officials said Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has been a "massive strategic blunder" which is likely to bring Nato enlargement. US officials expect the Nordic neighbours to bid for membership of the alliance, potentially as early as June. Washington is believed to support the move which would see the Western alliance grow to 32 members. US State Department officials said last week that discussions had taken place between Nato leaders and foreign ministers from Helsinki and Stockholm. Before it launched its invasion, Russia demanded that the alliance agree to halt any future enlargement, but the war has led to the deployment of more Nato troops on its eastern flank and a rise in public support for Swedish and Finnish membership.

Finnish MPs are expected to receive a security report from intelligence officials this week, and Prime Minister Sanna Marin said she expects her government "will end the discussion before midsummer" on whether to make a membership application. Finland shares a 1,340km (830 miles) long border with Russia and has been rattled by the invasion of Ukraine. And Sweden's ruling Social Democratic party, which has traditionally opposed Nato membership, said it is rethinking this position in light of Russia's attack on its western neighbour. Party secretary Tobias Baudin told local media that the Nato review should be complete within the next few months. "When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden's security position changed fundamentally," the party said in a statement on Monday. But Moscow has been clear that it opposes any potential enlargement of the alliance. Mr Peskov warned the bloc "is not that kind of alliance which ensures peace and stability, and its further expansion will not bring additional security to the European continent".

Last week Mr Peskov said that Russia would have to "rebalance the situation" with its own measures were Sweden and Finland to join Nato. And in February Maria Zakharova, Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman, warned of "military and political consequences" if the countries joined the bloc. Nato was formed in 1949 to counter the threat of Soviet expansion, though since the fall of the Berlin wall a number of formerly communist eastern European countries have joined. Member states agree to come to one another's aid in the event of an armed attack against any individual member state. Despite the threats, both countries have pushed ahead with their bids and stepped up defence spending. On Monday, army leaders in Helsinki announced a new plan to allocate €14m (£10.88m) to purchase drones for Finland's military. And last month Swedish officials said they would boost defence spending by three billion kronas (\$317m; £243m) in 2022.

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### 3. US Sanctions Western Balkan Figures, Citing 'Threat to Regional Security'

(Politico, Nektaria Stamouli, 11 Apr 22)...

The United States sanctioned seven people in the Western Balkans on Monday, including former leaders of North Macedonia and the short-lived State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, calling them a "serious threat to regional stability." Those targeted — from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia — were added to the list of specially designated nationals, maintained by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC. This means their assets are blocked, U.S. citizens are generally prohibited from dealing with them, and they are also banned from entering the U.S. "The people designated today constitute a serious threat to regional stability, institutional trust, and the aspirations of those seeking democratic and judicious governance in the Western Balkans," said Brian Nelson, the Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, in a statement. Those listed include Svetozar Marović, the last president of the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, which dissolved in 2006. Marović also served as deputy president of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro until 2015, when he was arrested over his involvement in corruption scandals related to construction projects. He admitted to the charges and signed two plea deals, but before serving his sentence he fled to Serbia, where he now resides. Montenegro's government has been seeking his extradition from Belgrade since 2019.

North Macedonia's former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski is also named. Gruevski was convicted by a court in his country on corruption-related charges, but fled and received asylum in Hungary, which the U.S. Treasury said "represents a serious setback for accountability for corruption and corruption-related activities in North Macedonia." OFAC also designated Gruevski's former chief of counterintelligence, Sašo Mijalkov, who the Treasury says was accused of being involved in a vote-rigging scheme and an illegal wiretapping operation targeting opposition politicians, judges and journalists "that provided political and economic gain, and which precipitated a two-year political crisis in the country." From Albania, the list includes former MP Aqif Rakipi and media mogul Ylli Ndroqi, accusing

him of using his outlets to “extort and blackmail Albanian citizens.” It also includes Asim Sarajlic, a member of the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the country’s former chief prosecutor, Gordana Tadic.

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#### 4. How Meta Fumbled Propaganda Moderation During Russia's Invasion of Ukraine (Reuters, Katie Paul and Munsif Vengattil, 11 Apr 22)...

Days after the March 9 bombing of a maternity and children's hospital in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, comments claiming the attack never happened began flooding the queues of workers moderating Facebook and Instagram content on behalf of the apps' owner, Meta Platforms (FB.O). The bombardment killed at least three people, including a child, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said publicly. Images of bloodied, heavily pregnant women fleeing through the rubble, their hands cradling their bellies, sparked immediate outrage worldwide. Among the most-recognized women was Mariana Vishegirska, a Ukrainian fashion and beauty influencer. Photos of her navigating down a hospital stairwell in polka-dot pajamas circulated widely after the attack, captured by an Associated Press photographer. Online expressions of support for the mother-to-be quickly turned to attacks on her Instagram account, according to two contractors directly moderating content from the conflict on Facebook and Instagram. They spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, citing non-disclosure agreements that barred them from discussing their work publicly. The case involving the beauty influencer is just one example of how Meta's content policies and enforcement mechanisms have enabled pro-Russian propaganda during the Ukraine invasion, the moderators told Reuters. Russian officialdom seized on the images, setting them side-by-side against her glossy Instagram photos in an effort to persuade viewers that the attack had been faked. On state television and social media, and in the chamber of the U.N. Security Council, Moscow alleged - falsely - that Vishegirska had donned make-up and multiple outfits in an elaborately staged hoax orchestrated by Ukrainian forces. Swarms of comments accusing the influencer of duplicity and being an actress appeared underneath old Instagram posts of her posed with tubes of makeup, the moderators said. At the height of the onslaught, comments containing false allegations about the woman accounted for most of the material in one moderator's content queue, which normally would have contained a mix of posts suspected of violating Meta's myriad policies, the person recalled. "The posts were vile," and appeared to be orchestrated, the moderator told Reuters. But many were within the company's rules, the person said, because they did not directly mention the attack. "I couldn't do anything about them," the moderator said. Reuters was unable to contact Vishegirska. Meta declined to comment on its handling of the activity involving Vishegirska, but said in a statement to Reuters that multiple teams are addressing the issue. "We have separate, expert teams and outside partners that review misinformation and inauthentic behavior and we have been applying our policies to counter that activity forcefully throughout the war," the statement said. Meta policy chief Nick Clegg separately told reporters on Wednesday that the company was considering new steps to address misinformation and hoaxes from Russian government pages, without elaborating. read more Russia's Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media and the Kremlin did not respond to requests for comment. Representatives of Ukraine did not respond to a request for comment.

Based at a moderation hub of several hundred people reviewing content from Eastern Europe, the two contractors are foot soldiers in Meta's battle to police content from the conflict. They are among tens of thousands of low-paid workers at outsourcing firms around the world that Meta contracts to enforce its rules. The tech giant has sought to position itself as a responsible steward of online speech during the invasion, which Russia calls a "special operation" to disarm and "denazify" its neighbor. Just a few days into the war, Meta imposed restrictions on Russian state media and took down a small network of coordinated fake accounts that it said were trying to undermine trust in the Ukrainian government. It later said it had pulled down another Russia-based network that was falsely reporting people for violations like hate speech or bullying, while beating back attempts by previously disabled networks to return to the platform. Meanwhile, the company attempted to carve out space for users in the region to express their anger over Russia's invasion and to issue calls to arms in ways Meta normally would not permit. In Ukraine and 11 other countries across Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, it created a series of temporary "spirit of the policy" exemptions to its rules barring hate speech, violent threats and more; the changes were intended to honor the general principles of those policies rather than their literal wording, according to Meta instructions to moderators seen by Reuters. For example, it permitted "dehumanizing speech against Russian soldiers" and calls for death to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his ally Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, unless those calls were considered credible or contained additional targets, according to the instructions viewed by Reuters.

The changes became a flashpoint for Meta as it navigated pressures both inside the company and from Moscow, which opened a criminal case into the firm after a March 10 Reuters report made the carve-outs public. Russia also banned Facebook and Instagram inside its borders, with a court accusing Meta of "extremist activity." read more Meta walked back elements of the exceptions after the Reuters report. It first limited them to Ukraine alone and then canceled one altogether, according to documents reviewed by Reuters, Meta's public statements, and interviews with two Meta staffers, the two moderators in Europe and a third moderator who handles English-language content in another region who had seen the advisories. The documents offer a rare lens into how Meta interprets its policies, called community standards. The company says its system is neutral and rule-based. Critics say it is often reactive, driven as much by business considerations and news cycles as by principle. It's a complaint that has dogged Meta in other global conflicts including Myanmar, Syria and Ethiopia. Social media researchers say the approach allows the company to escape accountability for how its policies affect the 3.6 billion users of its services. The shifting guidance over Ukraine has generated confusion and frustration for moderators, who say they have 90 seconds on average to decide whether a given post violates policy, as first reported by the New York Times. Reuters independently confirmed such frustrations with three moderators. After Reuters reported the exemptions on March 10, Meta policy chief Nick Clegg said in a statement the next day that Meta would allow such speech only in Ukraine. Two days later, Clegg told employees the company was reversing altogether the exemption that had allowed users to call for the deaths of

Putin and Lukashenko, according to a March 13 internal company post seen by Reuters. At the end of March, the company extended the remaining Ukraine-only exemptions through April 30, the documents show. Reuters is the first to report this extension, which allows Ukrainians to continue engaging in certain types of violent and dehumanizing speech that normally would be off-limits. Inside the company, writing on an internal social platform, some Meta employees expressed frustration that Facebook was allowing Ukrainians to make statements that would have been deemed out of bounds for users posting about previous conflicts in the Middle East and other parts of the world, according to copies of the messages viewed by Reuters. "Seems this policy is saying hate speech and violence is ok if it is targeting the 'right' people," one employee wrote, one of 900 comments on a post about the changes. Meanwhile, Meta gave moderators no guidance to enhance their ability to disable posts promoting false narratives about Russia's invasion, like denials that civilian deaths have occurred, the people told Reuters. The company declined to comment on its guidance to moderators.

In theory, Meta did have a rule that should have enabled moderators to address the mobs of commenters directing baseless vitriol at Vishegirskaia, the pregnant beauty influencer. She survived the Mariupol hospital bombing and delivered her baby, the Associated Press reported. Meta's harassment policy prohibits users from "posting content about a violent tragedy, or victims of violent tragedies that include claims that a violent tragedy did not occur," according to the Community Standards published on its website. It cited that rule when it removed posts by the Russian Embassy in London that had pushed false claims about the Mariupol bombing following the March 9 attack. But because the rule is narrowly defined, two of the moderators said, it could be used only sparingly to battle the online hate campaign against the beauty influencer that followed. Posts that explicitly alleged that the bombing was staged were eligible for removal, but comments such as "you're such a good actress" were considered too vague and had to stay up, even when the subtext was clear, they said. Guidance from Meta enabling commenters to consider context and enforce the spirit of that policy could have helped, they added. Meta declined to comment on whether the rule applied to the comments on Vishegirskaia's account. At the same time, even explicit posts proved elusive to Meta's enforcement systems. A week after the bombing, versions of the Russian Embassy posts were still circulating on at least eight official Russian accounts on Facebook, including its embassies in Denmark, Mexico and Japan, according to an Israeli watchdog organization, FakeReporter. [read more](#) One showed a red "fake" label laid over the Associated Press photos of Mariupol, with text claiming the attack on Vishegirskaia was a hoax, and pointing readers to "more than 500 comments from real users" on her Instagram account condemning her for participating in the alleged ruse. Meta removed those posts on March 16, hours after Reuters asked the company about them, a spokesperson confirmed. Meta declined to comment on why the posts had evaded its own detection systems. The following day, on March 17, Meta designated Vishegirskaia an "involuntary public person," which meant moderators could finally start deleting the comments under the company's bullying and harassment policy, they told Reuters. But the change, they said, came too late. The flow of posts related to the woman had already slowed to a trickle.

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## 5. Putin's Mysterious Facebook 'Superfans' on a Mission (BBC, Jack Goodman & Olga Robinson, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been widely condemned in many parts of the world, but a network of Facebook groups run by people with obscure motivations would like to change perceptions of the country's leader. Millions of people have viewed posts committed to portraying President Vladimir Putin as smiling, benevolent and peace-loving. These are Putin's superfans - and we've been tracking what they do and where they come from.

The BBC has been investigating these huge pro-Putin groups with the help of researchers from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). ISD experts identified 10 pro-Putin public groups, boasting names such as Vladimir Putin - Leader of the Free World. The groups have more than 650,000 members between them. Content includes photos and messages praising the Russian leader, written in a number of languages, including English, Russian, Farsi, Arabic and Khmer. Not only are they popular, but they are very active. Over the past month, researchers counted 16,500 posts, receiving more than 3.6 million interactions. The overall aim of the groups seems to be to promote Mr Putin as a hero standing up to the West, with overwhelming international support. The images often show the Russian leader "walking confidently, holding puppies, staring longingly into the camera, saluting troops, and riding an array of wild animals, including bears and lions". These groups have gained more than 100,000 new members since the start of the invasion on 24 February. Digging into the details of the people driving most of the content, it emerged that many of the fans listed as administrators of the groups have duplicate accounts under the same name. The researchers found at least 100 such accounts in the network. These accounts generally follow each other and sometimes post heart-warming messages or send heart emojis to each other. And they administer these pro-Putin accounts alongside others pretending to be the Russian Federation or the Russian security services, which are clearly fake. Running duplicate accounts is a potential violation of Facebook's rules on inauthentic behaviour, the ISD says. Lead researcher Moustafa Ayad calls the practice an example of "astroturfing" - an online operation involving multiple accounts that falsely gives something the impression of wider grassroots support. The campaign "creates the appearance of widespread support for Putin and the Kremlin in the shadow of the invasion and relies on... inauthentic accounts to accomplish its goal", according to the ISD report.

A closer examination of some of the group admins shows some unusual activity. One, named Marine, who says her location is Syria, uses three separate accounts to generate support for the president. Her three accounts, in Arabic, post at the same time every day. Another moderator, Victoria, from Cambodia, has been pushing content in a Khmer language group. Since 4 February, her posts have generated more than 34,000 reactions and have been shared more than 4,000 times. And Marine and Victoria jointly run a Khmer-language Facebook page, part of a wider pattern of co-ordination between some of the accounts. Posts are widely shared across different groups. For instance, another account listed as located in Bulgaria posted the same Putin image 12 times in the space of a couple of minutes. We tried to contact the people behind all of these accounts for comment, but didn't

have much luck. But a man in Kenya, called Raj, who's in several of these groups and includes "Putin" at the end of his name on Facebook, did answer the phone when we rang. In a brief conversation, he called the president a "great leader" but said he didn't want to discuss the war. We emailed him further questions about his interest in Russia, but he didn't respond. Hasmik, from Armenia, says she's a journalist and now helps to run six pro-Putin groups. We asked who invited her to do it. She told us it was the people already running the groups and said that she wasn't paid for her efforts.

It's difficult to glean the motivations of the people behind the accounts. There is no obvious link to the Russian government and unlike other well-known Russian disinformation campaigns, the network isn't subtle; nor do the people involved hide their intentions. But we can't rule out the possibility that the network has some links to the Russian authorities or pro-Putin elements inside Russia. Many people around the world are drawn to Mr Putin and his anti-West view of the world. We contacted Facebook, which says it has policies against fake accounts and has suspended a number of accounts based on information from the report and their own investigations. "We're continuing to take strong action to prevent the spread of misinformation relating to the crisis in Ukraine," says a spokesman for parent company Meta.

In the course of our research, we came across another interesting phenomenon - Vladimir Putin impersonation accounts. Mr Putin is one of the few world leaders who doesn't use social media, and there's no official Facebook account in his name. He reputedly doesn't even have a smartphone. According to his spokesman, Mr Putin simply "does not need" social media as it "doesn't give him anything he doesn't have already". But some have filled the gap left by his online absence. The page on Facebook displayed above had more than three million followers until it was taken down for impersonation shortly after the invasion at the end of February. A significant number of its subscribers - more than 700,000 - joined during the pandemic, when the page was talking up Russian-made Covid vaccines. More recently, the page was posting messages amplifying the Kremlin's view of the war, and many commenting on it appeared to believe it contained the genuine words of the Russian president. Shortly after the invasion, a post on the page declared the goal of the "operation" was "peacekeeping... aimed only at the demilitarisation of a neighbouring country". This message was shared and liked more than 200,000 times. And the page also had a habit of tagging people in its messages about Mr Putin, including users identified by researchers as having duplicate accounts. In other words, it was interacting with the Putin superfans. We don't know who's behind this account. The people managing it are based in Russia and Latvia, according to the page's transparency section. Fan pages are fertile ground to drum up support for the Kremlin internationally, says Nika Aleksejeva, a researcher at the Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), part of the Atlantic Council think tank. "They may help to build public support in foreign countries for Russia's so-called 'military operation in Ukraine' unless taken down by mainstream social media platforms," she says. DFRLab documented how one Putin-impersonator account posting in Arabic had paid for adverts targeting users in several countries, including Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco,

Lebanon, and Tunisia. The page had more than one million followers, but has since been deleted. Another prominent Putin page, posted in Arabic, used to be managed by a man who is also a big fan of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. It attracted almost a million followers before recently disappearing.

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#### 6. China's Echoes of Russia's Alternate Reality Intensify Around the World (New York Times, Paul Mozur, Steven Lee Myers, and John Liu, 11 Apr 22)...

When Twitter put up a warning message atop a Russian government post denying civilian killings in Bucha, Ukraine, last week, China's state media rushed to its defense. "On Twitter @mf\_a\_russia's statement on #Bucha got censored," wrote Frontline, a Twitter account associated with China's official English-language broadcaster, CGTN. In a Chinese Communist Party newspaper, an article declared that Russians had offered definitive evidence to prove that the lurid photos of bodies in the streets of Bucha, a suburb of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, were a hoax. A party television station in Shanghai said Ukraine's government had created the grisly tableaux to win sympathy in the West. "Obviously, such evidence would not be admissible in court," the report said. Only a month ago, the White House warned China not to amplify Russia's campaign to sow disinformation about the war in Ukraine. The Chinese efforts have intensified anyway, contradicting and disputing the policies of NATO capitals, even as Russia faced renewed condemnation for the killings in Bucha and other atrocities in recent days. The result has been to create an alternate reality of the war — not just for the consumption of China's citizens but also for a global audience. The propaganda has challenged the Western efforts to isolate Russia diplomatically, particularly in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, which have been fertile ground for conspiracy theories and distrust of the United States. "Russia and China have long shared distrust and animosity toward the West," said Bret Schafer, an analyst who tracks disinformation for the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a nonprofit group in Washington. "On Ukraine, it's a level above that — just the extent to which they have parroted some pretty specific and in some cases pretty far-fetched claims from Russia."

The campaign by China has further undercut the country's effort to present itself as a neutral actor in the war, eager to promote a peaceful resolution. In fact, its diplomats and official journalists have become combatants in the informational war to legitimize Russia's claims and discredit international concerns about what appear to be war crimes. Since the war began, they have parroted the Kremlin's justifications for it, including President Vladimir V. Putin's claim that he was fighting a neo-Nazi government in Kyiv. On Twitter alone, they have used the word "Nazi" — which Russia uses as a rallying cry — more times in the six weeks of the war so far than they did in the six months before, according to a database created by the Alliance for Securing Democracy. In an example on Wednesday, an official with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted a doctored photo appearing to show Nazis holding a flag with a swastika next to flags of Ukraine and the United States. "Surprisingly, the US stands with the neo-Nazis!" the official, Li Yang, wrote of the image, which originally featured a neo-Nazi flag in place of the American flag. The timing and subjects of many of the themes prominent in the countries' coverage suggest coordination or at least a shared view of the world and the United States'

pre-eminent role in it. China's attacks on the United States and the NATO alliance, for example, now closely hew to those in Russian state media blaming the West for the war. At times, even the wording — in English for global audiences — is almost identical.

After YouTube banned RT and Sputnik, two Russian television channels, for content “minimizing or trivializing well-documented violent events,” both RT and Frontline accused the platform of hypocrisy. They did so using the same videos of former American officials, including President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton, joking about weapons, drones and the killing of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the former Libyan leader. In another instance, the same accounts used a video of Joseph R. Biden Jr. warning in 1997, when he was a senator, that NATO's eastward expansion could provoke a “vigorous and hostile” reaction from Russia to suggest that Mr. Putin's decision to go to war was justified. China's efforts have made it clear that the White House's warning did little to influence Beijing. China's propagandists have instead intensified their efforts, amplifying not only the Kremlin's broad views about the war but also some of the most blatant lies about its conduct. “If you're just looking at the outputs, then that message didn't get through,” Mr. Schafer said. “If anything, we've seen them sort of double down.” The White House did not respond to a request for comment about China's support of Russian disinformation.

While the extent of any direct collusion between Russian and Chinese on war propaganda remains uncertain, the roots of cooperation in international media outreach stretch back nearly a decade. China's leader, Xi Jinping, pledged to deepen ties between Russian and Chinese state media on his first foreign trip in 2013 to Moscow. Since then, the two countries' myriad state media organs have signed dozens of pledges to share content. Sputnik alone has reached 17 agreements with major Chinese media, which shared its articles over 2,500 times in 2021, according to Vasily V. Pushkov, the international cooperation director for Rossiya Segodnya, the state company that owns and operates Sputnik. The two have taken other cues from each other as well. In mid-March, after Russia Today began to use clips of the Fox News host Tucker Carlson to support the idea that the United States was developing bioweapons in Ukraine, Chinese state media also began to pick up Mr. Carlson's broadcasts. On March 26, Mr. Carlson was quoted on China's flagship nightly news broadcast, averring that “it turns out our government has for some time funded biolabs in Ukraine.” The next day, the English-language channel, CGTN, repeated a Russian claim tying the labs to the laptops of Hunter Biden, the American president's son. Russian and Chinese state media have also increasingly drawn on the opinions of the same group of internet celebrities, pundits and influencers, featuring them on their shows as well as in YouTube videos. One of them, Benjamin Norton, is a journalist who claimed that a coup sponsored by the United States government took place in Ukraine in 2014 and that U.S. officials had installed the leaders of the current Ukrainian government. He first explained the conspiracy theory on RT, although it was later picked up by Chinese state media and tweeted by accounts like Frontline. In a March interview, which China's state broadcaster, CCTV, trumpeted as an exclusive, Mr. Norton said the United States, not Russia, was to blame for Russia's invasion. “Regarding the current situation in Ukraine, Benjamin said that this is not

a war caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but a war planned and provoked by the United States as early as 2014," an unnamed CCTV narrator said.

At times, China's information campaigns have seemed to contradict the country's official diplomatic statements, undercutting China's efforts to play down the links between its relationship with Russia and the brutal invasion. On Wednesday, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called the images from Bucha "disturbing" and asked for all parties to "exercise restraint and avoid groundless accusations." Only the day before, Chen Weihua, a vocal and prolific editor at China Daily, which is owned by the Chinese government, seemed to do just that. He retweeted a widely shared post that said there was not "one iota" of proof of massacre in Bucha and accused the West of "staging atrocities to jack up emotions, demonize adversaries and extend wars." Mr. Chen is one strand of a sprawling network of diplomats, government-controlled media, and state-backed pundits and influencers who have extended China's domestic narrative about the conflict to overseas platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Central to their message is that the United States and NATO, not Mr. Putin, are responsible for the war. One political cartoon, shared by state media and Chinese diplomats, portrayed the European Union as kidnapped by Uncle Sam and chained to a tank with a NATO flag. Another, from a Chinese diplomat in St. Petersburg, Russia, showed an arm with a stars-and-stripes sleeve stuffed up the back of a European Union puppet brandishing a spear. Other images portraying the European Union as a lackey of the United States came out of a number of official Chinese accounts in the run-up to a tense meeting between Mr. Xi and the European Union, in which Europe called on China not to subvert Western sanctions or support Russia's war. Maria Repnikova, a professor of global communication at Georgia State University who studies China and Russia information campaigns, said the two countries had "a shared vision of resenting the West" that drove nationalistic sentiment at home. At the same time, the shared messages have resonated globally, especially outside the United States and Europe. "It's not coordination but echoes of the similar sort of concerns or stance when it comes to this war," she said of views in Africa and other parts of the world. "China is also trying to showcase that it's not isolated."

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7. US Army Chief of Staff on Hand as Ally Lithuania Announces Training for Ukrainians  
(Stars & Stripes, John Vandiver, 11 Apr 22)...

Lithuania will host a mission to train Ukrainian soldiers to use new weaponry that the Baltic country's fellow NATO allies are sending Kyiv to assist in its war against invading Russian forces. Lithuanian defense officials announced the plan Sunday, the same day U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. James McConville was in the country for security talks. Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Sunday that it had concluded a separate training effort with Ukrainian forces in the U.S. The troops were being trained on operating maritime patrol craft and use of weapons systems, such as the Switchblade drone, that the U.S. is now providing to Ukraine. "To achieve maximum effect, we will soon organize military training for Ukrainian troops here in

Lithuania,” Lt. Gen. Valdemaras Rupsys, the Lithuanian defense chief, told local reporters. The effort will center on training Ukrainian military instructors, who can in turn pass on their weapons knowledge to rank-and-file troops in Ukraine, Rupsys told the Delfi news agency. Rupsys also held talks with McConville, who told reporters that the Pentagon continues to assess what the future American force structure will look like in countries such as Lithuania, which have been eager for a larger American military presence. “We have rotational forces here, and our policymakers have said that they will defend every inch of NATO,” Delfi quoted McConville as saying. “And they are working through what that will look like as far as rotational or permanent troops as we speak.”

For now, there are no immediate plans for U.S. soldiers to join the Lithuanian initiative, which is expected to begin in the coming weeks. “We can’t speculate on whether or not that could change in the future,” U.S. Army Europe and Africa said in a statement Monday. The U.S. has long been involved in the training of the Ukrainian military. For years, the Army operated out of a site in western Ukraine that was focused on preparing troops to fight Russian-backed separatists in the eastern region known as the Donbas. However, because of security concerns, the American training was put on hold less than two weeks before Feb. 24, the date Russia launched its full-fledged invasion. The Russia-Ukraine war was preceded by a buildup of about 200,000 Russian service members and materiel near Ukraine’s borders on three sides. At the time of the halt in the U.S. training, about 160 National Guard soldiers were relocated from Ukraine to Germany, where they continue to take part in other Army instruction in Europe.

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#### 8. Western Nations Adapt Their Ukraine Help as War Enters New Phase (DefenseNews, Joe Gould, 11 Apr 22)...

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to send heavier weapons to Ukraine in anticipation of Russia focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the country. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid a surprise visit to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Saturday, where he pledged 120 armored vehicles and new anti-ship missile systems. This came a day after he promised to send an additional £100 million (U.S. \$130 million) of high-grade military equipment to Ukraine, saying Britain wants to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression. In the United States, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley forecast the war’s new phase will play out in flat, open terrain and will increasingly involve armor and artillery. On Monday, a senior defense official said the Pentagon will send arms to Ukraine for that fight, including more Javelin anti-tank weapons as well as counter-artillery radars. “I don’t think they’re in Ukraine yet, but they’re on the move,” the Pentagon official said of the Javelins. “That’s a very specific example of how we’re trying to help the Ukrainians in this particular new phase of the conflict.”

Thwarted in its early plan for a quick takeover of the capital Kyiv, Russia is resupplying and reinforcing its invasion force in eastern Ukraine with an 8-mile convoy of vehicles. The group, which includes command-and-control

support and possibly helicopters for air support, is apparently headed toward Iziurm in the Kharkiv region of eastern Ukraine - all while Russia is reinforcing its positions southwest of Donetsk with artillery units. The action comes as Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called for more weapons for his country, and stronger sanctions against Moscow, during meetings with NATO foreign ministers in Brussels last week. Ahead of the talks, Kuleba said his agenda was "very simple - it has only three items on it: It's weapons, weapons and weapons." A \$100 million package of U.S. security assistance announced last week included Javelins, four counter-artillery and counter-UAV tracking radars, four counter-mortar radar systems, armored Humvees, and laser-guided rocket systems.

The Czech Republic became the first NATO member to send tanks to Ukraine, which included T-72 and BVP-1 infantry fighting vehicles. Reuters reported last week. The package of military aid Britain announced last week includes more Starstreak anti-aircraft missiles, another 800 anti-tank missiles and precision munitions capable of lingering in the sky until directed to their target. "Ukraine has defied the odds and pushed back Russian forces from the gates of Kyiv, achieving the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century," Johnson said in a statement. "It is because of President Zelenskyy's resolute leadership and the invincible heroism and courage of the Ukrainian people that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's monstrous aims are being thwarted." It's a trickier political question in Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz is reportedly delaying a final decision on whether to send German tanks to Ukraine. While the Defence Ministry argues it needs them for its own use, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Monday that Ukraine needs "heavy weapons." "Now is not the time for excuses; now is the time for creativity and pragmatism," Baerbock said at a meeting of European Union foreign affairs ministers in Luxembourg. Russia warned Thursday that supplying weapons to Ukraine would thwart ongoing peace negotiations between the two countries. "Pumping weapons into Ukraine will not contribute to the success of Russian-Ukrainian talks," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

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#### 9. Germany's Baerbock Calls for 'Heavy Weapons' for Ukraine (Politico, Hans von der Burchard, 11 Apr 22)...

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Monday urged Western countries to supply Ukraine with "heavy weapons," while issuing thinly veiled criticism of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who has delayed deliveries of tanks to Kyiv. "What's clear: Ukraine needs more military material, especially heavy weapons," Baerbock said at a meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers in Luxembourg, adding that "the terrible horror that we see every day" in Russia's war against Ukraine made the need for such supplies "more than clear." Germany has already delivered defensive weapons such as anti-tank missiles to Ukraine, while "heavy weapons" implies sending tanks, artillery or advanced air defense systems. POLITICO reported last week that Scholz is delaying a final decision on whether to send German tanks to Ukraine, despite pressure from his coalition partners the Greens, led by Baerbock and Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck. The foreign minister also issued indirect but harsh criticism of Scholz's position: "Now is not the time for excuses; now is the time for creativity and pragmatism," she said.

Scholz argued last week that Germany should reach a common position with allies on delivering tanks before sending them to Ukraine, while the German defense ministry, which is led by Scholz's Social Democratic Party colleague Christine Lambrecht, argued that Germany could not immediately deliver tanks to Ukraine from its own army stock because it needs them for its own defense as well as for NATO tasks. A defense ministry spokesperson argued on Monday that supplying Ukraine with offensive weapons was complicated and would require additional training as well as logistical support for maintenance and spare parts. Yet Baerbock pushed back against that argument, calling for "creativity and pragmatism" to solve "issues such as replacement materials and joint training" in order "to support Ukraine as soon as possible." Western officials have said that Russia is preparing for a major offensive in Eastern Ukraine in the coming weeks. The Ukrainian government has appealed to Germany and other EU governments to supply tanks and air defense systems to stop that offensive and also to be able to take back Ukrainian territories that are currently occupied by Russian forces.

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10. Russia Could Triple Troop Numbers in Bid to Take Donbas, Say Western Officials  
(Independent, Patrick Daly, 11 Apr 22)...

Vladimir Putin is expected to double or even possibly triple the number of Russian troops in the Donbas as the Russian president resorts to a "diminished" invasion strategy, according to Western officials. The amassing of troops, however, will not necessarily give Moscow an advantage over Ukraine, with Kyiv's forces having had success in pushing back insurgents in the east of the country, they said. The Russian leader has been forced to "diminish considerably" the plan in Ukraine, one official said, amid suggestions Mr Putin wants to take the Donbas region before May 9 when Russia traditionally marks the Soviet Union's World War Two victory against Nazi Germany with military parades in Moscow in an attempt to claim victory for his so-called "special operation". Another official said: "I would imagine that, at outside estimates, what you're looking at is a force which is probably the Russians looking to double or even treble the amount of force that they bring into that Donbas area. "But I would note that that is going to take some considerable time to bring them up to that sort of number. "And even when they bring themselves to that number, there is a question over how effectively they can bring those forces into the battle. "The Russians have shown themselves to be not very effective in this invasion as to being able to use their numerical advantage effectively to actually bring about a decisive engagement."

It comes after Downing Street confirmed further details of the Prime Minister's trip to the Ukrainian capital to meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky. Boris Johnson held talks with his counterpart over a dinner of roast beef after touring Independence Square on Saturday. The British leader was in Kyiv for around five hours, and travelled by car, helicopter, military plane and train, according to a No 10 spokeswoman. Western officials said they hoped that, with Russia's military regrouping and moving

east, more European leaders could travel to Kyiv to show solidarity “on the ground” with Ukraine. While Russian troops are poorly-led and ill-disciplined, they are also becoming desensitised by the war, an official said, leading to “revolting” behaviour, such as the “targeting of civilians”. The Foreign Office said it was “shocked” by reports of mass graves being found in the village of Buzova outside Kyiv. Local officials said bodies showing “evidence of execution” had been discovered following the Russian withdrawal. Buzova is near Bucha, another town where atrocities were discovered although Russia has claimed the scenes from the aftermath of its occupation were staged.

The UK will work with allies to “investigate war crimes and ensure justice is done”, a Foreign Office spokesman said. The next phase of the conflict is expected to see focus shift to the south east of Ukraine, although it is not known when a fresh assault will commence. Western officials said that 37 to 38 Russian battalion tactical groups are “non-combat effective” – up by almost 10 on last week’s estimate. The total force available is about 90 battalion tactical groups, with between 700 and 1,000 troops said to be contained in each one. One official said: “It is clear there is an intent to reinforce the Russian presence in and around those forces, both in and surrounding the Donbas. “We’re already starting to see some Russian forces continue their attacks into the Donbas, and we are also seeing Ukrainian forces being effective in causing them problems. “I think the losses that we’ve seen and the scale of losses, regardless of the reinforcing of their forces into the Donbas, it is still unclear how they (Russia) are going to overcome some of the morale issues they will have with their troops. “And we’ve seen numbers of troops being unwilling to fight and refusing to engage in operations. “When they do start, with the scale of operations we anticipate in the Donbas, they will also have large logistic lines open up which will be vulnerable potentially to attack by Ukrainian forces.”

Britain is increasingly worried that Russia could use white phosphorus munitions in the bombardment of the besieged Ukrainian port Mariupol. White phosphorus is used for illumination at night or to create a smokescreen, but when it is deployed as a weapon it causes horrific burns. Western officials think that, for Russia, bringing about the fall of Mariupol is seen as crucial for both freeing up troops for the fight in the Donbas but also for creating a route north for the Kremlin’s forces as they look to form a pincer movement on Ukrainian defenders in the east. Meanwhile, the Russian military said it had destroyed a shipment of air defence missile systems provided to Ukraine by the West. The claim has not been verified. Russian defence ministry spokesman Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov said the military used sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles to destroy four S-300 air defence missile launchers on the southern outskirts of the city of Dnipro, which lies in the east of Ukraine. He said about 25 Ukrainian troops were also hit by the strike on Sunday.

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11. Russians Ready for New Offensive in Eastern Ukraine, U.S. Official Warns (Politico, Quint Forgy, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia has begun an effort to “resupply and reinforce” its forces in eastern Ukraine before mounting a new offensive in the Donbas region, a senior Defense Department official said on Monday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, pointed to open-source images showing a line of Russian military vehicles heading toward the Ukrainian city of Izyum — just outside the Donbas, to its northwest. Although Russian forces still remain north of Izyum, the official said, the United States assesses that the line of vehicles includes a command and control element and a support group battalion, as well as perhaps rotary wing aviation support and other infantry support. “We do believe that this is an early effort by the Russians to bolster their presence and their capabilities in the Donbas,” the official said, adding that the developments are “clear evidence of what we’ve been saying for a while now: that the Russians are going to want to pour more of their assets into the Donbas.” Russia’s planned assault on the Donbas comes after its forces retreated from around the capital of Kyiv in recent days after encountering stiff Ukrainian resistance. Their hasty withdrawal exposed scenes of apparent war crimes and other atrocities in Bucha and other suburbs of Kyiv. Now, the official said on Monday, “the locus of everything we’re seeing is on the Donbas region,” from which Russia launched its latest invasion of Ukraine in February, 47 days ago.

Before proceeding with a full-scale invasion on the country, Russia first moved troops across its western border into the Donbas, which is home to two breakaway areas largely held by Moscow-backed separatists: the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic. The United States does not yet “assess that a new offensive has started” in the Donbas, the official said on Monday. But the official noted that a “hot war” has already been underway in the region since 2014 — when fighting began between Ukrainians and the pro-Russian separatists backed by Moscow. The official also said the United States assessed that Russia had indeed appointed Gen. Alexander Dvornikov to lead its war effort in Ukraine, as was reported over the weekend. Dvornikov previously oversaw Russian forces in Syria, and his brutal tactics there have prompted fears in the United States that the invasion of Ukraine could become even more violent as the fight shifts eastward. But the official said on Monday that “it remains to be seen what sort of an effect” Dvornikov will be able to have on Russian forces, who have faced significant logistical and morale problems amid the protracted conflict. “They have high challenges to surmount, and the choice of a general doesn’t mean that they’re poised for greater success here,” the official said. “We’ll just have to wait and see.”

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12. Russian Forces Ramp up Efforts to Gain Control of Mariupol (Irish Times, 11 Apr 22)...

Russian forces are pushing hard to establish control over the southern port city of Mariupol, the linchpin between Russian-held areas to the west and east and already devastated by weeks of siege and bombardment. Thousands of Russian troops were massing for a fresh offensive in the east, according to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy on Monday. He added that Moscow said it would not halt its military operation in Ukraine for any further peace talks. British intelligence indicated that Ukrainian forces had already

repulsed several Russian assaults in eastern regions. Britain's defence ministry said Russian shelling continued in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. But Ukrainian forces had beaten back several assaults and destroyed tanks, vehicles and artillery equipment, it said. For now at least, the invading forces have abandoned their attempt to capture the capital Kyiv but they are redoubling efforts in the east. The invasion – which Russia calls a “special military operation” – has left a trail of death and destruction. Moreover, the attack has drawn condemnation from western countries and triggered concern about President Putin's broader ambitions.

Russia's defence ministry said sea-launched missiles had on Sunday destroyed S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems which had been supplied to Ukraine by a European country. The batteries were concealed in a hangar on the outskirts of Dnipro in central Ukraine, it said. The United States did not have evidence that any S-300 missile defence system had been destroyed by Russia, said a senior defence official. Washington believes Russia has started reinforcing and resupplying its troops in Donbas in eastern Ukraine, the official added, but that the US does not believe this is the start of a new offensive in the region. President Zelenskyy appealed to South Korea's parliament by videolink to provide his country with military aid to assist Ukraine's struggle against the Russian onslaught. About one-quarter of Ukraine's 44 million population have been forced from their homes, cities turned into rubble and thousands have been killed or injured, many of them civilians. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed that the Kremlin would not halt its operation for any new round of peace talks. And he accused Kyiv of failing to reciprocate in previous sessions. Mr Lavrov told state television he saw no reason not to continue with talks. But although President Putin had ordered a suspension of military action during a first round in February, Moscow's position had changed, he said. “A decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause [in military action] so long as a final agreement is not reached,” said Mr Lavrov. Austrian leader Karl Nehammer met President Putin in Moscow on Monday and was expected to call for an end to the conflict. It was Mr Putin's first face-to-face meeting with a European Union leader since the invasion started. “This is not a friendly meeting,” Mr Nehammer was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office, reiterating that he had hoped to help bring an end to the war or improve conditions for civilians. “The conversation with President Putin was very direct, open and tough.”

Mounting civilian casualties have triggered widespread international condemnation and new sanctions. Luhansk governor Serhiy Gaidai said shelling in the region was increasing day by day. “The most difficult situation is in [the cities of] Rubizhne and Popasna. They are being shelled constantly, round the clock,” said Mr Gaidai. He urged all civilians to evacuate. “Those that wanted to leave have already left, while now many are left in bomb shelters who are perhaps frightened to come out . . . or scared to lose their possessions.” Moscow has rejected accusations of war crimes by Ukraine and western countries. It has repeatedly denied targeting civilians and says its aim is to demilitarise and root out dangerous nationalists in its southern neighbour. Ukraine and western nations have dismissed this as a baseless pretext for war. German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock, speaking before a meeting of European ministers in Luxembourg, said Berlin

saw "massive indications" of war crimes in Ukraine. Meanwhile, French bank Société Générale became the latest company to retreat from Russia. It agreed to sell its stake in Rosbank and the Russian lender's insurance subsidiaries to Interros Capital, a firm linked to billionaire Vladimir Potanin. The invasion has triggered a wave of financial sanctions from the United States, Europe and Britain, prompting western companies to sell their Russian assets. Several European Union ministers said on Monday the bloc's executive was drafting proposals for an oil embargo on Russia, although there was still no agreement to ban Russian crude. The World Bank forecast the war would cause Ukraine's economic output to collapse by 45 per cent this year, with half of its businesses shuttered, grain exports mostly cut off by Russia's naval blockade and destruction rendering economic activity impossible in many areas. The bank forecast Russia's gross domestic product would contract by 11.2 per cent this year due to sanctions.

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13. Russia Says West Helping Ukraine Prepare Fake Allegations of War Crimes (Reuters, 11 Apr 22)...

Moscow said on Monday that the United States and Britain were helping Ukraine prepare fake claims about the alleged persecution of civilians in Ukraine to feed to international media in an attempt to smear Russia. Since Russian troops withdrew from towns and villages around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have been showing journalists corpses of what they say are civilians killed by Russian forces, destroyed houses and burnt-out cars. The West says the dead civilians are evidence of war crimes. Reuters reporters saw dead bodies in the town of Bucha but could not independently verify who was responsible for the killings. Russia's defence ministry said Ukraine's government was being directed by the United States to sow false evidence of Russian violence against civilians despite what it cast as Moscow's "unprecedented measures to save civilians." "The United States, which has many years of experience in organizing provocations with human victims, continues its campaign to create and promote false 'evidence'," the ministry said.

Ukraine says Russia is guilty of genocide and has called on the West and the NATO military alliance to give it more support. Russia said British intelligence was helping Ukraine to prepare new fake claims about alleged abuses in northeastern Ukraine. The defence ministry did not provide evidence for its claims of British and U.S. involvement. "New false staged provocations accusing the armed forces of the Russian Federation of allegedly cruel treatment of the population of Ukraine are being prepared by the Kiev regime under the leadership of British special services on the territory of the Sumy region," the ministry said. Russia said Western journalists had been invited to the Sumy region in northeastern Ukraine to "conduct the filming of staged plots". The ministry said Western media would publish such fake news shortly. It did not say which media.

It said that Russian troops had left the alleged scene of some of the abuses, the Ukrainian village of Nyzhnya Syrovatka, on March 20. "The goal is to further stoke Russophobia against the backdrop of the rapidly

developing economic crisis in Europe," the ministry said. Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands of people, displaced millions and raised fears of a wider confrontation between Russia and the United States. Putin says the "special military operation" in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia and Moscow had to act to defend Russian-speaking people in Ukraine against persecution. Ukraine says it is fighting against an imperial-style land grab and dismisses Putin's claims of genocide as nonsense.

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#### 14. Russia Claims It Destroyed Ukrainian Air Defense Systems (VOA, Ken Bredemeier and Jeff Seldin, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia said Monday that it destroyed several air defense systems in Ukraine over the weekend, ahead of what Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is warning could be the start of a renewed Russian offensive into the country's eastern region. The Russian claims could not be verified, but Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said the military launched cruise missiles to destroy four launchers Sunday on the southern outskirts of the central city of Dnipro and also hit systems in the Mykolaiv and Kharkiv regions. Zelenskyy pleaded Monday for more military aid from the U.S. and its allies, specifically requesting South Korean lawmakers in a video address to send more equipment that can shoot down Russian missiles. Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Monday it is seeing early signs of efforts by Russia to reinforce its troops in eastern Ukraine. The U.S. spotted a convoy north of Izyum with command-and-control elements, enablers, artillery, and rotary blade air support, according to a senior U.S. defense official. The official said there also are indications that Russian forces sent from northern Ukraine to Belarus and the Russian town of Valuyki are now moving toward eastern Ukraine. The official said, "We do not assess a new offensive has started" in eastern Ukraine but added, "What is clear is that the Russians continue to sink to new lows of depravity and brutality as we saw with the missile strike on a train station last week and their continued assault on Mariupol ... . "We're certainly bracing ourselves here for some potentially really, really horrible outcomes," the official said.

The U.S. official said Russia has launched 1,500 missile attacks on Ukraine during 47 days of war, destroying apartment buildings and hospitals throughout the country and killing thousands of Ukrainian civilians. Russia has acknowledged sustaining "significant" troop losses of its own. Russia said one of its latest missile attacks hit four S-300 launchers provided by a European country it didn't name. Slovakia gave Ukraine just such a system last week but denied it had been destroyed. Military analysts say that Russia's failure to capture the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and the bulk of territory throughout the country has in part been the result of its failure to control the skies over Ukraine to provide cover for ground troops. Nonetheless, its missile bombardment has virtually flattened some cities and one missile attack on a train station killed more than 50 people last Friday. Russia has not been able to stop the flow of more military aid to Ukraine, with eight to 10 flights arriving daily. Zelenskyy told the CBS News show "60 Minutes" on Sunday that Ukraine's fate depends on further Western military assistance. "To be honest, whether we will be able to (survive) depends on this," Zelenskyy said. "Unfortunately, I don't have the

confidence that we will be receiving everything we need."

European Union foreign ministers are meeting Monday to discuss another round of sanctions against Russia. Meanwhile, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, the first such visit by a European leader since Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24. In a statement after the meeting, Nehammer said the discussion with Putin was "very direct, open and tough." Nehammer said his most important message to the Russian leader was that the war in Ukraine must end because "in a war there are only losers on both sides." There was no immediate comment from the Kremlin.

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15. Russia Will Not Pause Military Operation in Ukraine for Peace Talks (Reuters, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia will not pause its military operation in Ukraine for subsequent rounds of peace talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday. Russian officials say peace talks with Ukraine are not progressing as rapidly as they would like, and have accused the West of trying to derail negotiations by raising war crimes allegations against Russian troops in Ukraine, which Moscow denies. Speaking in an interview with Russian state television, Lavrov said he saw no reason not to continue talks with Ukraine but insisted Moscow would not halt its military operation when the sides convene again. Lavrov said that President Vladimir Putin had ordered to suspend military action during the first round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in late February but that Moscow's position had changed since. "After we became convinced that the Ukrainians were not planning to reciprocate, a decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause (in military action) so long as a final agreement is not reached," Lavrov said.

Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it called a special operation to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities and root out people it called dangerous nationalists. Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance and the West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia in an effort to force it to withdraw its forces. Lavrov last week accused Kyiv of presenting Moscow with an "unacceptable" draft peace deal that deviated from agreements the sides had previously reached. Kyiv dismissed Lavrov's comments at the time as a tactic to undermine Ukraine or divert attention from war crime accusations against Russian troops. In the interview aired on Monday, Lavrov also said that calls by Josep Borrell, the European Union's top diplomat, for the bloc to continue arming Kyiv marked a "very serious U-turn" in European policy.

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PREPARE

16. Army Generals to Be Nominated to Lead European Command, Special Operations Command: Report

(MilitaryTimes, Meghann Meyers, 11 Apr 22)...

The current heads of U.S. Army Europe and Africa and Joint Special Operations Command have been chosen for new posts, according to a Wall Street Journal report. Gen. Christopher Cavoli will be nominated to lead U.S. European Command, U.S. officials told WSJ, and Lt. Gen. Bryan Fenton will be tapped for U.S. Special Operations Command. The White House and Pentagon declined to comment on the nominations Monday. Neither has been officially sent to the Senate to prepare for confirmation hearings. Fenton, a career Special Forces officer, took command of JSOC in July, after serving in the defense secretary's office as an adviser. Prior to that, he was the deputy commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. Fenton would be the first Green Beret in nearly 20 years to lead SOCOM. The current head of the command, Gen. Richard Clarke, cut his teeth in the 75th Ranger Regiment, as did Gen. Tony Thomas before him.

Cavoli has led U.S. Army Europe since 2018. He became the head of the Army's combined Europe and Africa command when they consolidated in October 2020. An infantryman-turned-foreign area officer, Cavoli previously led the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division. If confirmed, he would take over for Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, who has been at the center of the U.S. and NATO responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. EUCOM commanders automatically take on a second role as NATO's supreme allied commander. As the war in Ukraine has ramped up, the U.S. has mobilized more than 12,000 troops to Germany and eastern Europe. At the same time, there's ongoing discussion at the Pentagon and within NATO on what the U.S. force posture should look like on the continent going forward.

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#### 17. Nato's 'Achilles Heel': Alliance Conducts War Games in Nervous Lithuania

(Guardian, Philip Oltermann, 11 Apr 22)...

About 30km west of the Belarusian border, the enemy's tanks were rolling through the pine forests of Lithuania at speed until a makeshift obstacle made of barbed wire blocked their path. Soldiers carrying bolt cutters jumped out of the armoured vehicle at the front to clear the road. Then, a deafening bang. In its rush to victory, the advancing party had neglected to check the sandy terrain underneath the roadblock for mines. Luckily, for them, this was merely a dress rehearsal for a showdown between Russia and the North Atlantic alliance. No live explosives were used in Nato's "Rising Griffin" manoeuvre at the Pabradė military base in eastern Lithuania. Instead, referees politely informed the tank commanders that their vehicles would have been ripped to shreds. The Russian enemy was being impersonated by American and Norwegian troops. The western defenders may have notched up a tactical victory against an eastern aggressor on this sunny April morning, yet Nato's security architecture has never looked more fragile than in the spring of 2022, especially when viewed from Lithuania, a country long considered the alliance's achilles heel.

An independent republic since 1990, the southernmost of the three Baltic

states borders both Russia-allied Belarus on its eastern side and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on its western flank. On Russian television, pundits have openly urged the Kremlin to escalate the war in Ukraine by enforcing a military corridor along the “Suwalki gap” – Lithuania’s short border with Poland – thus cutting off the Baltics from other Nato-allied lands. “Until last November, we had the Russian army quite far away from Nato’s borders,” said Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania’s foreign minister. “Now the military activity is very close. To add to that, Lithuania lies between the territory of Belarus and the territory of Kaliningrad. Which puts us in a strategic situation that is, let’s say, interesting.” Since 2016, after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, “enhanced forward presence” battlegroups have been stationed in four member states on Nato’s eastern flank: Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The war in Ukraine has led the alliance to further bolster its presence in the region, with multinational battalions to be dispatched to Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. The military presence in Lithuania has been increased from approximately 1,200 to roughly 1,600 soldiers and equipped with new hardware, such as the German army’s light and mobile Ozelot anti-aircraft system, which can be used to protect airports from aerial assaults. But the function of these military units remains that of a “tripwire”: a reminder to hardliners in the Kremlin that invading what they may see as renegade breakaway nations of a former Russian empire would automatically trigger a military conflict with other western European states. But in their current state, there is little doubt the enhanced forward presence units would sooner or later be overrun. The scenario being rehearsed in the Rising Griffin exercise was a David v Goliath one, with the attacking force taking the role of the giant. The priority of Nato’s troops in the manoeuvre, said one officer, was to “delay the enemy”, not to hold the line.

As Nato members prepare to meet in Madrid in June, Lithuania, along with its Baltic neighbour Estonia, is calling on Nato to urgently adjust its posture in the region from deterrence to what it calls “forward defence”. “What we’re seeing in Russia and Belarus is now a dangerous country with the intention to attack other sovereign states,” Landsbergis told the Guardian. “It’s a double-edged sword: on the one hand Russia has proven in Ukraine that it is a declining regional power. On the other hand, it can still do a lot of damage on its way down, as it seems to have no regard for its own losses. We have to defend the Baltic states, especially those that are geographically interesting to Russia.” In keeping with the “founding act”, a political agreement signed by Nato and Russia in 1997, there are restrictions on how many western allied troops are allowed to be deployed to the Baltics, and how close they can be stationed to the border.

The enhanced forward presence in Lithuania, which is made up of seven European nations and led by Germany’s Bundeswehr, has to be rotated every six months at considerable cost and effort, with hundreds of vehicles having to be transported by road, rail or air before each changeover. While countries such as Germany and the UK remain committed to the founding act,

Lithuania and other states in the region say the document is no longer viable as a treaty. "We consider it null and void after what Russia has done," Landsbergis said. "The new reality we have to accept is that the treaties that built the old security environment with Russia are no more. We have to look at this with new eyes. There has to be a permanent military presence with everything needed to defend the skies, defend the seas and defend the land of the Baltic states." Estonia's prime minister last week called for the three Baltic states to be handed "war-fighting capabilities", with divisions of up to 25,000 soldiers per country. "The question we have to ask ourselves is: what will be the new global security architecture of the world after this war?" said Landsbergis. "At the moment, we are merely reacting to what is happening in Ukraine. But that has to change. We have to start thinking in strategic terms."

v/r,

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Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

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**From:**

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**Sent:**

Wed, 13 Apr 2022 03:38:41 -0400

**To:**

Anderson, Matthew D CTR DTRA OI (USA); Angell, Michael A CTR

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Apr 13, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your April 13, 2022 news.

COMPETE

1. Putin's Bullying Backfires as Finland and Sweden Edge Closer to Joining NATO  
(CNN, Luke McGee, 12 Apr 22)...

When Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, his goals were clear. He wanted to bring his neighbor to heel, assert Russian authority in Eastern Europe and make the West think twice about expanding militarily and politically toward Russia's borders. But in one important respect, Putin's plan appears to have failed: The war has united the West against Moscow in ways that seemed unimaginable in January. Now, Finland and Sweden -- nations that are officially non-aligned -- are edging ever closer toward joining NATO, the US-led military alliance. Finland is expected to produce a report on the country's security policy this week, a key step on the road to the nation potentially applying for NATO. That report is expected to start discussions in Finland's parliament about whether to pursue membership in the alliance -- discussions which Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said she hoped would wrap up "before mid-summer." Finland's foreign minister Pekka Haavisto said Monday that it was "important" that neighboring Sweden was following a "similar process" which he expects to take time. "But of course we exchange information all the time and, hopefully, if we make similar kinds of decisions, we could do them around the same time."

Sweden holds an election later this year, in which NATO is likely to be a key campaigning issue, with mainstream parties potentially not objecting to joining the alliance. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson did not rule out the possibility of membership in an interview with SVT at the end of March. Sweden is undertaking an analysis of security policy that's due to be completed by the end of May, and the government is expected to announce

its position following that report, a Swedish official told CNN. They said their nation could make its position public sooner, depending on when neighboring Finland does. Public opinion in both countries has shifted significantly since the invasion, and NATO allies and officials are on the whole supportive of the two countries joining. The only serious objection could come from Hungary, whose leader is close with Putin, but NATO officials think it would be able to twist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's arm. Given that Putin started his war demanding that NATO roll its borders back to where they were in the 1990s, the fact this is even being considered represents a diplomatic disaster for Moscow. And if Finland in particular were to join, Putin would find Russia suddenly sharing an additional 830-mile border with NATO.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned on Monday that expanding NATO wouldn't bring any more stability to Europe. "We have repeatedly said that the alliance itself is more of a tool for confrontation. This is not an alliance that provides peace and stability, and further expansion of the alliance, of course, will not lead to more stability on the European continent," he said. Rob Bauer, the head of NATO's military committee, told reporters on Tuesday that the alliance has not ruled out new members, but said it was ultimately up to Finland and Sweden to decide whether they want to join, Reuters reported. "It is a sovereign decision of any nation that wants to join NATO to apply for membership, which they so far have not done ... We are forcing no one into NATO," Bauer said. Nor has Putin's invasion motivated Ukraine to pull back from its desire for closer integration with the West. While the country is unlikely to join NATO, its efforts to join the European Union have accelerated since the start of the war. This would take a very long time and could also face stiff opposition from Hungary, which is already in a nasty battle with Brussels over its violations of the rule of law, causing the EU to propose suspending central funding to Budapest.

However, once again, the fact it's being talked about and the level of support among EU leaders and officials is another indication of just how united the West has become against Russia. It's worth noting that since the start of the war, the West has remained largely united in its response to Russia, be it through economic sanctions or military support for Ukraine. However, there are a few challenges coming up that will test how united this alliance against Russia really is. First, if it emerges that Russia has used chemical weapons in Ukraine, there will be enormous pressure for the West, particularly NATO, to take an even more active role in the war -- something the alliance has been reluctant to do so far. NATO members have already discussed red lines and what action should be taken in the event of chemical weapons, but those details are still private to prevent Russia from taking pre-emptive protective action. However, any NATO intervention would almost certainly lead to a less stable security situation in Europe, as the West would risk a military confrontation with Russia -- a nuclear power, which would likely respond by intensifying its attacks on Ukraine and possibly in other areas of traditional Russian influence. Second, the cost of living crisis in many European countries could soon test the unity of future Western sanctions on Russia and embargoes on Russian energy. If, ultimately, the economy of Western Europe is deemed more important than holding Russia

to account for waging war on its peaceful neighbor, then Putin could to some extent get away with invading an innocent country. But for now, as that unity largely holds, it is clear that Putin's desire to belittle the Western alliance has backfired -- and that the strongman has secured pariah status for his nation, possibly for years to come.

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## 2. Finland Finishes White Paper Set to Kick off NATO Debates (Bloomberg, Leo Laikola, 12 Apr 22)...

Finland is set to kick off a process that is likely to culminate in an application by Russia's Nordic neighbor to join the defense alliance NATO. The government, together with President Sauli Niinisto, on Tuesday finalized a white paper on changes to the nation's security environment following its former imperial master's attack on Ukraine. The report will be sent to parliament and made public when officially signed off by the government in a session due to take place on Wednesday. While no proposal to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is set to be included, the government is prepared to later file an addendum on such a proposal should the required backing for it emerge in parliament, Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has said. More than half of voting lawmakers now support joining the alliance, according to an unofficial tally by Finland's biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

Finland has seen a tectonic shift in attitudes toward the membership in NATO following the invasion of Ukraine, with the latest polls showing a majority of Finns now backing it. With the white paper set to be used as a vehicle for the parliament to debate the issue, a potential entry application could be filed before the 30-member bloc is set to meet for a summit in Madrid June 29-30. The Nordic nation of 5.5-million people, which has the European Union's longest border with Russia, has been warned by its eastern neighbor against joining NATO, raising concerns about potential aggression from Moscow. On Friday, Finland reported an attack on government websites and a suspected airspace violation by Russian aircraft. The changing security landscape and public opinion is also seeing governing parties move toward supporting a membership in NATO. During the weekend, Finland's Center Party, that's part of a five-party cabinet run by Social Democrat Prime Minister Sanna Marin, opened the door to a potential membership bid. In yet another sign of the change in opinions on security issues, Finns have also given a somber assessment of their eastern neighbor with 84% now seeing Russia a significant military threat.

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## 3. In Ukraine, Facebook Fact-Checkers Fight a War on Two Fronts (Washington Post, Naomi Nix, 11 Apr 22)...

First came a one-minute video taken on the streets of Bucha, a Kyiv suburb abandoned by retreating Russian forces. The footage showed numerous bodies, civilians in winter coats, scattered along the muddy roads like leaves on a fall day. Then came the deluge of misinformation: On social media, some argued the images were fake, that the bodies were actors pretending to be dead. Others falsely claimed the Ukrainian military had slain their own

countrymen. It fell to Valeriia Stepaniuk, 22, to set things straight. Stepaniuk fact-checks content for Facebook as part of her job at a think tank called VoxUkraine. After scouring credible news sources — such as a BBC article that said satellite imagery disproved Russian claims that the Bucha footage was staged — she and a handful of colleagues are compiling a report to debunk the misinformation flooding social media. “It was hard to write about this, to see everything the first several times,” Stepaniuk said from her home in the Western city of Lutsk. “But now I understand I can’t ignore this. Everyone should see the photos and understand the scale of tragedy.” Stepaniuk is part of a small group of independent fact-checkers in Ukraine who have long worked with Facebook to identify falsehoods on their social networks. When such outside groups determine a post is false, Facebook decreases its visibility in users’ news feeds and attaches a warning label pointing them to an explanation from the fact-checker. The role of these fact-checkers has become more critical since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. VoxUkraine started as a blog by economists in 2014, when Ukraine’s president decided not to sign a trade agreement with the European Union, prompting a wave of protests. Now, the think tank is part of a nascent coalition determined to slow the spread of misinformation about the war. These groups bolster Facebook’s own algorithms and thousands of content moderators who police content that breaks its rules.

Before the war, there were no groups assigned to fact-check posts in Russia, according to a Washington Post review, and only two examining content in Ukraine: VoxUkraine and StopFake. Now, there are eight additional groups policing misinformation in the region. The stakes are high, as social media is increasingly becoming a tool of modern warfare. Ukrainians and Russians have both been turning to social media to win hearts and minds around the world as the bloody conflict destroys Ukrainian infrastructure, claims thousands of lives and sends refugees flooding into neighboring countries. Both VoxUkraine and StopFake have lost workers to the front lines. Those who stayed behind have had to fit fact-checking into days filled with planning for escape to Western cities or taking cover during particularly violent moments. “It was very frustrating moment because you need to come to terms with the reality of war,” said StopFake editor in chief Yevhen Fedchenko. “The challenge was how are we going to operate a business in the fog of war.” Meta spokesperson Ayobami Olugbemiga said in a statement that during the invasion the company has “been providing significant resources to fact-checkers covering Eastern Europe to increase their capacity to help slow the spread of misinformation about the war in Ukraine and help ensure their safety.” Facebook, which was recently renamed Meta, has long faced criticism of its role in spreading misinformation globally, particularly in the midst of elections and global conflicts.

Last month, the tech giant announced it had taken down a network of accounts that were operating from Russia and Ukraine to target people there with claims that Western nations were betraying their country. A pair of whistleblower complaints filed to the Justice and Treasury departments in December and February allege that the company has allowed sanctioned entities and individuals to spread Russian propaganda on Facebook and Instagram. The company has hired thousands of content moderators and has trained its algorithms to catch misinformation that breaks the site’s rules

on hate speech and other issues. But it also started adding organizations like VoxUkraine and StopFake following the 2016 election, paying independent news outlets and small media organizations to debunk misinformation. Those organizations are members of the International Fact-Checking Network, which sets editorial standards for fact-checking organizations and is run by the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit research organization. Facebook is also frequently their member organizations' largest source of revenue. VoxUkraine, StopFake and others get access to a special dashboard, where they see a list of potential posts and links in a specific region that could be debunked, according to representatives of several fact checking organizations. Then fact-checkers like Stepaniuk can pick what they want to focus on, relying on government records, press reports and software to help identify false statements, misleading news and doctored imagery. For example, Stepaniuk recently focused her attention on an article with anonymous sources posted on Facebook claiming the United States planned to send the Afghanistan military to fight in Ukraine. She and her colleagues began scouring the Internet for evidence that could support a written explanation about why it wasn't true. They found a news report about a news conference held before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in which President Biden said he would not send troops to Ukraine. They also noticed that Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, reiterated that argument in March. And they pointed out that the Afghan National Army had collapsed when the Taliban took over the country last August. They posted an article publishing the results of their findings.

Months before Russia invaded, the Ukrainian-based StopFake was already developing contingency plans in case war broke out. They acted on warnings from foreign intelligence officials about Russia's increasing aggressiveness, Fedchenko said. He took those reports seriously in part because they kept seeing Russian propaganda that offered new twists on old claims such as Ukraine is a failed, fascist state and the Ukrainian military plans to take back control of Crimea with force. "We have been looking at disinformation for eight years and for us it was obvious that it's not the end, it's just the beginning," Fedchenko said. "That gives you a very kind of special attitude because we have a very small team of people who are fighting against a huge machinery of lies." StopFake started working on an editorial plan to cover the war. The group also mulled potential measures to shore up the security of their technological systems. And they thought about how to ensure their employees could get to safety in the event that Kyiv, where the group is based, was surrounded quickly by Russian forces, Fedchenko said. Just a couple of days before Russia's invasion, traffic was unusually high at Russian state-backed propaganda channels on Facebook and YouTube, which were promoting false claims about the war such as that Ukrainians had attacked Russians, according to a Post data analysis. The day Russia invaded, VoxUkraine staffers spent their morning Zoom call developing new products to fight misinformation about the war on the Internet, said Svitlana Slipchenko, the head of VoxUkraine's fact-checking arm. The group decided to further expand their fact checking program beyond Facebook to emerging platforms such as Telegram, where it seemed Russia propaganda was migrating. It also decided to launch a podcast to tell Ukrainians positive news about the war.

After their meeting, VoxUkraine managers began calling on their staff members to check in. Many of them talked about their plans to flee to cities in Western Ukraine such as Sumy and Kryvyi Rih. Some privately told their bosses they wanted to take a mental health break for a few days before returning to work. For others, debunking viral falsehoods was a welcome respite from the chaos of the invasion, said Slipchenko. “In some days, I just wanted to sit at the floor and cry about all that’s happening in Ukraine now,” Slipchenko said about the early days of the invasion from her Kyiv apartment, where she has heard explosions and seen smoke billowing from the city streets. “The work was the main factor that helped me deal with this situation. I know that I’m on the informational front of this war.”

That day Maksym Skubenko sat in his apartment mulling his next move to fight the Russian invaders. As chief executive of VoxUkraine, Skubenko had already mapped out contingency plans to swap intelligence with the government, and knew his 25-person team could function without him. So Skubenko, 30, chugged a couple small glasses of whiskey and took a taxi to enlist. Instead of using a computer to patrol the digital front lines of Russia’s war in Ukraine, he chose to fight with a gun. “We need to fight,” Skubenko said in a Zoom interview. “We need to become stronger and stronger — even stronger than we are right now — and to fight them because they will never stop.”

Three employees of StopFake’s 15-member team also temporarily left their posts to go fight in the war but Fedchenko replaced them by recruiting among alumni of the journalism school where he works.

After the conflict began, Facebook barred Russian state-controlled media outlets from advertising and said it demoted its content on its social networks. The company also started reaching out to a handful of organizations in nearby countries to ask them if they could also fact-check content appearing in Ukraine and Russia. And it added additional groups. Georgia-based Myth Detector is one organization that expanded its capacity to catch viral propaganda about the war. After the invasion, Meta expanded its agreement with the fact-checking site so the group could also debunk falsehoods appearing in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, according to Tamar Kintsurashvili, executive director of the Media Development Foundation, which started the site. To cope with the influx of Russian disinformation, the organization hired one additional Russian speaker and reallocated two others who speak the language to focus on fact checking, Kintsurashvili said. Latvia-based fact-checking group Re:Check was asked by Facebook to start checking content in Russia and Ukraine. Re:Check editor Evita Purina said their three-person team is still primarily focused on checking posts targeted at Latvian audiences, not the posts appearing in the other countries. Purina added that the group’s resources are “quite limited” but they decided to add another fact-checker. “We realized soon enough we don’t have resources enough to cover the war,” said Purina. “Comparing to January, for example, I would say we have tripled our amount of work.” Lead Stories, a global debunking website, has also started fact-checking Russian and Ukrainian language content. The group, which also has a partnership with TikTok, said last month it was onboarding at least half a dozen native speakers to handle posts about the war. “We’re building the runway as the airplane is taking off,” said co-founder Alan Duke.

More than a hundred fact-checking groups around the world have also joined

in to help debunk viral rumors about the conflict in their respective countries. The groups are coordinating so they don't duplicate efforts trying to fact-check the same myths — a strategy they developed while policing misinformation about the covid-19 pandemic. Now, the groups are pooling their debunked posts into a database and posting them on the website, #UkraineFacts. So far, there are more than 1,000 debunked posts on the site. "The key lesson was like immediate collaboration," said Enoch Nyariki, community and impact manager for the International Fact-Checking Network. "During covid, it was quite slow but I think this collaboration has benefited greatly from our initial working together." Facebook's fact-checking model — one of its primary methods of policing potential falsehoods on its sites — has some critics. Some have alleged that the outside groups can be too ideologically aligned to fairly determine what's true. Others question whether fact checking is a function Facebook should be taking on in-house. The issue has caught the attention of at least one member of Facebook's Oversight Board, an independent group of journalists, human rights experts and academics funded by the company and tasked with overseeing the company's content moderation decisions. "These organizations do not have any oversight," Oversight Board member Michael McConnell said about Facebook's fact-checking model.

On the front lines of the war, many are doing their best. Kyrilo Perevoshchykov, 23, spends his nights on a mattress on the floor in the underground shelter at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, where he is getting a degree in international relations. During the days, he goes back up to his dorm room where he reads the news, catches up with friends and fact-checks posts on Facebook. Sometimes, a loud siren warns him that it may be dangerous to be above ground so he heads back down to the shelter or to his windowless bathroom to take cover. Then it's back up to his dorm to fact-check. Last month, Perevoshchykov began looking into an online report that alleged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky fled Ukraine after Russia's invasion in February. Perevoshchykov debunked it by checking news reports showing interviews and news conferences held by Zelensky in his office during the first four weeks of the war. He also saw videos published by Zelensky's administration in which he mentions the popular viral piece of misinformation himself, Perevoshchykov said. Perevoshchykov, who may have to join the armed services when he graduates this spring, said informational warfare is just as important as combat on the front lines, he said. "It will be success for us that we prevent someone from falling into Russian lies and manipulation," he said. "But there is also a feeling that you are not doing enough — that you could not only write fact checking, but you could also volunteer or maybe help your soldiers."

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#### 4. Romania Hasn't Always Seen Itself as a Safe Haven. War in Ukraine Has Changed That

(NPR, Michel Martin, Liz Baker, Emma Bowman, Eliza Dennis, 12 Apr 22)...

Sasha and Eugenia had just crossed into Romania from Ukraine, carrying their 2-year old son and heavy duffle bags as they walked through a ferry checkpoint. Sasha, the father, says they decided to leave their home country a week earlier. It had been more than a month since the start of the Russian invasion, and the family had reached a breaking point. "Our child, he needs

special care," he says through an interpreter. "And then, all of a sudden, we realized we don't have the medicine; it is not available anymore. And that is the moment we got triggered. We decided we had to leave." More than 4.5 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the war erupted in late February. The vast majority, some 2.6 million, have traveled to Poland. Romania has seen the second-largest influx. For many of the more than 690,000 Ukrainians who have passed through Romania, the port city of Isaccea is the final stop on a difficult journey. For others, like Sasha, Eugenia and their young son, it's a way station, one stop among many on a long, unpredictable search for safety. The couple, who declined to give their last names, came from a village near the ferry departure point in the southern Ukrainian village of Orlivka. Eventually, they hope to reach California, where they have family. They arrived in Romania alongside hundreds of others after a 20-minute ferry ride across the Danube River. The throng of new arrivals entered the country wheeling large suitcases, pushing strollers and carrying pets across a bumpy metal ramp. They were greeted by aid workers, who helped them navigate a maze of relief tents and trucks filled with supplies. Daniel Petrov, a local first responder, is in charge of the extensive operation in Isaccea — one that includes border officials, volunteers and medics from three different agencies that all teamed up to respond to the flood of arriving Ukrainians. In the first weeks of the war, the boat ferried some 800 people on a single trip some days, Petrov says. During those early days, he says, "It was, I must say, traumatizing for both Ukrainians and us — the authorities — on this side." The reason, he explained, "I would use only one word: empathy."

Radu Umbres, a professor of anthropology at the National School for Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, says he was taken aback by his country's warm response to the refugees from Ukraine. "The image that we have of ourselves is that in general, we're not especially generous towards foreigners in particular," he says. "We have this idea that developed, rich countries are the ones that help. But in this case, even a rather small and not so affluent country as Romania has offered quite a lot of support for this, for these neighboring people." Romania's embrace of refugees from Ukraine, Umbres concedes, stands in stark contrast to how the nation responded during Europe's last major humanitarian crisis, when millions of migrants and refugees from across the Middle East and Africa sought safety on the continent, including in Romania. "We had refugees from Iraq, from Afghanistan, from Syria, and the general experience was that they were not welcomed," he says. "To be honest about the matter, it's clear that the empathy that Romanians felt for Ukrainian refugees comes from a certain amount of shared cultural heritage," he says. "Ukrainians are very similar to Romanians in many ways. Of course, we have also some shared post-communist history, [which] makes them in a way very familiar." Umbres says the crisis has also brought back echoes of Romania's own troubled history with Russia — memories that remain deeply personal and deeply painful for many. "So many people have personal histories in which their ancestors have been, in one way or another, hurt by the Russian power, by this kind of authoritarian state. So this, again, helps empathizing with them." Of more than 600,000 refugees who have traveled to Romania, roughly 80,000 have chosen to stay. What's unclear is how large that number may ultimately grow the longer the war drags on. "It's quite possible that many Ukrainians might end up staying in Romania for a long time, given the fact that the Romanian economy is doing rather well in the past few years,"

Umbres says. "I think that if I look towards the future, I think there's a good chance that we'll have a Ukrainian diaspora living in Romania for some time to come."

About 200 miles southwest of Isaccea, Romania's biggest train station, located in the capital of Bucharest, has transformed into another central hub for Ukrainians fleeing the war. Almost every corner of the Gara de Nord station is being used to assist refugees. There are separate waiting areas for women and children, men and families, where refugees can rest, eat and breastfeed. Yellow-vested volunteers stand ready to field questions. An abandoned storefront now houses refrigerators of food prepared by World Central Kitchen — one of the American-based NGO's 42 distribution sites in Romania providing hot meals to refugees. At a medical tent set up by the local fire department, an EMT named Faisal Hawat has been treating somewhere between 60 and 70 patients a day. Many of these people, he says, are struggling with insomnia and anxiety. In the area sheltering women and children, 5-year-old Dana, who's traveling with her parents, happened to be in Sri Lanka when Russia invaded Ukraine. But her teenage sister is stuck in Kharkiv, one of Ukraine's hardest-hit cities. Dmytro Ishchuk, Dana's father, says they can't find a way to get her out of the city. "They're just hiding in undergrounds, just waiting for a proper moment," he says, speaking through an interpreter. But he doesn't see such a moment in the near future. Sofia Kotlyarova, an 11-year-old singer and actor from Kyiv, is at the station with her mother and grandmother after her family spent more than a month volunteering in the Ukrainian capital. But after their neighborhood was bombed, says Sofia's mother, Ira, they decided it was time to evacuate. That meant separating from Ira's father, brother and husband, who are still in Ukraine. Under Ukraine's martial law, men between the ages of 18 and 60 aren't allowed to leave the country in case they are needed to fight. Kotlyarova's family has friends in Israel who are willing to take them in if they can get there. They aren't Jewish and don't have family in Israel, so they're hoping Sofia's fame can help their chances of getting in. But they've been disappointed before. The 11-year-old reflected on how quickly her family's lives have changed. Since the invasion, she says, her once-close friends in Russia are now ignoring her calls. "We always thought that Russia was our friend," Sofia says. "We will never forgive them."

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5. 480th Fighter Squadron Rapidly Deploys to Deter Russia on the Black Sea (Air Force Magazine, Abraham Mahshie, 11 Apr 22)...

As Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened Ukraine in early February, amassing some 150,000 troops along its border, worrying NATO allies, the U.S. Air Force needed to reassure eastern flank Allies, and fast. The 480th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, answered the call. They had one week to deploy to Romania with eight F-16Cs, 150 service members, and a million pounds of equipment. Seven days later, they were flying. "Usually these things takes months to plan," said 1st Lt. Jayce Webster, project manager for the mission support group "We had to plan airlift, plan ground movements, we had to plan the layout of everything within a week," he said. "So, when you talk about that agile combat, we were

able to do that before the jets landed, and we started running.” The 86th Air Base, as Fetesti is also known, also received a rotation of two F-35s as part of the air policing mission in mid-February. Romania is rapidly building up this base with new construction, but it’s not yet ready for new tenants. There are only hangers to accommodate the Romanian F-16s, so scheduling maintenance is hard.

Still, the Black Sea ally was eager to welcome the added air power. Romania cleared out a building, initially provided all the aircraft fuel, and shared the few spare parts that coincided with their own earlier model F-16 Block 15s. The 30-year-old U.S. aircraft require regular maintenance on wiring and computer systems to stay fully operational. To limit downtime during the five-day wait for spare parts, an aircraft is designated to be “cannibalized” for parts. “It’s just the avionics side, it breaks more often,” said Master Sgt. Christopher Paden, maintenance production superintendent. “The targeting systems, the digital flight control computer is a common part we change.” Now, close to 200 U.S. service members are helping to fly four daily NATO enhanced Air Policing sorties with Allies, protecting NATO’s skies alongside Romanian F-16s and MiG-21s, and British and Italian Eurofighters at nearby Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base. “It’s a daily integration with a partner nation,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. William Parks, 480th Fighter Squadron detachment commander, who uses a building where Romanian Airmen live and work.

The Romanian Air Force is looking to build its fleet of approximately two dozen MiG-21 Lancers with 49 second-hand F-16s in coming years. It’s already taken possession of 17 F-16s. NATO began enhanced Air Policing over the skies and Black Sea coast of Romania and Bulgaria in 2014 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The mission differs from Baltic Air Policing, which began in 2004, and protects the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which do not have their own combat jets. “We’re here just on the enhanced part of that air patrol, an extra visible and forward symbol to show U.S., Romanian, and NATO unity,” Parks said. The mission includes training and exercising with Romanian pilots, what’s known as “enhanced vigilance.” “Because of the info exchange, the experience exchange,” with USAF pilots, “... our troops get kind of like a second wind going towards progress,” said Romanian Lt. Alex Nasturel.

Fetesti Air Base is just over 50 miles from the coast of the Black Sea, which is now threatened by a heavy Russian air- and sea-presence. Non-Black Sea NATO ships are forbidden from entering during wartime due to the Montreux Convention, and U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance flights over international air space on the Black Sea are believed to have ceased. Russian fighter jets in recent weeks have tested NATO air space, causing NATO aircraft to scramble in response. With Putin repositioning his troops in the east and south of Ukraine, Romania has also begun to move armored vehicles and land forces to its border with Ukraine. Small villages dot the expansive green fields near the Romanian 86th Air Base. Its symbol, the prickly-leafed pink thistle flower, protrudes through the grass in and around the base in the chilly spring. Despite living at a hotel an hour away

in Constanta, along a strip of beach crowded with bars and clubs, the Spangdahlem Airmen avoid the nightlife. Their focus is on mission. Early the morning of April 9, before the 480th even began making its trademark jalapeno popcorn, Maj. Jared "Roam" Aschenbrenner and Capt. Sean "Sega" Sheldon were in a dark room watching slides and getting their "step brief" from Parks, who identified the Combat Air Patrol (CAP) zone in eastern Romania butting up against the border of Ukraine for the pilots to patrol. They would keep an undisclosed buffer distance from the border in accordance with NATO standards. Just across the Ukrainian border is the region of Odesa, thought to be a prime target in Putin's quest to cut Ukraine off from the sea and grab a prized port.

The total time for the CAP was four hours, meaning the pilots would make a 10-minute commute to the center of the country to hit a tanker over the Carpathian Mountains before finishing their sortie and high fiving their replacement enhanced Air Policing pair before returning to Fetesti. On their F-16C Block 50s were AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles, should they be needed. While air encounters have occurred between Russians and other NATO partners, Parks assured the Americans are trained to de-escalate. So far, the Russians have diverted after each intercept without incident. "We're here, we're present, we're showing that NATO's borders are secure," said Parks, who also flies patrols. "If an intercept has to occur, our primary job is to be de-escalatory. Let's go out, let's identify this person. Let's make sure he gets turned around and back to whatever nation or host country that aircraft is out of." With the sun just over the horizon as the hour neared the 0815 departure, 17 maintainers stood back from the two aircraft. Their job was done. The aircraft's GE engine had been roaring for some 40 minutes as all the checks were run. The chocks were pulled, and the two jets began to taxi, one behind the other. In minutes, they were airborne, launching in quick succession, then banking slightly left and rising almost vertically into the orange-hued clouds.

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#### 6. Biden Appears to Label Russian Atrocities in Ukraine 'Genocide' (Politico, Myah Ward, 12 Apr 22)...

President Joe Biden on Tuesday appeared for the first time to label Russia's atrocities in Ukraine genocide. Speaking in Menlo, Iowa, about his Build a Better America agenda and efforts to lower energy prices, the president said a family's financial situation in the U.S. should not be dependent on another leader's attacks "half a world away," in remarks likely aimed at Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Your family budget, your ability to fill up your tank, none of it should hinge on whether a dictator declares war and commits genocide a half a world away," Biden said. Biden's notable shift in rhetoric comes as other administration officials have so far avoided using the genocide designation. From national security adviser Jake Sullivan to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, officials have said they're monitoring the situation and have yet to reach consensus on whether the atrocities in Ukraine "rise to the level of genocide." "Based on what we have seen so far, we have seen atrocities," Sullivan said last week. "We have seen war crimes. We have not seen a level of systematic deprivation of life of the Ukrainian people to rise to the level of genocide."

The U.S. has long been reluctant to designate genocides. Just three weeks ago, the Biden administration formally labeled the Myanmar military's actions against the country's minority Rohingya population in 2016 and 2017 genocide and crimes against humanity. A flood of horrid imagery poured out of Ukraine last week, with the scenes out of Bucha prompting Biden to say Putin should be put on trial for war crimes. The Justice Department also announced last week that it was contributing to international investigations into alleged war crimes, further escalating U.S. involvement in holding Moscow legally accountable. Tuesday's rhetoric from Biden, whether a slip up or intentional, isn't the first time he's led the administration in a shift toward stronger language. Biden was one of the first U.S. officials to call Putin a war criminal, language other administration officials began to use freely in the following days and weeks.

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## 7. Ukraine War: US 'Deeply Concerned' at Report of Mariupol Chemical Attack

(BBC, 12 Apr 22)...

The US and Britain say they are looking into reports that chemical weapons have been used by Russian forces attacking the Ukrainian port of Mariupol. Ukraine's Azov regiment said three soldiers were injured by "a poisonous substance" in an attack on Monday. However, no evidence has been presented to confirm the use of chemical weapons. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said officials were working to "urgently" investigate what she called "a callous escalation" of the war. The Pentagon called the potential use of the weapons "deeply concerning". Western nations have warned that the use of chemical weapons would mark a dangerous escalation of the conflict and have pledged to take firm action if Russia carries out such attacks. Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said the government was investigating the allegations, adding that early assumptions suggested phosphorous ammunition had been used. Phosphorus is not classed as a chemical weapon under the Chemical Weapons Convention, but using it as an incendiary weapon near civilians would be illegal. On Tuesday, pro-Russian separatist forces in Donetsk denied carrying out the attack.

The Azov battalion, which has been heavily involved in fighting in Mariupol and has strong ties to the far-right, wrote in a Telegram post that Russian forces had dropped "a poisonous substance of unknown origin" during a drone attack at the city's large Azovstal metals plant. It said that its fighters had suffered minor injuries, including shortness of breath. One injured man described a "sweet-tasting" white smoke covering an area of the plant after an explosion. Another said he felt immediately unable to breathe and had collapsed with "cotton legs". The reported incident - which the BBC cannot independently verify - came hours after a spokesperson for the Moscow-backed Donetsk People's Republic urged Russia to bring in "chemical forces" to the besieged south-eastern city. Eduard Basurin told Russian state TV the remaining Ukrainian forces in Mariupol were entrenched at the Azovstal plant and that Russia should encircle it and "smoke out the moles". Speaking on Monday night, President Volodymyr Zelensky said any use of chemical weapons would mark a "new stage of terror against Ukraine" and called on Western

nations to arm his forces with the weapons needed to defend his country. "Unfortunately, we are not getting as much as we need to end this war sooner," Mr. Zelensky said. "I am sure that we will get almost everything we need, but not only time is being lost. The lives of Ukrainians are being lost — lives that can no longer be returned." UK Defence Minister James Heappey ruled nothing out in terms of a Western response if a chemical attack was confirmed. "There are some things that are beyond the pale, and the use of chemical weapons will get a response and all options are on the table for what that response could be," he said. Last month US President Joe Biden said Nato "would respond" if Russia used chemical weapons in Ukraine. "The nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use," he said.

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8. Pentagon Working With Congress on Additional Ukraine Funding (DefenseNews, Bryant Harris and Joe Gould, 12 Apr 22)...

The Defense Department's No. 2 civilian official said Tuesday the Biden administration plans to ask Congress for money to pay for U.S. troop deployments in Eastern Europe — on the same day Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., floated the possibility of additional Ukraine funding. Asked about the potential for additional funding to respond to the crisis, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said the Pentagon is working with Congress to backfill the cost of U.S. forces surged to Eastern Europe. Those forces were not included in the FY23 budget request, she said. "Congress on a bipartisan basis has been very forward leaning in terms of its interest in making sure they can help us be whole against those requirements," she said at a roundtable with reporters. "As we are able to kind of abrogate those costs, a lot of that is Army cost, in terms of Army movement. We make sure to capture those costs, and we're working with Congress." McConnell on Tuesday noted Congress may need to pass an additional funding bill to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "We may need to do another supplemental," McConnell said during remarks in his home state of Kentucky. "This is critically important that we win, that the Russians be defeated, that we do everything we can to punish them both on the economic side and military side." Congress finalized a \$1.5 trillion spending bill last month that provides \$13.6 billion in new aid for the Ukraine crisis. The money was in large part to restore military stocks of equipment already transferred to Ukrainian military units through the president's drawdown authority, while \$3.1 billion was to cover "deployment, operational, and intelligence costs" for U.S. forces deployed to Europe in response to the Russian actions.

Legislation supporting Ukraine and punishing Russia has become easy fodder in recent weeks for an otherwise bitterly partisan Congress to pass into law. President Joe Biden signed into law last week two separate bills penalizing Russia, which both the Senate and the House quickly passed before adjourning for a two-week recess. The Senate passed both pieces of legislation — one bill banning Russian energy imports and another suspending normal trade relations with Moscow — by a 100-0 vote. Separately, the Senate unanimously passed another bill last week intended to expedite military aid to Ukraine by easing statutory requirements under the president's authority to lease or loan defense articles to Kyiv. However, the House did not take action on the Ukraine bill before recessing. Hicks said the Biden

administration is in a “continuing dialogue” with Ukrainian officials over the types of weapons it plans to send, and that presidential decisions on the matter are pending. “Yes, we will continue to look at the type of capabilities that the Ukrainians are asking for in terms of how to give them more range and distance,” Hicks said. Washington is debating an increase to U.S. military deployments in Eastern Europe, which grew after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. That would represent another added expense. But any major changes in force posture will probably have to wait for the early July NATO summit in Madrid, Hicks said. “Given that we’re in the midst of operations now, those operations may continue for some time as they are,” she said. “I wouldn’t anticipate drastic changes in U.S. posture, and certainly not before there’s a summit where there’s a general understanding of what allied posture is going to be.”

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9. Pentagon Does 'Not Object' to Potential Transfer of Jets From Slovakia to Ukraine  
(Washington Examiner, Mike Brest, 12 Apr 22)...

The Pentagon would not stand in the way of a possible transfer of Slovakian fighter jets to Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Tuesday. Slovakia, which has already provided military technology to the Ukrainian military that the United States has back-filled, could provide MiG-29 fighter aircraft, Prime Minister Eduard Heger said Monday, according to Politico, though it's unclear how many the country would provide. “We certainly would not object to it. We have no right to object to it,” the defense official said, noting that the U.S., to its knowledge, was not involved in any of the discussion in facilitating the deal. Earlier during the war in Ukraine, the U.S. nixed a proposed Polish deal that would provide Ukraine with MiG-29 aircraft because the Polish wanted to transfer the planes to U.S. custody first. The Pentagon called the possible deal “high-risk” and not “tenable.”

The defense official specified that the objection to the previous possible agreement was the role in getting the planes to Ukraine, not Poland’s idea to provide the aircraft. “I want to stress again, from the very beginning, we said that these are sovereign decisions that nations can make, and we respect them, and if a nation wants to provide fixed-wing fighter aircraft to Ukraine, then that’s up to them to decide and for them to speak to. And what our goal again, our objections to the previous proposal was that the country in question expressed the desire to transfer them into our custody for us to deliver to Ukraine,” the official said. “That is what we objected to. We did not object to the idea of the provision of fixed-wing aircraft to Ukraine, and that will be a decision in this case for Slovakia to make,” the official continued.

The Slovakian government is looking to move away from relying on MiGs because the upkeep on such aircraft requires a “relationship” with Russia, Heger said, noting that they’re waiting two more years to receive U.S.-made F-16s. Ukrainian leaders continued to press Western governments for additional military resources as Russia has changed its operating tactics to

focus on the Donbas region, the eastern and southeastern part of the country. The U.S. alone has provided \$1.7 billion in military aid since Russia invaded. Last week, Slovakia provided the Ukrainians with an S-300 air defense system, and U.S. European Command repositioned one Patriot missile system to Slovakia in return.

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10. Putin Says Peace Talks With Ukraine Are at Dead End, Goads the West (Reuters, Guy Faulconbridge, 12 Apr 22)...

President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday peace talks with Ukraine had hit a dead end, using his first public comments on the conflict in more than a week to vow his troops would win and to goad the West for failing to bring Moscow to heel. Addressing the war in public for the first time since Russian forces retreated from northern Ukraine after they were halted at the gates of Kyiv, Putin promised that Russia would achieve all of its "noble" aims in Ukraine. In the strongest signal to date that the war will grind on for longer, Putin said Kyiv had derailed peace talks by staging what he said were fake claims of Russian war crimes and by demanding security guarantees to cover the whole of Ukraine. "We have again returned to a dead-end situation for us," Putin, Russia's paramount leader since 1999, told a news briefing during a visit to the Vostochny Cosmodrome 3,450 miles (5,550 km) east of Moscow. Asked by Russian space agency workers if the operation in Ukraine would achieve its goals, Putin said: "Absolutely. I don't have any doubt at all." Russia will "rhythmically and calmly" continue its operation but the most important strategic conclusion was that the unipolar international order which the United States had built after the Cold War was breaking up, Putin said. Putin said Russia had no choice but to fight because it had to defend the Russian speakers of eastern Ukraine and prevent its former Soviet neighbour from becoming an anti-Russian springboard for Moscow's enemies. The West has condemned the war as a brutal imperial-style land grab targeting a sovereign country. Ukraine says it is fighting for its survival after Putin annexed Crimea in 2014 and on Feb. 21 recognised two of its rebel regions as sovereign. Putin dismissed the West's sanctions, which have tipped Russia towards its worst recession since the years following the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, as a failure. "That Blitzkrieg on which our foes were counting did not work," Putin said. "The United States is ready to fight with Russia until the last Ukrainian - that is the way it is." Putin, who had been ubiquitous on Russian television in the early days of the war, had largely retreated from public view since Russia's withdrawal from northern Ukraine two weeks ago. His only public appearance in the past week was at the funeral of a nationalist lawmaker, where he did not directly address the war. On Monday he met the visiting chancellor of Austria at a country residence outside Moscow but no images of that meeting were released.

Putin dismissed Ukrainian and Western claims that Russia had committed war crimes as fakes. Since Russian troops withdrew from towns and villages around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have been showing journalists corpses of what they say are civilians killed by Russian forces, destroyed houses and burnt-out cars. Reuters saw dead bodies in the town of Bucha but could not independently verify who was responsible for the killings. Ukraine says Russia is guilty of genocide and U.S. President Joe

Biden has accused Putin of war crimes and called for a trial. Putin said he had told Western leaders to think a little about destruction by the United States of the Syrian city of Raqqa, the former de facto capital of the Islamic State caliphate, and in Afghanistan. "Have you seen how this Syrian city was turned to rubble by American aircraft? Corpses lay in the ruins for months decomposing," Putin said. "Nobody cared. No one even noticed." "There was no such silence when provocations were staged in Syria, when they portrayed the use of chemical weapons by the Assad government. Then it turned out that it was fake. It's the same kind of fake in Bucha." The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has found that poison gas was used repeatedly in Syria, including in Ghouta, an opposition-held suburb of Damascus. Russia has objected to those findings that implicated its ally Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Washington and its allies have denied targeting civilians in the 2017 air strikes on Raqqa, a Syrian city that had become the headquarters of the Islamic State militant movement the U.S.-led coalition was fighting. Putin, who says Ukraine and Russia are essentially one people, casts the war as an inevitable confrontation with the United States, which he accuses of threatening Russia by meddling in its backyard. Sixty one years to the day since the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin blasted off into the history books by becoming the first man in space, Putin drew an analogy between Soviet space successes and Russia's defiance today. "The sanctions were total, the isolation was complete but the Soviet Union was still first in space," he said. "We don't intend to be isolated," Putin added. "It is impossible to severely isolate anyone in the modern world - especially such a vast country as Russia."

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11. Putin and Lukashenko Describe Bucha Killings as 'Fake' and 'Staged by Englishmen'  
(Politico, Victor Jack, 12 Apr 22)...

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the mass killing of civilians in Bucha "fake" and praised Russia's "noble" war against Ukraine during a visit to eastern Russia with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday. "When it comes to Bucha ... it's the exact same fake as in Syria," Putin said, in reference to Russian claims from 2018 that the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian war was staged by foreign agents. Bucha was "a psychological operation staged by Englishmen," Lukashenko added. After Russian troops partially withdrew from Bucha, a town outside of Kyiv, earlier this month, authorities discovered roads lined with civilians apparently tied up and shot at close range, as well as mass graves of local residents. Russia has repeatedly denied it was responsible, but numerous media outlets have independently shown that it was unlikely the scenes were staged by Ukraine.

The Russian president was on a joint visit with the Belarusian premier to the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's far east to celebrate "Space Day" and discuss the two countries' space industries. "What is happening in Ukraine is a tragedy ... but they left us no choice," Putin said, adding that Russia's military "goals are absolutely clear and noble." He also slammed the U.S., alleging Washington was using Ukraine as a proxy conflict and was "ready to fight against Russia until the last Ukrainian" — while repeating claims it was "impossible" to isolate Russia with sanctions because of its size. Russia's economy — which has been hammered by sanctions, inflation and

capital flight since its invasion of Ukraine — is set to contract by over 10 percent this year, the biggest drop in GDP in more than two decades. Putin also told reporters that negotiations with Ukraine had reached a “deadlock” due to an “inconsistency on fundamental issues” and suggested talks may take place in Belarus in the future.

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12. A Fifth of Russia’s War Dead Are ‘Officers Sent to Command Putin’s Troops in Ukraine’  
(Independent, Rory Sullivan, 12 Apr 22)...

More high-ranking Russian soldiers have been killed in the conflict, Ukraine’s military has said, following reports that about 20 per cent of the Kremlin’s war dead are officers. The Ukrainian army said that Colonel Alexander Beshpalov, who led the 59th Guards Tank Regiment, and Lieutenant Colonel Vyacheslav Savinov, who worked in artillery reconnaissance, had died. Colonel Beshpalov’s funeral took place in the central Russian city of Ozersk on Friday, with his death first announced via a local messaging board post, which was later deleted. Their deaths come as the BBC Russian Service concluded that officers account for one in five Russian losses on the battlefields of Ukraine. In a sample of 1,083 dead Russian soldiers, there were 31 majors and 155 troops ranked between second lieutenant and captain, the broadcaster reported.

Experts believe the proportion of officer deaths could be slightly inflated due to the faster return of their bodies to Russia than those of rank-and-file soldiers. Speaking on Friday, Oleksiy Arestovych, a Ukrainian presidential adviser, said the Kremlin had refused to accept the corpses of 3,000 of its regular soldiers early in the war. “They said, ‘We don’t believe in such quantities. We don’t have this number. We’re not ready to accept them,’” he told The Washington Post. Moscow has been largely quiet about the number of casualties it has suffered since it invaded Ukraine on 24 February. In only its second update, Vladimir Putin’s regime said 1,351 Russian troops had died as of 25 March. However, Kyiv believes almost 20,000 Russian troops have been killed so far in less than seven weeks of fighting, more than the 15,000 Soviet soldiers who lost their lives in the Soviet-Afghan war, fought between 1979 and 1989.

Although Russia has not released a new death toll for some time, Dmitry Peskov, Mr Putin’s spokesperson, said last week that his country had seen “significant losses of troops”, describing it as “a huge tragedy for us”. On Monday, Western officials confirmed that Russian forces had sustained “extremely high casualties”, adding that they are becoming “increasingly difficult to lead”. The remarks were made as the Kremlin plans to heighten its attack against the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

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PREPARE

13. Army’s Cavoli to Be Next EUCOM Chief and NATO Commander in Europe,

Report Says  
(Stars & Stripes, John Vandiver, 12 Apr 22)...

Gen. Christopher Cavoli, a Russian speaker who has led the Army in Europe for the past four years, has been tapped to serve as the next head of U.S. European Command, according to a Wall Street Journal report. Cavoli would replace Gen. Tod Wolters, who is slated to retire, the Journal reported Monday, citing unnamed U.S. officials. The shakeup comes at a crucial time in Europe, where Russia's war on Ukraine has prompted the U.S. and its allies to send thousands more troops to NATO's eastern flank. If confirmed, Cavoli also would serve simultaneously as NATO's supreme allied commander. During his tenure at U.S. Army Europe and Africa, Cavoli has overseen a mission that was growing even before Russia's Feb. 24 full-fledged invasion of Ukraine. Additional units, such as the Army's 56th Artillery Command, have taken up new positions in Germany, marking a reversal from the decadeslong post-Cold War drawdown of U.S. troops in Europe.

In October 2020, Cavoli was promoted in connection with U.S. Army Europe and Africa's elevation to a four-star headquarters. Going forward as EUCOM chief, Cavoli is expected to play a key role in designing what the future U.S. mission in Europe will look like. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Army Gen. Mark Miley and other military leaders have said they anticipate more U.S. troops being based on NATO's eastern flank in the future in connection with concerns about further Russian aggression. That increase could involve rotational forces or a mix of revolving and permanently based troops. Cavoli, who was born to an Army family in Wuerzburg, Germany, during the Cold War, grew up at various military bases around Europe. A graduate of Princeton University, he served multiple tours in Afghanistan. He also is a foreign area officer and held a previous staff job as director for Russia on the Joint Staff. A replacement for Cavoli at Army headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany has not yet been announced.

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14. U.S. Amphibious Combat Group Deploys to the High North Amid High Tensions  
(Independent Barents Observer, Thomas Nilsen, 12 Apr 22)...

The North Atlantic with Iceland and northern Norway are critical communication links between North America and Europe in times of war. This winter, one NATO exercise has followed the other. The Norwegian-led Cold Response was followed by the Iceland-hosted, U.S. Sixth Fleet-led Northern Viking. Now, the largest warship that participated outside Keflavik last week sails into the waters of northern Norway with the U.S. 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, forces consisting of amphibious vessels, aircraft, helicopters, multi-role attack ships, logistics and a command unit. Training is set to kick off next week. "This is a very important allied unit from the U.S. Marine Corps," says Lt. Gen. Yngve Odlo, head of the Norwegian Operations Headquarters.

In case of war, Norway depend on reinforcement from allied forces.  
"Receiving and joint training with allied forces is very important and

contributes to high operational readiness. Norway, and especially parts of Nordland and Troms regions, are favorable training areas for several of our allied forces," Odlo notes. The amphibious assault ship "USS Kearsage" made port call to Tromsø on Monday. The dock landing ship "USS Gunston Hall" and the destroyer "USS Gravelly" are also taking part. With soldiers from the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit ready for fast reaction winter operations includes a tiltrotor squadron, the ground combat element, a landing team, aviation combat forces, and a logistic element. The training will last until early summer, the Armed Forces informs.

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#### 15. Albania's Former 'Stalin City' Looks West With NATO Airbase (AFP, 12 Apr 22)...

In an Albanian city once named for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, dozens of Soviet- and Chinese-made planes rust in the open air on a former communist airbase, some with flat tyres, others covered with dust. The site in the central city now called Kucova is being transformed into a modern NATO airbase, a symbol of Albania's westward shift -- and a key military buffer in Europe as Russia wages war in Ukraine. The renovation project was agreed in 2018 by the Balkan state and NATO, which has already committed \$55 million (50.4 million euros) to the project, according to Albanian sources. Construction began at the beginning of the year, ahead of Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine that has sparked fears of a spillover into NATO and EU member states. Though the timing of the Kucova base redevelopment was a coincidence, for some it is a welcome one. "The changed global security environment has now created considerable impetus for the completion of the (base) renovation plan," a NATO official in Brussels told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. The base, due to be completed in 2023, will give the "alliance an important strategic facility in the Western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Black Sea region", the NATO official said.

After decades of global isolation, Albania became a NATO member in 2009. It was shunned by much of the world under paranoid Communist dictator Enver Hoxha, who forged close ties with the Soviet Union and China before falling out with them over their apparent deviation from true Marxism. The country embraced the West after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, and today is eager to become an EU member. The defunct aircraft at the Kucova base are reminders of a chapter of Albania's history many are happy to leave behind -- and a signal to Russia which has sought to extend its influence in the region. "The construction of this base is a clear message to other players with bad intentions in the Western Balkans region," Albania's Defence Minister Niko Peleshi told AFP. The construction is certain to irk Moscow, which strongly opposes any NATO expansion into eastern and central Europe -- especially in the Balkans which has traditionally been torn between East and West. Today, Albania's neighbours Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia are all part of NATO too. For Scit Putro, who has worked in the finance department at the base for more than 30 years, it's a welcome confirmation of Albania's political allegiances. "Once in the East, we are now in our place, next to the West, which is a good step forward for all," he told AFP.

The 350-hectare (865-acre) site in the former 'Stalin City' was built in the 1950s under Hoxha with help from the Soviets, and completed later with a network of the same kind of underground tunnels that were dug across the country in case of nuclear attack. Once the NATO renovation is finished, it will function as a tactical operational base, kitted out with a refurbished runway more than two kilometres (1.2 miles) long, an updated control tower and new storage units. It will have the capacity to host state-of-the-art military aircraft and can also be used for refuelling and ammunition storage. Officials are also hoping the base, which once employed 700 people, will create new jobs in the poor region, 85 kilometres south of the capital Tirana. It will have a "very positive economic and social impact", said deputy commander of the base, Major Leandro Syka.

The aircraft now languishing on the airbase mainly consist of Chinese and Soviet MiGs, Soviet-made Antonovs and Yak-18s. At the end of the Cold War, the base had about 200 planes and 40 helicopters, which were put out of commission as they were obsolete. About 75 remain today, and their fate remains uncertain. The authorities have to yet to decide whether they will be auctioned, put in a museum or turned into scrap metal. For some, they hold painful memories from past conflicts. Former pilot Niazi Nelaj remembers clearly his first flight aboard a Mig-15, which bore bullet marks from combat in distant Asian countries. But the 85-year-old is happy to see the airbase aligned with NATO, and he believes Albania's previous pivot toward the East was only an "accident of history". "Albania's natural alliance has always been and will be with the West," he said.

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Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

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# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, March 21

## OVERVIEW

Amid growing concern that Russia could use chemical or biological weapons, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told *CBS News* the U.S. expected to see Russia continue attacks against Ukraine's civilian population in an attempt to re-establish momentum for their "essentially stalled" campaign. Separately, current and former Pentagon officials rejected Russian and Chinese accusations that the U.S. was funding biological weapons labs in Ukraine, and one senior official noted "Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction," the *Wall Street Journal* wrote. Also of note, INDOPACOM Commander Adm. John C. Aquilino said that China has installed missile arsenals, aircraft hangars, radar systems and other military facilities on at least three artificial islands in the South China Sea to expand offensive capability beyond their continental shores, the *Associated Press* reported.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. Austin vows 'significant reaction' if Russia uses chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine

*CBSNews.com (Face the Nation), Mar. 20 (1222) | Melissa Quinn*

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warned Sunday a chemical or biological weapons attack by Russia in Ukraine would prompt a "significant reaction" from the United States, as well as global allies and partners. "If a chemical or biological weapon was used, you'd see a significant reaction from not only the United States, but also the global community," Austin said in an interview on "Face the Nation." "I don't want to speculate about what exactly would change our calculation. I think engaging in hypotheticals is probably not helpful here either, but this is a very serious step and as you heard our president say, we won't take that lightly."

### 2. Pentagon Program Becomes Flashpoint

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A6 | Sharon Weinberger*

A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union -- and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War -- has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### 3. U.S. Admiral Says China Fully Militarized Isles

*Associated Press (Exclusive), Mar. 21 (0126) | Jim Gomez and Aaron Favila*

China has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea, arming them with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby, a top U.S. military commander said Sunday. U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Adm. John C. Aquilino said the hostile actions were in stark contrast to Chinese

President Xi Jinping's past assurances that Beijing would not transform the artificial islands in contested waters into military bases. The efforts were part of China's flexing its military muscle, he said.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Ukraine war is backdrop in U.S. push for hypersonic weapons**

*Associated Press, Mar. 20 (1105) | David Sharp*

Lagging behind Russia in developing hypersonic weapons, the U.S. Navy is rushing to field its first, with installation on a warship starting as soon as late next year. The United States is in a race with Russia and China to develop these weapons, which travel at speeds akin to ballistic missiles but are difficult to shoot down because of their maneuverability.

## **COVID-19**

### **5. Inside U.S. troops' fight against the Pentagon's 'unjust' COVID vaccine mandate**

*Washington Times Online, Mar. 20 (2106) | Ben Wolfgang*

They didn't make the decision lightly, as they were fully aware it would likely cost them their military careers. But for U.S. troops who refused the federally mandated COVID-19 vaccine, it was a sacrifice worth making. Washington Times interviews with several service members and the lawyers who represent them revealed a host of reasons for opting against coronavirus immunization. They include deeply held religious beliefs, fears of long-term health side effects and broader concerns about what objectors say is the increasingly heavy hand of government in their personal lives.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **6. White House: Biden to Visit Poland on Europe Trip This Week**

*Associated Press, Mar. 21 (0018) | Colleen Long and Ellen Knickmeyer*

President Joe Biden has added a stop in Poland to his trip this week to Europe for urgent talks with NATO and European allies, as Russian forces concentrate their fire upon cities and trapped civilians in a nearly month-old invasion of Ukraine. Biden will first travel to Brussels and then to Poland to meet with leaders there, press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement Sunday night.

### **7. 'Do the Right Thing': How U.S., Allies United to Punish Putin**

*Associated Press, Mar. 20 (1256) | Josh Boak*

Just days before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, President Joe Biden quietly dispatched a team to European Union headquarters in Belgium. These were not spy chiefs or generals, but experts in reading fine print and tracking the flow of money, computer chips and other goods around the world. Their mandate: inflict maximum

pain on Russian President Vladimir Putin, making it harder, if not impossible, for him to fund a prolonged war in Ukraine and denying him access to technologies at the core of modern warfare.

**8. Prosecutors May Seek To Resolve Sept. 11 Case Without a Capital Trial**

*New York Times, Mar. 21 (0300), Pg. A13 | Carol Rosenberg*

Pentagon prosecutors have struggled for more than a dozen years to hold the death-penalty trial of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and his four co-defendants at Guantánamo Bay. Now a trial prosecutor who has been on the case since the George W. Bush administration, Clayton G. Trivett Jr., is in talks with defense lawyers about trading guilty pleas for at most life in prison without parole.

**EUROPE**

**9. Ukraine Rejects Russian Offer of Passage Out of Mariupol**

*Associated Press, Mar. 21 (0137) | Cara Anna*

Ukrainian officials defiantly rejected a Russian demand that their forces in Mariupol lay down arms and raise white flags Monday in exchange for safe passage out of the besieged strategic port. Fighting for Mariupol has continued to be intense, even as the Russian offensive in other areas has floundered to the point where Western governments and analysts see the broader conflict grinding into a war of attrition. Ukrainian officials rejected the Russian proposal for safe passage out of Mariupol even before Moscow's 5 a.m. deadline for a response came and went.

**10. Ukraine Assault Uproots 10 Million**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A1 | Alan Cullison, Isabel Coles and Matthew Luxmoore*

Russia's assault on Ukraine has forced more than 10 million people to abandon their homes, the United Nations said, with the scale of the humanitarian disaster showing little sign of easing as Moscow presses its attack with missile strikes and artillery fire.

**11. As Russian advances slow, a stalemate may be on the horizon**

*Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A1 | Liz Sly and Dan Lamothe*

Russia's attempt to conquer Ukraine could be headed toward a stalemate as heavy casualties and equipment losses take a toll on unprepared Russian forces that have failed so far to achieve any of their initial objectives, Western officials and military experts say.

**12. US and NATO officials struggle to decipher status of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine**

*CNN.com, Mar. 20 (2200) | Zachary Cohen, Natasha Bertrand and Alex Marquardt*

US and NATO officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin has not backed off his original demands in talks with Ukraine, and there is a heavy dose of skepticism in Western capitals about how credible Moscow's

engagement truly is -- even as the status of those negotiations remains difficult to decipher, according to multiple sources briefed on the situation.

**13. Ukraine finally rotates workers at Chernobyl – IAEA**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 21 (0337) | Not Attributed*

Ukraine has managed to rotate staff working at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant for the first time since Russia seized it last month as it invaded its neighbour, the UN's nuclear agency said.

**14. Ukraine's military is winning with agile defenses, measured weapons use and fierce will**

*Washington Times Online, Mar. 20 (1940) | Bill Gertz and Mike Glenn*

Outgunned Ukrainian forces are winning the war so far against the invading Russians with unique tactics, effective use of weapons and fighters who have exhibited a fierce commitment to defending their nation, military analysts say. In particular, the anti-tank missiles supplied to Ukraine in advance of the month-old war played a major role in thwarting the advances of Russian tanks and armored vehicles, and the anti-aircraft systems denied Moscow control of the skies.

**15. US delivers air defence system to Slovakia**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 20 (1158) | Not Attributed*

The US-made Patriot air defence system is on its way to Slovakia, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said Sunday, paving the way for Bratislava to possibly deliver similar hardware to Ukraine.

**16. Signed up to fight, some foreigners wait in frustration**

*Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A1 | Sudarsan Raghavan*

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, thousands of Americans and other foreign nationals have signed up to fight for Ukraine, answering a call to action by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Now, with the conflict in its fourth week, a growing number of foreign volunteers are flowing into the capital, signing contracts and receiving weapons and combat training before being deployed to one of the numerous front lines of the war.

**17. On NATO's eastern edge, high stakes for exposed Baltics**

*Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A13 | Missy Ryan, Michael Birnbaum, Paul Sonne and Steve Hendrix*

As Russia presses its invasion deeper into Ukraine, Baltic leaders say the world has finally woken up to the admonitions they have been making for years: that Putin is prepared to use force, like he did in Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, to advance his political goals. As the global implications of Putin's assault set in, Baltic nations' appeals for greater deterrence are translating into additional troop and aircraft deployments. Already in recent months, new NATO and U.S. forces have been dispatched to the region. In Estonia, a British-led force of some 2,500 NATO troops conducts training and exercises with local forces. Additional NATO forces are there

for the Baltic air policing mission, which now includes American F-35s and British and U.S. F-16s. There are also American F-35s in Lithuania.

**18. Is an EU Army Coming?**

*ForeignPolicy.com (Interview), Mar. 20 (1338) | Elisabeth Braw*

The war in Ukraine, politicians and pundits agree, is the European Union's sudden birth as a serious military player. Germany has announced that it will dramatically increase its defense spending and is sending weapons to Ukraine—a previously unthinkable development. The European Union, heretofore mostly known as an outfit that voices concerns about military aggression but does nothing, has already sent Ukraine military aid worth more than half a billion dollars. But what exactly the EU's military role should be remains painfully unclear: Member states have widely different opinions on the matter, and European security is of course already being looked after by NATO. What, exactly, can the EU do to grow its military muscle without causing affront to its Brussels neighbor? Severe crises below NATO's Article 5 threshold, in a way, pose an opportunity for the EU to make a real military contribution. Its Military Committee—composed of member states' defense chiefs—has the daunting task of mapping a course. At the center sits its chair, Gen. Claudio Graziano.

**RUSSIA**

**19. Putin Is Seen as Shifting to Plan B**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A1 | Michael R. Gordon and Alex Leary*

After Russian forces failed to secure a quick victory over Ukraine, senior U.S. officials see signs the Kremlin is shifting to a new strategy to secure key territorial objectives while seeking leverage to compel the Ukrainian government to accept neutrality between Russia and the West. The new assessment of Mr. Putin's intentions, which is shared by senior officials within the Biden administration, is to compel Kyiv to accept Russian claims to Ukraine's southern and eastern territories. Having seized both Crimea and regions of Donbas in 2014, Russia seeks to secure a "land bridge" between western Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, and to expand Russian control of the Donbas region.

**20. Blame Game Begins For Russia Agencies**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A6 | Warren P. Strobel and Michael R. Gordon*

Recriminations and finger-pointing have begun within Russia's spy and defense agencies, as the campaign that Moscow expected to culminate in a lightning seizure of Ukraine's capital has instead turned into a costly and embarrassing morass, U.S. officials said. The blame game, which includes the detention of at least one senior Russian intelligence official, doesn't appear to pose any immediate threat to Russian President Vladimir Putin's iron grip on power, but the U.S. officials are watching the machinations closely.

**21. For Putin, 'Truth' Is Just Another Front Line**

*New York Times, Mar. 21 (0300), Pg. A1 | Steven Lee Myers and Stuart A. Thompson*

Disinformation in wartime is as old as war itself, but today war unfolds in the age of social media and digital diplomacy. That has given Russia -- and its allies in China and elsewhere -- powerful means to prop up the claim that the invasion is justified, exploiting disinformation to rally its citizens at home and to discredit its enemies abroad. Truth has simply become another front in Russia's war. Russia's message has proved successful domestically, where the Kremlin's claims go unchallenged. Surveys suggest a majority of Russians support the war effort. Internationally, the campaign has seeped into an information ecosystem that allows them to spread virulently, reaching audiences that were once harder to reach.

**22. U.S. envoy to U.N. decries 'disturbing' accounts of Ukrainians deported to Russia**

*Reuters, Mar. 20 (1350) | Ted Hesson and Richard Cowan*

Accounts that thousands of residents of Ukraine's besieged port city of Mariupol have been forcibly deported to Russia are "disturbing" and "unconscionable" if true, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Sunday.

**23. Why Russia's tank war stalled in Ukraine**

*CBSNews.com (Sunday Morning), Mar. 20 (0914) | Not Attributed*

The stalled and sputtering spectacle the Russian military is making of itself in Ukraine came as a revelation to General Frank McKenzie -- and almost certainly to Vladimir Putin as well. "I am surprised at the problems they were having," McKenzie said. "It should be very concerning to Russian leadership."

## **CHINA**

**24. China Will Work to De-Escalate War in Ukraine, Diplomat Says**

*Bloomberg News, Mar. 20 (2256) | Tony Czuczka*

China's top envoy to Washington pledged his country "will do everything" to de-escalate the war in Ukraine, but refused to condemn Russia's attack and branded such requests "naive." "There's disinformation about China providing military assistance to Russia," Ambassador Qin Gang said on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday. China isn't sending "weapons and ammunitions to any party," he said, calling Beijing's "common interests" with Russia an "asset" that could help peace talks.

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**25. India's Dependence on Russian Weapons Tethers Modi to Putin**

*Bloomberg News, Mar. 20 (1900) | Sudhi Ranjan Sen*

For all the success of the U.S.-led campaign to isolate Russia on the world stage, India has stood out as one major democracy that has been reluctant to criticize Vladimir Putin -- and billions of dollars in weapons purchases mean that's unlikely to change anytime soon.

**26. Eying China, Japan breaks with past for strong Ukraine response**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 20 (2153) | Not Attributed*

Japan has broken with years of precedent in its tough response to the Ukraine invasion, and the conflict could reshape Tokyo's defence strategy as it confronts China's regional ambitions, analysts say.

**27. Biden administration rules Myanmar army committed genocide against Rohingya**

*Reuters (Exclusive), Mar. 20 (1508) | Humeysra Pamuk and Simon Lewis*

The Biden administration has formally determined that violence committed against the Rohingya minority by Myanmar's military amounts to genocide and crimes against humanity, U.S. officials told Reuters, a move that advocates say should bolster efforts to hold the junta that now runs Myanmar accountable.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

**28. U.S. Delivers Patriot Missiles to Saudis**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A12 | David S. Cloud*

The Biden administration has transferred a significant number of Patriot antimissile interceptors to Saudi Arabia within the past month, fulfilling Riyadh's urgent request for a resupply amid sharp tensions in the relationship, senior U.S. officials said.

## **AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN**

**29. How Afghanistan's Militant Groups Are Evolving Under Taliban Rule**

*Voice of America News, Mar. 20 (1305) | Jeff Seldin*

Intelligence agencies worldwide are warning that Taliban rule in Afghanistan is radically reshaping terrorist and militant groups in South Asia and around the world. Specifically, intelligence and counterterrorism officials say that despite Taliban promises to sever ties with al-Qaida and oppose terror groups such as the Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, as codified in the 2020 Doha agreement with the United States, there has been scant evidence of progress.

## **MARINE CORPS**

**30. Marines Corps identifies Marines killed in Norway Osprey crash**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 20 (2045) | Phillip Walter Wellman*

The Marine Corps on Monday identified four Marines killed during a training accident in northern Norway last week.

## **MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY**

### **31. Q&A with Dr. Martin Lindsey, Science & Technology Advisor to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command**

*National Defense Magazine Online, Mar. 20 (1918) | Stew Magnuson*

Dr. Martin Lindsey is the principal science and technology Advisor to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. He advises command staff and advocates for S&T activities that better enable warfighters serving in the region to accomplish their assigned missions. He also engages with service and agency laboratories and pursues cooperative efforts with international partners and allies within the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. He spoke by phone with National Defense Editor in Chief Stew Magnuson after the conclusion of the Pacific Operational Science and Technology (POST) conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, organized by the National Defense Industrial Association. The interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

### **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

#### **32. Don't Go Wobbly on Ukraine Now**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A20 | Editorial*

The Ukrainian people are making great sacrifices fighting against Russia's war machine, and their resistance is helping the free world. As NATO's leaders meet this week in Brussels, now is the time for the alliance to repay this fortitude by escalating support for Kyiv.

#### **33. The Next NATO Expansion**

*Wall Street Journal Online, Mar. 20 (1655) | Editorial*

One lesson of Russia's assault on Ukraine is that NATO continues to be vital to European security. Would Ukraine be under siege today if it were a member of the alliance? This is something to keep in mind as discussions about Sweden and Finland pursuing membership advance.

### **TOP STORIES**

#### **1. Austin vows 'significant reaction' if Russia uses chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine**

*CBSNews.com (Face the Nation), Mar. 20 (1222) | Melissa Quinn*

Washington -- Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warned Sunday a chemical or biological weapons attack by Russia in Ukraine would prompt a "significant reaction" from the United States, as well as global allies and partners.

"If a chemical or biological weapon was used, you'd see a significant reaction from not only the United States, but also the global community," Austin said in an interview on "Face the Nation." "I don't want to speculate about what exactly would change our calculation. I think engaging in hypotheticals is probably not helpful here either, but this is a very serious step and as you heard our president say, we won't take that lightly."

Twenty-five days after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces are struggling in their effort to take over the capital city of Kyiv but have continued their brutal bombardment of civilians.

In the port city of Mariupol, Ukrainian officials have accused Russia of bombing an art school where 400 people were sheltering, marking the second attack of a public building where civilians were taking shelter in less than a week. Russian forces struck a theater in Mariupol where more than 1,300 people were believed to be inside last week.

Outside of other major cities, Russia's advance has largely stalled, though there has been growing concern among Ukrainian and U.S. officials that Moscow could use chemical or biological weapons in the ongoing war.

The White House last week said Russia could escalate its attack by using such weapons or claiming Ukraine used chemical or biological weapons in a "false flag" attack as a pretext for more violence.

Russian officials, meanwhile, have accused the U.S. of working on secret biological and chemical programs inside Ukraine, a claim the White House has rebuked as absurd and part of a ploy by Russia to try to justify its attack on Ukraine.

Austin said that the U.S. has in the past seen Russia "raising issues and creating a pretext so that if they did something in the battle space, they could blame it on somebody else, either Ukrainians, us, NATO."

"This could possibly be what we're seeing today," he said.

Austin said the U.S. expects to see Russia's attacks on civilians in Ukraine continue as a result of its stalled campaign and in an attempt by Russian President Vladimir Putin to re-establish momentum.

"They're not being effective today in terms of their maneuver forces on the ground. They're essentially stalled," he said. "It's had the effect of [Putin] moving his forces into a wood chipper."

Austin commended the Ukrainian people for their defense of the country against Russia, saying they have shown "significant resolve" and been effective at using the weapons and equipment provided by the U.S.

"What we've seen in the past is that the Ukrainians have counterattacked, that they've used their initiative to move things around on the battlefield and they've presented some significant problems for the Russians," he said.

The Biden administration has provided Ukraine with \$2 billion in security assistance since 2021, and Congress earlier this month approved \$13.6 billion in humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine and Eastern European allies.

Still, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged the U.S. to help create a no-fly zone over his country's skies, a move President Biden has opposed due to concerns it would further escalate tensions with Russia.

Austin, though, said the U.S. will work with allies and partners to help create conditions for Ukraine to get equipment like Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missile systems and “ensure they have the ability to protect their skies going forward.”

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## **2. Pentagon Program Becomes Flashpoint**

*U.S. worked to secure dangerous materials; Moscow accuses it of funding biowarfare*

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A6 | Sharon Weinberger

On his first official visit abroad, the new senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, was taken to a facility in Ukraine where the U.S. helped scientists working with dangerous biological materials. But rather than produce biological weapons, U.S. officials in that ramshackle building were trying to prevent lethal pathogens from falling into the hands of terrorists.

“I removed a tray of glass vials containing *Bacillus anthracis*, which is the bacterium that causes the anthrax,” recalls Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official who was in charge of the U.S.-funded program that worked with the Ukrainian government. Mr. Weber said he showed the tray “to a very concerned-looking young senator.”

Mr. Obama himself recalled seeing in his 2005 trip to Ukraine “test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded.”

A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union -- and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War -- has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow has accused the Pentagon of funding weapons work in Ukraine’s biological laboratories. “These were not peaceful experiments,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month.

China, whose leader Xi Jinping has cultivated a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has echoed those allegations. “Russia has found during its military operations that the U.S. uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans,” the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

U.S. officials have flatly denied those claims and warned that Moscow could use its allegations to justify its own use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine.

“We believe that Moscow may be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon and then falsely blame Ukraine to justify escalating its attacks on the Ukrainian people,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week. “Manufacturing events and creating false narratives of genocide to justify greater use of military force is a tactic that Russia has used before.”

The allegations have shocked those who are most familiar with the Pentagon's post-Cold War initiative, called the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. That is because not only has Russia been aware of the Pentagon's work securing chemical, biological and nuclear facilities across the former Soviet Union, but it had also been its beneficiary for many years.

"They're outrageous claims," said Robert Pope, the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, or DTRA, the arm of the Pentagon in charge of running the program. "We were created 30 years ago to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction."

The program, which dates back to 1991 and continues today, stretches across the former Soviet Union. Since the program started, the Pentagon has spent approximately \$12 billion on securing material used in weapons of mass destruction in post-Soviet republics, according to a DTRA spokeswoman. Of those funds, about \$200 million has been spent on the biological work in Ukraine since 2005. The funds have supported dozens of labs, health facilities and diagnostic sites around the country, the DTRA spokeswoman said.

Mr. Weber, who was in charge of negotiating the initial agreement with Kyiv to work on securing the country's biological materials and facilities, said that work expanded to Ukraine after the 9/11 attacks, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. U.S. policy makers grew worried about the potential for terrorists to steal biological materials -- fears that were heightened after letters containing anthrax were sent through the U.S. mail to congressional offices and media outlets. The Federal Bureau of Investigation eventually concluded that an American scientist employed at a military lab sent the letters.

The president of Ukraine at the time, Leonid Kuchma, concerned about the threat of terrorism in his own country, asked the U.S. for help. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, Ukraine had been starved of the funds needed to secure its biological facilities.

Mr. Weber put together a team that visited Ukraine's biological and chemical facilities, which ranged from large laboratories to small veterinary research centers.

"We found that a number of them had dangerous pathogen collections left over from Soviet days," he said. "They were in pretty bad shape."

Ukraine's laboratories -- unlike some in other former Soviet republics -- weren't directly involved in the Cold War biological-weapons program, but they did have pathogens that fed into offensive work, according to Mr. Weber.

Those pathogens, like anthrax, could pose a threat if released, whether accidentally or on purpose. The focus of U.S. work in Ukraine was to consolidate that biological material, much of it related to agriculture, into secure facilities, which the U.S. would pay to build or upgrade.

Paul McNelly, who from 1995 to 2003 directed the Defense Department's chemical and biological elimination programs in Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, said he was stunned with what he saw inside the former Soviet facilities.

"You would walk into these places and the refrigerators that stored these dangerous pathogens, they had no locks on them at all," Mr. McNelly said. "There would be vials that were labeled tularemia, plague, different things like that. And these people, most of them, weren't masked. Their gowns were antiquated." He added: "It was horrible."

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### **3. U.S. Admiral Says China Fully Militarized Isles**

Associated Press (Exclusive), Mar. 21 (0126) | Jim Gomez and Aaron Favila

OVER THE SOUTH CHINA SEA -- China has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea, arming them with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby, a top U.S. military commander said Sunday.

U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Adm. John C. Aquilino said the hostile actions were in stark contrast to Chinese President Xi Jinping's past assurances that Beijing would not transform the artificial islands in contested waters into military bases. The efforts were part of China's flexing its military muscle, he said.

"I think over the past 20 years we've witnessed the largest military buildup since World War II by the PRC," Aquilino told The Associated Press in an interview, using the initials of China's formal name. "They have advanced all their capabilities and that buildup of weaponization is destabilizing to the region."

There were no immediate comments from Chinese officials. Beijing maintains its military profile is purely defensive, arranged to protect what it says are its sovereign rights. But after years of increased military spending, China now boasts the world's second-largest defense budget after the U.S. and is rapidly modernizing its force with weapons systems including the J-20 stealth fighter, hypersonic missiles and two aircraft carriers, with a third under construction.

Aquilino spoke with the AP onboard a U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft that flew near Chinese-held outposts in the South China Sea's Spratly archipelago, one of the most hotly contested regions in the world. During the patrol, the P-8A Poseidon plane was repeatedly warned by Chinese callers that it illegally entered what they said was China's territory and ordered the plane to move away.

“China has sovereignty over the Spratly islands, as well as surrounding maritime areas. Stay away immediately to avoid misjudgment,” one of the stern radio messages said in a veiled threat.

But the U.S. Navy plane dismissed the multiple warnings and pressed on defiantly with its reconnaissance in brief but tense moments witnessed by two AP journalists invited onboard. “I am a sovereign immune United States naval aircraft conducting lawful military activities beyond the national airspace of any coastal state,” a U.S. pilot radioed back to the Chinese.

“Exercising these rights is guaranteed by international law and I am operating with due regard to the rights and duties of all states,” he said.

Navy commanding officer Joel Martinez, who led the P-8A Poseidon’s crew, said there has been an incident when a Chinese jet flew close to a U.S. aircraft in a dangerous maneuver in the disputed region. The U.S. flight crew calmly reminded the Chinese to comply with aviation safety regulations, he said.

As the P-8A Poseidon flew as low as 15,000 feet (4,500 meters) near the Chinese-occupied reefs, some appeared to be like small cities on screen monitors, with multi-story buildings, warehouses, hangars, seaports, runways and white round structures Aquilino said were radars. Near Fiery Cross, more than 40 unspecified vessels could be seen apparently anchored.

Aquilino said the construction of missile arsenals, aircraft hangars, radar systems and other military facilities on Mischief Reef, Subi Reef and Fiery Cross appeared to have been completed but it remains to be seen if China will pursue the construction of military infrastructure in other areas.

“The function of those islands is to expand the offensive capability of the PRC beyond their continental shores,” he said. “They can fly fighters, bombers plus all those offensive capabilities of missile systems.”

He said any military and civilian plane flying over the disputed waterway could easily get within range of the Chinese islands’ missile system.

“So that’s the threat that exists, that’s why it’s so concerning for the militarization of these islands,” he said. “They threaten all nations who operate in the vicinity and all the international sea and airspace.”

China sought to shore up its vast territorial claims over virtually the entire South China Sea by building island bases on coral atolls nearly a decade ago. The U.S. responded by sending its warships through the region in what it calls freedom of operation missions. The United States has no claims itself but has deployed Navy ships and aircraft for decades to patrol and promote free navigation in international waterway and airspace.

China routinely objects to any action by the U.S. military in the region. The other parties — the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei — claim all or part of the sea, through which approximately \$5 trillion in goods are shipped every year.

Despite China's aggression, the long-simmering territorial conflicts should only be resolved peacefully, Aquilino said, and cited the Philippine government's successful move to bring its disputes with China to international arbitration in 2013 as a good template.

A U.N.-backed arbitration tribunal that handled the case invalidated China's sweeping historical claims in the South China Sea under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea. Beijing dismissed the ruling as sham and continues to defy it.

Washington's main objective in the disputed region is "to prevent war" through deterrence and promote peace and stability, including by engaging American allies and partners in projects with that objective, Aquilino said.

"Should deterrence fail, my second mission is to be prepared to fight and win," said Aquilino, who leads the largest U.S. combatant command with 380,000 military and civilian personnel covering 36 nations and territories.

*--Associated Press writer David Rising in Bangkok contributed to this report*

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## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Ukraine war is backdrop in U.S. push for hypersonic weapons**

Associated Press, Mar. 20 (1105) | David Sharp

PORTLAND, Maine -- Lagging behind Russia in developing hypersonic weapons, the U.S. Navy is rushing to field its first, with installation on a warship starting as soon as late next year.

The United States is in a race with Russia and China to develop these weapons, which travel at speeds akin to ballistic missiles but are difficult to shoot down because of their maneuverability.

The Russian military says it already deployed hypersonic missiles, claiming on both Saturday and Sunday to have deployed them against targets in Ukraine marking the weapon's first use in combat. The Pentagon couldn't confirm a hypersonic weapon was used in the attacks.

The American military is accelerating development to catch up.

The U.S. weapon would launch like a ballistic missile and would release a hypersonic glide vehicle that would reach speeds seven to eight times faster than the speed of sound before hitting the target.

In Maine, General Dynamics subsidiary Bath Iron Works has begun engineering and design work on changes necessary to install the weapon system on three Zumwalt-class destroyers.

The work would begin at a yet-to-be-named shipyard sometime in fiscal year that begins in October 2023, the Navy said.

Hypersonic weapons are defined as anything traveling beyond Mach 5, or five times faster than the speed of sound. That's about 3,800 mph (6,100 kph). Intercontinental ballistic missiles far exceed that threshold but travel in a predictable path, making it possible to intercept them.

The new weapons are maneuverable.

Existing missile defense systems, including the Navy's Aegis system, would have trouble intercepting such objects because maneuverability makes their movement unpredictable and speed leaves little time to react.

Russia says it has ballistic missiles that can deploy hypersonic glide vehicles as well as a hypersonic cruise missile.

The U.S. is "straining just to catch up" because it failed to invest in the new technology, with only a fraction of the 10,000 people who were working on the program in the 1980s, said U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, a Tennessee Democrat who's chair of a subcommittee that monitors the program.

"If we want to pursue parity, we will need to back this effort with more money, time, and talent than we are now," he said.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine serves as a backdrop as the Pentagon releases its budget proposal that lays out its goals for hypersonics and other weapon systems later this month.

The three stealthy Zumwalt-class destroyers to be equipped with the new weapons have plenty of space to accommodate them thanks to a design failure that works to the Navy's advantage in this instance.

The ships were built around a gun system that was supposed to use GPS-guided, rocket-boosted projectiles to pound targets 90 miles (145 kilometers) away. But those projectiles proved to be too expensive, and the Navy canceled the system, leaving each of the ships with a useless loading system and a pair of 155-mm guns hidden in angular turrets.

The retrofit of all three ships will likely cost more than \$1 billion but will give a new capability to the tech-laden, electric-drive ships that already cost the Navy \$23.5 billion to design and build, said Bryan Clark, a defense analyst at the Hudson Institute.

“The engineering is not that hard. It’ll just take time and money to make it happen,” Clark said.

The Navy intends to field the weapons on the destroyers in the 2025 fiscal year and on Virginia-class nuclear-powered attack submarines in the 2028 fiscal year, the Navy said.

The destroyers would be based in the Pacific Ocean, where they would be a deterrent to China, should it become emboldened by Russia’s attack on Ukraine and consider attacking Taiwan, Clark said.

The U.S. focus on hypersonic weapons represents a pivot after hesitating in the past because of technological hurdles. Adversaries, meanwhile, continued research and development.

Russia fired off a salvo of Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles in late December, heralding the completion of weapon testing.

But Russia may be exaggerating the capability of such super weapons to compensate for weakness in other areas, said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst at the Lexington Institute.

For the time being, Russia doesn’t have many of the weapons, and it’s unclear how effective they are, he said.

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## **COVID-19**

### **5. Inside U.S. troops’ fight against the Pentagon’s ‘unjust’ COVID vaccine mandate**

*Navy SEALs, Air Force reservists describe chaos, coercion in religious waiver process as their military careers hang in the balance*

Washington Times Online, Mar. 20 (2106) | Ben Wolfgang

They didn’t make the decision lightly, as they were fully aware it would likely cost them their military careers. But for U.S. troops who refused the federally mandated COVID-19 vaccine, it was a sacrifice worth making.

Washington Times interviews with several service members and the lawyers who represent them revealed a host of reasons for opting against coronavirus immunization. They include deeply held religious beliefs, fears of long-term health side effects and broader concerns about what objectors say is the increasingly heavy hand of government in their personal lives.

In each case, the troops explained how they consulted with their family, friends, colleagues, legal counsel and other stakeholders as they weighed their options. Each said they understood early on, from the moment Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last year ordered all military personnel to get vaccinated, that their choice would come

with serious repercussions, likely including removal from their units and subsequent losses of health and retirement benefits.

Pentagon officials insist the vaccine mandate is needed to maintain the safety and readiness of the American fighting force. They stress that the vaccines are medically safe.

With relatively few exceptions, the Pentagon has routinely ruled that spiritual belief isn't a valid reason to be excused from vaccination.

Thousands of troops believe otherwise. Whether one agrees with their decision or not, there is little doubt it comes from a place of deep conviction.

“What’s going on right now is unjust,” one active-duty Navy SEAL told The Times in a recent interview. The Times is not identifying the resisters by name because they have filed formal religious waiver requests with the Navy and haven’t received final decisions.

“As service members in the military, we understand we swore an oath to the Constitution,” they said. “Your allegiance ... is to the law of the land, which is the Constitution.”

“Ultimately, we would be ... hypocritical, or we would be frauds, to go against the oath we swore in defending the law of the land if we were to comply with tyranny or to comply with something that is built off of lies,” the SEAL said.

Behind the scenes, SEALs described an atmosphere of pressure and coercion from the early days of the Pentagon’s vaccine mandate. When they raised questions about the vaccines, they said they were essentially told they needed to get them “because it’s an order.” Lawyers representing service members said they had clients who ultimately decided to get the shot, despite their doubts, simply because of the pressure from peers and commanding officers.

The Defense Department strongly denies such charges. Defense officials say military personnel are given every opportunity to have their questions answered and concerns addressed when it comes to vaccinations and other health-related matters.

### *An unprecedented fight*

Navy SEALs across the country have found themselves at the center of the vaccine fight. Last week, attorneys for 35 Navy SEALs and other special warfare personnel who object to the mandate on religious grounds asked the Supreme Court to intervene on their behalf and block any punishment for refusing the shot.

A week earlier, the Biden administration asked the high court to lift an earlier injunction keeping the Navy from considering vaccination status when deploying service members. None of the SEALs interviewed by The Times for this article is involved with that case, which is making its way through federal court in Texas.

That case centers on religious objections, but other factors are at play.

Another SEAL, who also asked to not be identified, discussed how they continue to face punishment even as many vaccine mandates, mask requirements and other COVID-19 policies are quickly rolled back across American society. Some of those policies are still being contested in court, but the outcome could result in a world in which unvaccinated civilians are working alongside troops who have been forced to get the vaccine, raising questions about the effectiveness and fundamental fairness of the policy.

“When we approach a topic of fairness, we understand that life is not fair,” the SEAL said. “Period. We approach it from right and wrong, and that leads us back to what the word of God says. If it is wrong, then we are going to stand in opposition to that. It may not be fair, but we’re looking to stand in truth.”

R. Davis Younts, a Pennsylvania lawyer representing about 60 military members, including the SEALs interviewed by The Times, said many of his clients have religious objections to vaccines because of research connected to the origins of the vaccines that was conducted using fetal stem cells. Numerous service members also cited that as a key reason for their objection.

Mr. Younts acknowledged that his clients, and all other service members, need to receive more than a dozen other vaccinations before they are allowed into the military. That has given fuel to critics who say the COVID-19 vaccine refusals are based more on politics than spirituality and moral beliefs.

“Why this vaccine? Military members get anywhere from 15 to 17 mandatory vaccines. I’ve had them,” said Mr. Younts, who spent more than a decade as an active-duty service member in the Air Force and served as a military attorney.

“All up until this vaccine, this is the first time there’s been a vaccine with a known tie with fetal cell tissue development,” he said. “That’s a huge issue for me. That’s a huge issue for my clients.”

Mr. Younts, along with other attorneys involved in COVID-19 vaccination cases, have argued that the military’s system of processing the thousands of religious waiver requests simply isn’t up to par. They say the system has been stretched thin and is struggling to handle the number of waivers filed. Some military officials have privately acknowledged that claim in past conversations with The Times.

“They don’t have the resources to handle this in a serious manner,” said Sean Timmons, a Houston lawyer whose firm, Tully Rinckey PLLC, represents more than 100 military personnel seeking COVID-19 exemptions.

“It’s a giant mess,” Mr. Timmons told The Times in November. “Nobody knows what’s going on. It’s been a complete and utter disaster every step of the way.”

Indeed, one SEAL told The Times, that they are “in complete limbo” with little clarity on when they will get a final decision on their waiver requests and whether they will be kicked out of the military.

Pentagon officials vehemently deny accusations that they are rushing through the process and issuing mass denials without proper consideration for each individual case. They say they are processing the cases fairly and as quickly as possible.

“All religious accommodation requests and appeals are reviewed and adjudicated on a case-by-case basis. Each request receives full and thorough consideration of the facts and circumstances presented by the service member,” a Navy spokesperson told The Times. “We do want to reiterate that the secretary and chief of naval operations’ top priority is protecting the health of service members. The health and readiness of our service members is of paramount importance to maintaining war-fighting readiness.”

#### *The ‘worst possible outcome’*

Navy officials stressed that service members have numerous forums where they can get answers to their questions about the coronavirus immunizations, including a host of information about any potential medical side effects.

Service members describe a much different environment behind the scenes.

“Just our normal baseline questions — they were not answered, and they’re still not answered,” one SEAL said.

Across the services, just a handful of religious waivers have been approved. In some cases, service members claim to have suffered punishment just for informing their commanders that they intended to file a waiver request.

Air Force Reserve officer Lt. Col. Brandi King said she met with superior officers in September and said she intended to file a waiver request.

“I just had this overwhelming feeling that I was not under any circumstance supposed to put whatever this is into my body,” she told The Times. “I just was adamant I was not to put this in my body at all costs, even if it means I was living under a bridge in a cardboard box with my kids.”

Col. King said her orders were canceled even before she formally submitted the request. She said she is now being shifted from her job into the Individual Ready Reserve. She said the move essentially amounts to being fired from her position.

Col. King said she filed numerous waiver requests, including several on medical grounds, after learning she was allergic to some ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines. None has been approved.

“I don’t say this lightly ...,” said Mr. Younts, who represents Col. King. “In my capacity as her attorney, there was no logical or reasonable justification for being fired from this position ... other than she was going to submit a religious waiver request.”

Air Force officials deny those claims. An Air Force spokesperson told The Times that the service “didn’t cancel any orders based on religious accommodation requests.”

“All requests for a COVID-19 vaccine exemption are reviewed thoroughly on a case-by-case basis so each is given full and fair consideration. Service members’ requests are evaluated to see if their accommodation can be supported with no impact to mission readiness,” an Air Force spokesperson said. “The Department of the Air Force has approved for the total force 21 religious accommodations and two religious accommodation appeals that meet that criteria.”

The Army has approved one religious waiver request, with thousands more to be processed. The Navy has approved none for its active-duty service members, the most recent figures show. The Marine Corps has approved six religious waiver requests. Each service has approved additional waivers on medical or administrative grounds.

The military is sorting through thousands more appeals from service members whose initial requests were denied. As that process plays out, the SEALs interviewed by The Times said they are anxiously awaiting their fates.

“We all were advised by more wise people than ourselves to count the costs before we started this ... and what could the repercussions be of this action,” one of the SEALs said, adding that they have braced themselves for the “worst possible outcome.”

*--Mark A. Kellner contributed to this report*

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## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **6. White House: Biden to Visit Poland on Europe Trip This Week**

Associated Press, Mar. 21 (0018) | Colleen Long and Ellen Knickmeyer

WASHINGTON -- President Joe Biden has added a stop in Poland to his trip this week to Europe for urgent talks with NATO and European allies, as Russian forces concentrate their fire upon cities and trapped civilians in a nearly month-old invasion of Ukraine.

Biden will first travel to Brussels and then to Poland to meet with leaders there, press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement Sunday night.

Poland is a crucial ally in the Ukraine crisis. It is hosting thousands of American troops and is taking in more people fleeing the war in Ukraine — more than 2 million — than any other nation in the midst of the largest European refugee crisis in decades.

Biden will head to Warsaw for a bilateral meeting with President Andrzej Duda scheduled for Saturday. Biden will discuss how the U.S., along with its allies and partners, is responding to “the humanitarian and human rights crisis that Russia’s unjustified and unprovoked war on Ukraine has created,” Psaki said.

On Monday ahead of his trip, Biden will discuss the war with European leaders. President Emmanuel Macron of France, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy and Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom are expected to take part, the White House said Sunday.

White House officials have said Biden has no plans to travel to Ukraine. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while in Poland this month, briefly crossed into neighboring Ukraine in a show of solidarity alongside that country’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba. Poland has been one of the most vocal countries in asking fellow NATO members to consider getting more involved to rein in the bloodshed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine largely has united the U.S. and NATO and European allies, as well as allies in Asia and elsewhere. The United States and European governments see Moscow’s military aggression as a threat to their security and strategic interests.

Biden and NATO have said repeatedly that while the U.S. and NATO will provide weapons and other defensive support to non-NATO member Ukraine, they are determined to avoid any escalation on behalf of Kyiv that risks a broader war with Russia.

The Pentagon on March 9 rejected a Polish proposal for providing Ukraine with MiG fighter jets via a NATO air base, saying allied efforts against the Russian invasion should focus on more useful weaponry and that the MiG transfer with a U.S. and NATO connection would run a “high risk” of escalating the war.

Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has pleaded for the U.S. to provide his military with more aircraft and advanced air-defense systems. NATO and the United States have rejected his appeals to establish a “no-fly zone” over Ukraine to suppress Russian air power, saying it would put Western forces in direct conflict with Russian ones.

Determined resistance by Ukrainian fighters when Russian tanks and troops rolled into Ukraine in late February quickly defeated Russian forces’ attempts to storm Ukraine’s capital and unseat the westward-looking government. Denied an easy and early victory, Russia’s military is reverting to the scorched earth tactics of its

past offensives in Syria and Chechnya, and pounding population centers with airstrikes and artillery barrages that leave civilians like those in the port city of Mariupol able to safely venture out for food or water, to bury the dead, or to flee.

After Biden rallied European allies to join in sweeping sanctions against Russia over the invasion at the outset, his tasks now include dealing with some NATO members that are pushing for more involvement directly in the fighting. That includes proposals by Poland for peacekeepers.

Biden's trip includes a summit Thursday of NATO leaders, who will use the meeting to look at strengthening the bloc's own deterrence and defense, immediately and in the long term, to deal with the now openly confrontational Putin.

That gathering is intended not just to show NATO's "support to Ukraine, but also our readiness to protect and defend all NATO allies," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday.

"And by sending that message, we are preventing an escalation of the conflict to a full-fledged war between NATO and Russia," Stoltenberg said.

Front-line NATO members on the alliance's eastern flank are also asking for advanced U.S. and British air defense systems to guard against the kind of missile and air assaults Russia is unleashing on Ukraine.

"We have to strengthen our eastern flank of NATO. We have been talking about this for years, but now it's time for action," Estonia's prime minister, Kaja Kallas, told CNN's "State of the Union."

She added: "We need some more capabilities to support ourselves and defend ourselves by air defense systems, what is definitely necessary here, but also the troops that are present that act as a deterrent also to the Russian military."

Noting that Russia is firing missiles "from such a long range that they can also reach Paris from where they are shooting right now," Kallas said European leaders must "understand that this defense is our common issue, and it's not a theoretical discussion, but issue in real life."

Biden also will participate in a European Council summit to discuss the allies' sanctions on Russia and humanitarian efforts for the millions of Ukraine's people displaced by Russia's attacks, Psaki said last week.

His agenda includes a meeting of leaders of the Group of Seven countries to discuss the punishing financial and economic penalties that the West and its allies have leveled on Russia over its invasion, Psaki said.

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## 7. ‘Do the Right Thing’: How U.S., Allies United to Punish Putin

Associated Press, Mar. 20 (1256) | Josh Boak

WASHINGTON -- Just days before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, President Joe Biden quietly dispatched a team to European Union headquarters in Belgium.

These were not spy chiefs or generals, but experts in reading fine print and tracking the flow of money, computer chips and other goods around the world. Their mandate: inflict maximum pain on Russian President Vladimir Putin, making it harder, if not impossible, for him to fund a prolonged war in Ukraine and denying him access to technologies at the core of modern warfare.

There were intense meetings in February in Brussels, Paris, London and Berlin, often running six hours at a time as the allies tried to craft the details of a historic economic blockade, according to Biden administration officials. Some of the exports the U.S. wanted to ban were met with reluctance by the Europeans, who would essentially be telling their own companies to forgo several billion dollars in annual revenues from Russia.

When there was a deadlock, U.S. negotiators would put Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo on the phone.

“You can say ‘no’ now, but when the body bags are coming out of Ukraine, you’re not going to want to be a holdout,” Raimondo said she told allied counterparts. “Do the right thing.”

Everyone signed on — and before the invasion.

Raimondo said what ultimately drove the agreement and the fast timeline was the threat of Putin’s imminent attack on Ukraine.

“We all got religion fast that it was time to band together and stick together,” she said. “If you cause enough pain, isolate Putin, it will bring this war to an end.”

The wealthiest nations in the world — outside of China — are directly confronting Putin on their preferred terms. They have imposed sanctions in which their strengths intersect with Russia’s vulnerabilities. Russia is reliant on the U.S., the EU, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan for cutting-edge technologies and investment, so the allies decided to cut Moscow off.

It’s a strategic play designed to trap Putin in a downward spiral, as foreign investors pull out their money in response to the atrocities. It’s also a remarkable show of unity that could be tested in the coming weeks by the allies’ own dependence on fossil fuels.

A group of economists estimated Thursday that EU countries have transferred more than 13.3 billion euros (\$14.7 billion) to Russia for oil, natural gas and coal since the war began, essentially funding Putin’s war machine.

While the allied talks in the lead-up to the war were critical, the EU was not just waiting around for U.S. direction to act. Bloc members had been consulting for months.

One EU diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal talks, outlined in an interview as far back as January potential penalties that included the export ban, noting that the EU had held together its coalition on enforcing sanctions since Russia's 2014 occupation of parts of the Donbas region in Ukraine.

But this time, the U.S. and EU responded to Russia's aggression with a novel set of policies to cripple Putin's ability to fight by denying it access to the semiconductors, computers, telecommunications equipment, lasers and sensors integral to war materiel.

This is a supply chain squeeze that will force Russia to raid existing airplanes, tanks and other gear for spare parts essentially eroding its military and economic capacity. The same U.S. and EU officials dealing with their own supply chain challenges after the pandemic found a way to amplify the problem for Russia through trade regulations.

In a sign of early success, U.S. officials point to the closing of Lada auto plants in Russia and the more than 300 companies that have stopped doing business with Russia. The companies are not just Starbucks, but chipmakers such as Germany's Infineon that said it stopped all direct and indirect deliveries to Russia as well as technical support.

Within days of the invasion, the allies blocked the foreign assets of Russia's central bank. Two senior Biden administration officials, who were not authorized to publicly discuss the strategy and spoke on condition of anonymity, said this option was not initially presented to allies out of concern that Russia could move its money ahead of time. They waited to present the asset freeze until the invasion started and the images of bombings and death compelled the Europeans to almost immediately agree.

The freeze rendered half of the more than \$600 billion in Putin's war chest unusable. While the Russian stock market has been closed and the value of the ruble has plunged, the sanctions are designed so that the financial effects tighten over time. As long as Ukraine is able to hold out with military aid against severe casualties, the sanctions will do more to exhaust Putin.

EU Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis on Thursday praised the "very good coordination" among nations and said the sanctions "are biting hard. Russia's financial markets are close to collapse." He also noted that the sanctions create costs for the allies, though the price is much less than the consequences of the war spreading.

Yet with every new round of sanctions, the unity of the 27 EU members is tested ever more. If imposing a ban on Russian oil and gas comes up, Germany and Italy, both heavily dependent on Russian energy, will be in a tough

spot to contain the drive of several eastern member nations like Poland and the Baltic states that want to hit Putin as hard as possible as soon as possible. The U.S. is less dependent on Russian oil and natural gas, making it easier for Biden to ban those imports earlier this month.

There is also the risk that the sanctions will fail to stop Putin or that Russia can still find ways to bring goods into its economy. Trade data analyzed by ImportGenius show that China supplanted Germany in 2021 as the leading source of exports to Russia — and U.S. officials say that Russia has solicited help from the Chinese government.

On Twitter, Olivier Blanchard, former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund and now a fellow at the Peterson Institute of International Economics, equated the sanctions to the bombing of German factories during World War II. Those bombings disrupted the German war machine in ways that made it impossible to prolong an extended fight — and economists had a role in choosing the targets.

For all that has been done, question remain about whether it is enough.

Blanchard recommends expanding the export controls from defense-related production to “anything which disorganizes production” in the Russian economy. If Russian-made refrigerators need a gasket made in the EU, restricting access to that gasket makes it harder for the Russian economy to function, he said.

Tania Babina, a finance professor at Columbia University who was born in Ukraine, said that sanctions tend not to stop dictators and she warned that Putin might ultimately become even more entrenched unless the U.S. and EU take more aggressive action. She said Europeans need to add sanctions that ban the use of Russian oil and natural gas.

“He is going to throw everything to win, will send his grandma to fight if needed,” Babina said. “He cannot lose Ukraine. That is why it is so paramount to cut off Russia’s energy export revenues.”

But Babina noted that there is another far more chilling cost to the allied strategy of sanctions: Ukrainian lives.

“How many people do we let die before Putin runs out of assets?” she asked.

*--Associated Press writer Raf Casert in Brussels contributed to this report*

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## **8. Prosecutors May Seek To Resolve Sept. 11 Case Without a Capital Trial**

*New leadership, an ever receding trial date and pressure to disclose more information about the C.I.A. torture of the accused plotters all contribute*

New York Times, Mar. 21 (0300), Pg. A13 | Carol Rosenberg

GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba -- Pentagon prosecutors have struggled for more than a dozen years to hold the death-penalty trial of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and his four co-defendants at Guantánamo Bay.

They have litigated everything from Mr. Mohammed's choice of court attire -- he sometimes dons a paramilitary camouflage vest -- to how much evidence of C.I.A. torture the defense teams and, ultimately, a military jury should be allowed to see.

Now a trial prosecutor who has been on the case since the George W. Bush administration, Clayton G. Trivett Jr., is in talks with defense lawyers about trading guilty pleas for at most life in prison without parole.

Why are the two sides talking? Here is a rundown.

*Delays, Delays, Delays*

Between stalled litigation during the coronavirus pandemic and the pace of discovery and pretrial hearings, jury selection cannot start before mid-2024 -- and that is according to the most optimistic estimate.

But that was before the death-penalty lawyer for one of the defendants, Walid bin Attash, asked to quit the case, creating a potential vacancy in a key position that must be filled unless prosecutors abandon their insistence on a joint, five-man trial.

The coronavirus has already forced a 500-day recess. An earlier judge, the third on the case, retired at the start of the pandemic. The current judge, Col. Matthew N. McCall, did not get the assignment until August because prosecutors considered him too inexperienced. He has since limited the pace of litigation while he learns the court record, including thousands of pages of secret prosecution filings.

*New Political Leadership*

Detention operations at Guantánamo Bay, which have held 780 men and boys as detainees, have lasted for four administrations. Mr. Bush established the prison and court system, and President Barack Obama overhauled the court with the goal of ending detainee operations. Congress thwarted him.

President Donald J. Trump maintained the operation, and promised to add new prisoners, but never did. His first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, was opposed to negotiations. In 2017, after Mr. Sessions learned that the senior

Pentagon official overseeing the trial was discussing a plea with defense lawyers, he called Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and declared “no deal.” Mr. Mattis fired the overseer, Harvey Rishikof, citing other reasons.

President Biden came into office with the goal of ending detention operations at Guantánamo Bay.

A letter written by a lawyer at his National Security Council acknowledges that pretrial plea deals could be appropriate as a way to resolve some military commissions cases, but stresses that the White House takes no position on what should happen in any particular matter.

### *New Leadership on Trial Teams*

The long-running chief war crimes prosecutor, Brig. Gen. Mark S. Martins, retired from the Army in September. An even longer-serving case prosecutor, Robert Swann, left the case in late 2021. Relatives of some of the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks who have met the men -- including those who oppose and favor the death penalty -- describe them as solidly committed to bringing the case to a capital trial.

The new interim chief prosecutor, George C. Kraehe, an Army Reserve colonel, has delegated the authority to negotiate to three civilians, all Justice Department employees, who have been on the case since the beginning: Mr. Trivett, a Navy Reserve commander; Edward Ryan, a federal prosecutor; and Jeffrey D. Groharing, a Marine Corps Reserve colonel.

The defense teams have new leadership, too. Brig. Gen. Jackie L. Thompson Jr. of the Army took charge as the chief defense counsel in January and wrote Mr. Biden seeking support for resolving the case through pleas.

One of the nation’s leading and longest-serving capital defense lawyers, David I. Bruck, also made his first court appearance in the case in September.

### *The Majid Khan Case*

Last year, a military jury’s condemnation of torture by the C.I.A. in another war crimes case raised questions of whether prosecutors could win a unanimous death-penalty decision even for Mr. Mohammed, 53, the accused architect of the hijackings plot.

In the case of Majid Khan, a confessed courier for Al Qaeda, U.S. military officers on his jury called his cruel treatment “a stain on the moral fiber of America” and urged the Pentagon overseer of the war court to grant the prisoner clemency. Mr. Khan was abused rectally and kept nude, sleep deprived and nearly starved in the same program of “enhanced interrogation” that tortured Mr. Mohammed, who was also waterboarded 183 times.

Charles Stimson, a retired Navy judge who managed detainee policy at the Pentagon for the Bush administration from 2005 to 2007, said recently that the Khan case illustrated that, even if prosecutors get the Sept. 11 defendants

to trial and win a conviction, “the likelihood of their coming to a unanimous verdict with respect to the death penalty is close to zero.”

Negotiations are appropriate even for the “worst war crime that has been committed in our lifetime,” said Mr. Stimson, who is now a scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation. “Any man or woman serving in the United States military who hears about the treatment that these detainees had at the hands of the United States government is going to weigh that quite heavily in the sentencing portion of the trial. And it won’t go over well.”

### *More Disclosures of Torture*

At first, court security officers briefed by the intelligence agencies forbade mention of the word “torture” in open court hearings.

A lawyer could not explain why the Saudi defendant Mustafa al-Hawsawi, 53, who is accused of helping the Sept. 11 hijackers with travel and expenses, sat gingerly on a pillow in court. In time, his lawyers were allowed to say he was sodomized by the C.I.A. during his detention in the black sites.

The more time has passed, the more grisly details about the program that held and tortured the defendants between 2002 and 2006 have emerged -- despite claims by prosecutors for years that the defense teams had all the evidence they needed to prepare for trial.

But three of the presiding judges have ordered the disclosure of more and more information, often requiring permission of the C.I.A. or other intelligence agencies.

Since getting the case over the summer, defense lawyers say, Colonel McCall has ordered even more disclosures.

In those situations, if prosecutors invoke a national security privilege and refuse to provide the material, the judge can order remedies. He could suspend the case until the government turns over the information. He could dismiss the case. Or he could downgrade it by making life in prison the ultimate possible sentence

### *Mounting Mental Illness Claims*

Lawyers for Mr. Mohammed’s nephew, Ammar al-Baluchi, 44, have long argued that the prisoner is brain damaged as a result of his torture by the C.I.A., and that he needs rehabilitation that the military at Guantánamo cannot provide.

His defense team recently submitted material to a federal court panel about a 2003 episode in which C.I.A. trainees were taught an enhanced interrogation technique called “walling.” They took turns slamming his head into a wall until he blacked out.

The health of the man accused of serving as a deputy to Mr. Mohammed in the Sept. 11 plot, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, 49, has also long clouded the case. At first, his claims that he was being sleep deprived by outside forces making noises and vibrating his prison cell interfered with his lawyers' ability to craft a defense. In recent years, the problems escalated to him howling from sharp pinprick pains in his genitals and other body parts.

Last month, the U.S. military delivered to Saudi Arabia for psychiatric care a schizophrenic prisoner whose torture by U.S. forces long ago made him ineligible for the Sept. 11 conspiracy trial. That man, Mohammed al-Qahtani, was held at Guantánamo as the suspected would-be 20th hijacker for two decades, only to be recommended for release after a Navy doctor concluded he could not get proper care at the prison.

### *Changing Political Climate*

Be it distraction by the events in Ukraine or a sense that something has changed 20 years after the Sept. 11 attacks, few Republicans protested the decision to release Mr. Qahtani, leading some critics of the military prison in Cuba to suggest that Guantánamo has receded as a political rallying point.

“The Bush administration tortured the defendants and built a system to avoid the consequences of it,” said Scott Roehm, the Washington director of the Center for Victims of Torture. “That was never going to work.”

He called it noteworthy that, while a few Republicans made an impassioned defense of the need to keep Guantánamo open, none of them spoke up at a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting in December after the chief defense counsel at the time, Brig. Gen. John G. Baker, argued for the “negotiated resolution of the cases.”

“Much of the hearing was a discussion of plea deals,” Mr. Roehm said. “And nobody said: ‘This is crazy. Don’t do this. We object to a plea strategy.’ There wasn’t any pushback at all.”

Instead, Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, offered a spirited defense of Guantánamo-style detention under the laws of war.

“I’ve never accepted the false choice of ‘try them or release them,’” he said. “You can hold somebody until they die as an enemy combatant if it’s unsafe to release them if the war is not over.”

“If we can try them, great,” said Mr. Graham, a retired Air Force JAG colonel. “If we can’t, let’s hold them.”

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## EUROPE

### 9. Ukraine Rejects Russian Offer of Passage Out of Mariupol

Associated Press, Mar. 21 (0137) | Cara Anna

LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian officials defiantly rejected a Russian demand that their forces in Mariupol lay down arms and raise white flags Monday in exchange for safe passage out of the besieged strategic port.

Russia has been barraging the encircled southern city on the Sea of Azov, hitting an art school sheltering some 400 people only hours before offering to open two corridors out of the city in return for the capitulation of its defenders, according to Ukrainian officials.

Fighting for Mariupol has continued to be intense, even as the Russian offensive in other areas has floundered to the point where Western governments and analysts see the broader conflict grinding into a war of attrition.

Ukrainian officials rejected the Russian proposal for safe passage out of Mariupol even before Moscow's 5 a.m. deadline for a response came and went.

"There can be no talk of any surrender, laying down of arms," Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Irina Vereshchuk told the news outlet Ukrainian Pravda. "We have already informed the Russian side about this."

Mariupol Mayor Piotr Andryushchenko also rejected the offer shortly after it was made, saying in a Facebook post he didn't need to wait until the morning deadline to respond and cursing at the Russians, according to the news agency Interfax Ukraine.

Russian Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev had offered two corridors -- one heading east toward Russia and the other west to other parts of Ukraine. He did not say what Russia planned if the offer was rejected.

The Russian Ministry of Defense said authorities in Mariupol could face a military tribunal if they sided with what it described as "bandits," the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Earlier attempts to evacuate civilian residents from Mariupol and other Ukrainian cities have failed or only partly succeeded, with bombardments continuing as civilians sought to flee.

Tearful evacuees from devastated Mariupol have described how "battles took place over every street."

Ahead of the latest offer, a Russian airstrike hit the school where some 400 civilians had been taking shelter and it was not clear how many casualties there were, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address early Monday.

“They are under the rubble, and we don’t know how many of them have survived,” he said.

The fall of Mariupol would allow Russian forces in southern and eastern Ukraine to unite. But Western military analysts say that even if the surrounded city is taken, the troops battling a block at a time for control there may be too depleted to help secure Russian breakthroughs on other fronts.

Ukrainians “have not greeted Russian soldiers with a bunch of flowers,” Zelenskyy told CNN, but with “weapons in their hands.”

U.S. President Joe Biden was expected to talk later Monday with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Britain to discuss the war, before heading later in the week to Brussels and then Poland for in-person talks.

Zelenskyy has been pleading with the U.S. for more aircraft and advanced air-defense systems, while NATO members on the alliance’s eastern flank have also been looking for missile defense systems from the U.S. and Britain.

Three weeks into the invasion, the two sides now seem to be trying to wear down the other, experts say, with bogged-down Russian forces launching long-range missiles at cities and military bases as Ukrainian forces carry out hit-and-run attacks and seek to sever Russian supply lines.

“The block-by-block fighting in Mariupol itself is costing the Russian military time, initiative, and combat power,” the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said in a briefing.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Ukrainian resistance means Russian President Vladimir Putin’s “forces on the ground are essentially stalled.”

“It’s had the effect of him moving his forces into a woodchipper,” Austin told CBS on Sunday.

The strike on the art school was the second time in less than a week that officials reported an attack on a public building where Mariupol residents had taken shelter. On Wednesday, a bomb hit a theater where more than 1,000 people were believed to be sheltering.

There was no immediate word on casualties in the school attack, which The Associated Press could not independently verify. Ukrainian officials have not given an update on the search of the theater since Friday, when they said at least 130 people had been rescued and another 1,300 were trapped by rubble.

City officials and aid groups say food, water and electricity have run low in Mariupol and fighting has kept out humanitarian convoys. Communications are severed.

The city has been under bombardment for over three weeks and has seen some of the worst horrors of the war. City officials said at least 2,300 people have died, with some buried in mass graves.

Some who were able to flee Mariupol tearfully hugged relatives as they arrived by train Sunday in Lviv, about 1,100 kilometers (680 miles) to the west.

“Battles took place over every street. Every house became a target,” said Olga Nikitina, who was embraced by her brother as she got off the train. “Gunfire blew out the windows. The apartment was below freezing.”

In Ukraine’s major cities, hundreds of men, women and children have been killed in Russian attacks.

In Kyiv, six people were killed by shelling in the densely populated Podil district not far from the center of the capital Sunday, according to AP journalists at the scene. It devastated a shopping center, leaving a flattened ruin still smoldering Monday morning in the midst of high-rise towers. The force of the explosion shattered every window in the high-rise next door and twisted their metal frames.

In the distance, the sound of artillery rang out as firefighters picked their way through the destruction. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Russian shelling hit several houses in Podil.

Russian troops have been shelling Kyiv for a fourth week now and are trying to surround the capital, which had nearly 3 million people before the war.

The U.N. has confirmed 902 civilian deaths in the war but concedes the actual toll is likely much higher. It says nearly 3.4 million people have fled Ukraine. Estimates of Russian deaths vary, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands.

The Ukrainian prosecutor general’s office says at least 115 children have been killed and 148 injured so far.

Some Russians also have fled their country amid a widespread crackdown on dissent. Russia has arrested thousands of antiwar protesters, muzzled independent media and cut access to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

*--Associated Press writer Yuras Karmanau in Lviv, Ukraine, and other AP journalists around the world contributed*

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## 10. Ukraine Assault Uproots 10 Million

*Attacks on population centers intensify; humanitarian situation in Mariupol worsens*

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A1 | Alan Cullison, Isabel Coles and Matthew Luxmoore

KYIV, Ukraine -- Russia's assault on Ukraine has forced more than 10 million people to abandon their homes, the United Nations said, with the scale of the humanitarian disaster showing little sign of easing as Moscow presses its attack with missile strikes and artillery fire.

"The war in Ukraine is so devastating that 10 million have fled -- either displaced inside the country, or as refugees abroad," said Filippo Grandi, the U.N.'s high commissioner for refugees, on Sunday. That means almost a quarter of the country's prewar population has been uprooted.

About 3.4 million people have left Ukraine since the Russian offensive began Feb. 24, mostly women and children bound for Poland, according to the U.N., which said the number of refugees could reach four million. The flow of people has eased in recent days, but still tops 50,000 refugees a day, according to the latest U.N. figures.

In the southeastern port city of Mariupol, where fighting has reached the streets, the humanitarian situation worsened. Ukrainian officials said an art school where around 400 people had been sheltering was bombed by Russia, trapping people beneath the rubble. Their condition couldn't be determined.

The incident comes days after a theater in the city was bombed. Rescue workers had freed 130 people from the rubble as of Friday, though 1,300 people remained trapped in the basement where they had been sheltering, a local official said.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Russia's military had been deliberately targeting population centers because President Vladimir Putin's campaign had stalled in the face of an effective Ukrainian defense and counterattack.

"He's not been able to achieve the goals that he wants to achieve as rapidly as he wants to achieve them," Mr. Austin said Sunday on CBS News. "It's had the effect of him moving his forces into a wood chipper."

Russia's Defense Ministry on Sunday gave defenders of the besieged city of Mariupol, the site of some of the worst civilian casualties of the war, until Monday morning to surrender and allow the evacuation of civilians.

"We call on all the units of Ukraine's armed forces, the battalions of its territorial defense and foreign mercenaries to cease their military activities and lay down their weapons," said Mikhail Mizintsev, the head of the Defense Ministry's National Defense Control Center, according to Interfax.

Mr. Mizintsev said that Kyiv must respond to Russia's offer by 5 a.m. Moscow time on Monday. Describing Mariupol city officials as "odious bandits," he said they had a "historic choice" to accept Russia's initiative, according to RIA Novosti, the official Russian state news agency.

The Russian Defense Ministry showed no sign of letting up even as its own military has taken big losses. It said Sunday that its forces carried out a range of activities, including firing a number of long-range weapons at targets in Ukraine, striking a military base in the country's Zhytomyr region, where it alleged foreign fighters were located, and attacking a large number of military facilities in helicopter raids.

On Sunday, the governor of the Crimean city of Sevastopol reported that the deputy head of Russia's Black Sea Fleet was killed in the attack on Mariupol, the latest in a number of high-ranking officers to die in the invasion.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said his country's military was imposing heavy losses on Russian troops but added, "We are well aware that Russia has just a bottomless human resource and a lot of equipment, missiles and bombs."

President Biden is heading to Europe this week for a round of meetings with allies and partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Group of Seven and European states, where they are expected to discuss deterrence efforts, humanitarian relief and the campaign of sanctions against Russia. He will travel to Warsaw on Friday for talks with Polish President Andrzej Duda, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Sunday.

The White House said that Mr. Biden wouldn't be visiting Ukraine.

Mariupol's City Council said on Sunday about 4,000 civilians in the city have been killed since the start of the fighting. It also accused Russian forces of forcibly evacuating some of the city's residents to Russia and into the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk, the pro-Russian breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine.

"People who are being forcibly transported onto Russian territory are having their Ukrainian passports seized and given papers that have no legal weight," the council said in a statement posted to Telegram.

Russia hasn't commented on the reports of forced evacuations from Mariupol.

Mariupol is a strategic objective for Moscow as it attempts to open an overland corridor to the Russia-annexed region of Crimea and shift the momentum in its three-week-old invasion. During weeks of bombardment and attack, Ukrainians said they had kept Russian forces at bay on Mariupol's outskirts, but that changed Saturday, Ukrainian officials said.

The capture of Mariupol would be a victory for Russia, which has so far failed to take any big Ukrainian cities since the start of its invasion.

“Mariupol has not yet fallen,” retired U.S. Gen. David Petraeus said on CNN. “It is out of food, fuel, water, everything except for heart. They are still fighting very hard. This is the first place where the Russians are having to do no-kidding urban fighting, having to go building to building.”

Dima Shvets, who left Mariupol last week with his wife and 7-year-old daughter, described scraping snow off cars to melt for drinking water and using supermarket shopping carts to carry the dead to hastily dug graves.

He said he had lost count of the number of Russian checkpoints through which the family passed on the way from Mariupol to Berdyansk, down the Sea of Azov coast to the west. The drive, which usually takes 40 minutes, lasted 15 hours. Russian soldiers made the men remove their shirts and checked their bodies for tattoos that would identify them as Nazis, he said.

*--Alex Leary contributed to this article*

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## **11. As Russian advances slow, a stalemate may be on the horizon**

Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A1 | Liz Sly and Dan Lamothe

Russia’s attempt to conquer Ukraine could be headed toward a stalemate as heavy casualties and equipment losses take a toll on unprepared Russian forces that have failed so far to achieve any of their initial objectives, Western officials and military experts say.

The front lines have barely moved in more than a week. Russians are being killed or injured at the rate of up to 1,000 a day, according to Western intelligence estimates, and even more according to Ukrainian ones.

Videos of burned-out tanks and abandoned convoys stream constantly on Ukrainian social media accounts, alongside footage of dead Russian soldiers, surrendering Russian soldiers, hungry Russian soldiers stealing chickens from local farmers - and, increasingly, the mangled bodies of Ukrainian civilians dying in missile and artillery attacks.

The ferocity of the Russian assault has only intensified as the advances have slowed, with Russia substituting harsh bombardments of civilian populations for progress on the battlefield. Regular Ukrainians living in cities surrounded, or partially surrounded, by Russian troops are paying the price for a war effort that began to go wrong in the first hours.

But in the absence of substantive progress on the ground and given the scale of the losses being inflicted on its ranks, Russia’s military campaign could soon become unsustainable, with troops unable to advance because they lack sufficient manpower, supplies and munitions, analysts and officials say.

The next two weeks could be critical in determining the outcome of the entire war, they say. Unless Russia can swiftly improve its supply lines, bring reinforcements and bolster the flagging morale of the troops on the ground, its goals may become impossible to achieve.

“I don’t think Ukraine forces can push Russian forces out of Ukraine, but I also don’t think Russian forces can take that much more of Ukraine,” said Rob Lee, a former U.S. Marine who is now a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

An assessment Saturday by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) went further. “Ukrainian forces have defeated the initial Russian campaign of this war,” it said. The conflict, it said, has now reached “a stalemate.”

Events on the battlefield could yet tilt in a different direction: for example, if the Russians succeed in capturing the besieged and desperate city of Mariupol, freeing up their forces to bolster their offensive elsewhere.

But in a widely shared March 14 article, a retired U.S. general and a European military academic argue that the Russian force is close to reaching what military strategists call the “culminating point” of its offensive, meaning that it will have reached the limits of its capacity to wage the war it set out to prosecute.

“The Russian war of conquest in Ukraine is now entering a critical phase; a race to reach the culminating point of Russia’s offensive capacity and Ukraine’s defensive capacity,” wrote retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges and Julian Lindley-French, who chairs the Alphen Group think tank in the Netherlands. They advocate a sustained effort by the United States and its allies to provide military supplies to Ukraine in hopes that Ukrainian forces can take advantage of this “window of opportunity” to win concessions at the negotiating table.

“I believe that Russia does not have the time, manpower or ammunition to sustain what they are doing now,” Hodges, who is now with the Washington-based Center for European Policy Analysis, said in an interview. The assessment assumes, he says, that the West continues to step up military support for Ukraine, thereby enabling Ukrainian forces to sustain the tempo of their resistance.

The Russian military still has overwhelming superiority in terms of numbers and equipment compared with the smaller and more lightly armed Ukrainian military. Russia could yet turn the fight around if it is able to replenish its manpower and supplies, cautioned Lindley-French.

“It would be a big mistake to think that Russia cannot sustain this war,” he said. “They can’t now, but they could fix it” by adjusting tactics and bringing in reinforcements.

However, he added, “Unless the Russians can really improve their game and start rotating [troop] formations into the front line, this particular force is facing a problem.”

U.S. officials decline to make public predictions about the course of the war but say there are clear indications that the Russians are struggling to sustain the existing forces they have and are scrambling to find reinforcements and resolve their logistical difficulties.

Appeals to China for military assistance, a so far fruitless attempt to recruit Syrians and talk of bringing in reinforcements from other parts of Russia and the breakaway territory of South Ossetia in Georgia have not yet produced evidence that fresh troops are on the way, the officials say.

“Just that they’re talking about resupply and re-sourcing tells you they are beginning to get concerned about longevity here,” said a senior U.S. Defense Department official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive subjects.

“It’s quite extraordinary, three weeks in, that they are still having these same logistical and sustainment issues, and that they are considering additional ways to overcome these shortages from outside Ukraine,” the official added.

The Russian troops that initially surged into Ukraine from at least four directions had expected to be welcomed as liberators and came unprepared for a long fight, officials and experts say. Instead, the Russians encountered fierce resistance, and now they are strung out along multiple fronts, bogged down in manpower-intensive sieges and without preplanned supply lines to sustain a protracted war, the officials and experts say.

The current map of the battlefield points to the scale of the difficulties, Lee said.

It was clear from the way Russian forces moved in the first hours of the war, he said, that their key objectives were to take Ukraine’s second-largest city of Kharkiv, link up the occupied Donbas region with the port city of Odessa along Ukraine’s southern coast, and - most crucially - capture the capital, Kyiv, with a lightning push from the north.

More than three weeks on, Russian troops still haven’t achieved any of those goals.

They have failed to fully encircle the northeastern city of Kharkiv, even though it lies just a few miles from the Russian border. Their push to take the port city of Odessa has been halted by fierce Ukrainian resistance at the gates of Mykolaiv. Their effort to link the Russian-annexed territory of Crimea has become ensnared by the grinding and increasingly bloody siege of Mariupol.

The Russians have been making gains in the east, in the oblasts of Luhansk and Donetsk, which Russia recognized as independent republics on the eve of the war and which have been partially occupied by Russian-backed forces since 2014. But those advances fall far short of the initial ambitious goal of the invasion.

The Russians' hopes of encircling Kyiv, let alone capturing it, are starting to recede, Lee said. Russian forces remain stuck about 15 miles outside the city, and though U.S. officials say Russia is moving rear forces toward the front in anticipation of a renewed push on the capital, the front line hasn't shifted.

Meanwhile, Russians are dying at a rate that is increasingly unsustainable, Lee said. Although Russia still has vast reserves of manpower, it has already committed the bulk of its combat-ready forces, and they are the ones that are almost certainly bearing the brunt of the casualties, he said.

There are no confirmed casualty figures, and Russia has not updated the figure of 498 dead that it announced a week into the war. But of the Russian army's 168 battalion tactical groups, 120 are already fighting on the ground, making up about 100,000 soldiers out of the total 190,000 sent into Ukraine. That means Russia has already committed 75 percent of its combat-ready force, U.S. officials say.

Western intelligence estimates say it is likely that at least 7,000 Russians have been killed and as many as 20,000 injured, and assuming that the combat forces are bearing the brunt of the casualties, that could mean up to a third of the main combat force is now out of action, Lee said.

"That's a huge loss, and you can't readily replace that," he said. Russia can bring in new conscripts or call up more reservists, but that will dilute the capabilities of the overall force, "and that is not in Russia's interest," he said.

Ukrainian forces have been taking casualties, too, though how many isn't publicly known because they also have not released any numbers. The longer the war drags on, the more perilous their position will become, too, and the greater the chance that Russia will overcome its initial mistakes, said Jack Watling of the London-based Royal United Services Institute.

But, he noted, the Ukrainian forces appear to remain highly motivated, while there are clear signs that morale continues to diminish among the Russian troops, he said. Russian forces continue to surrender, abandon their vehicles and show few signs of initiative in the areas they do control, signs "that this is not a force that is well motivated," he said.

As Russia's offensive capabilities slow, the risk is high that civilian casualties will mount. A stalemate is likely to become "very violent and bloody," the ISW assessment said, because Russian troops are more likely to rely on the bombardment of cities to apply pressure.

There are signs that Russia is running out of precision missiles, U.S. officials say, which means Russian forces will also increasingly resort to the use of "dumb bombs" indiscriminately dropped on civilian areas in an effort to cow them into submission.

Ukraine is unlikely to have the capacity to push Russia out of the territory it has taken so far, officials and analysts say. But the Russians' current difficulties open up the possibility that the Ukrainians could at least fight them to a standstill, thereby exerting pressure on Russia to accept a negotiated solution.

The main question now has shifted from how long it would take the Russians to conquer Ukraine to "can Ukraine fight Russia to a stalemate?" said a Western official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "They're doing pretty well at the moment."

"The next two weeks are going to be pretty decisive," Watling said. The war won't be over in two weeks, he predicted, and all the signals from Moscow suggest the Russians are more likely to double down than climb down, making the war more deadly for Ukrainians even as it moves at a slower pace.

"The odds are stacked heavily in the Russians' favor. This is their war to lose. The reason they are not achieving their objective is largely about their own incompetence, their lack of coordination," he said.

"What this really comes down to is whether the Russians are going to get their act together."

--*William Booth contributed to this report*

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## **12. US and NATO officials struggle to decipher status of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine**

CNN.com, Mar. 20 (2200) | Zachary Cohen, Natasha Bertrand and Alex Marquardt

US and NATO officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin has not backed off his original demands in talks with Ukraine, and there is a heavy dose of skepticism in Western capitals about how credible Moscow's engagement truly is -- even as the status of those negotiations remains difficult to decipher, according to multiple sources briefed on the situation.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has recently indicated he is willing to consider some concessions to Russia to help bring an end to the violence, including a neutrality policy -- albeit one underpinned by robust security guarantees, raising more questions about the current state of talks and specific elements of any peace deal that may be under consideration.

"I'm ready for negotiations with (Putin). I was ready for the last two years. And I think that without negotiations, we cannot end this war," Zelensky told CNN's Fareed Zakaria in an exclusive interview Sunday. But he warned that any failure of negotiation attempts fail could lead to "a third World War."

Ukrainian and Russian negotiators have met four times since the start of Russia's invasion.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov weighed in on the possibility of Ukraine agreeing to neutral status during a media event in Moscow on Saturday.

“After our operation in Ukraine ends, and I hope it ends with a signing of a comprehensive agreement on the issues I mentioned -- security issues, Ukraine’s neutral status with the guarantees of its security as (Putin), a couple of months ago as I recall, commented at a news conference on our initiative of non-expansion of NATO, he said we understood every country needs guarantees of its security,” said Lavrov.

But details on negotiations remain scant with many NATO countries, including the US, remaining on the outside looking in when it comes to the secretive talks, with one European defense official calling negotiations “a bit of a dark avenue right now.”

The Biden administration still sees no indication that Putin is willing or ready to deescalate the conflict -- making it difficult for US officials to be optimistic about the current state of negotiations, one source familiar with the situation said.

But at the same time, this source also said that the US is not pressuring Ukraine to accept or reject specific concessions and is not involved in the negotiation process.

The US National Security Council declined to comment.

### *Russian demands*

Some of the terms Ukraine has said it may be willing to consider seem more feasible than others, but at the end of the day, NATO countries are still skeptical of Russia’s engagement.

“It is very close hold, and no one really knows what’s going on,” the European defense official said. “Ukraine’s positions haven’t changed -- ceasefire, withdrawal of troops and security guarantees.”

“Anyone who says they know something about the status of the talks, (they) really don’t,” the official added.

Putin laid out several issues to achieve a ceasefire with Ukraine in a Thursday phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, according to Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin.

“The first is Ukraine’s neutrality,” Kalin said in an interview with the Turkish newspaper Hurriyet published Saturday, adding that would mean Ukraine agreeing to not become a NATO member. “Second, disarmament and mutual security guarantees in the context of the Austrian model. Third, the process that the Russian side refers to as ‘de-Nazification.’ Fourth, removing obstacles to the widespread use of Russian language in Ukraine. It is understood that some progress has been made in the first four articles of the ongoing negotiations. It is too early to say that there is full agreement or that an agreement is about to be signed.”

Kalin said Putin had additional demands that were “the most difficult issues” -- the recognition of the annexation of Crimea and the two so-called republics in Donbas. Kalin said these final two issues “are not acceptable demands for Ukraine and the international community.”

“If a point is reached in the first four articles and an agreement is reached, there can be a discussion at the leaders’ level regarding the fifth and sixth articles,” Kalin said in the interview, adding that if the negotiations take place, “it may be possible to reach an agreement and end the war.”

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Sunday declined to set terms on what the US would or would not accept when it came to an agreement between Ukraine and Russia to end the fighting.

“This is for the Ukrainians themselves to decide what is too much for them. It is not our decision on that and we support their efforts. So I can’t preview what they will end up coming up in their negotiations with the Russians,” she told CNN’s Jake Tapper on “State of the Union.”

Asked by Tapper again, if the US would recognize Crimea or Donbas as a part of Russia should that be a part of the agreement, Thomas-Greenfield again declined to answer.

“I can’t say that at the moment. We certainly have not recognized the independent Donbas regions just declared as independent. But I can’t review how we will respond to a negotiated settlement that the Ukrainians come up with the Russians to save the lives of their own people.”

The lack of clarity about the status of negotiations is raising additional questions about what Ukraine is willing to agree to and how Russia’s demands would be implemented if they ultimately reach some sort of agreement.

Zelensky said Saturday there were “compromises” his country could not make in negotiations with Putin.

“Any compromises related to our territorial integrity and our sovereignty and the Ukrainian people have spoken about it, they have not greeted Russian soldiers with a bunch of flowers, they have greeted them with bravery, they have greeted them with weapons in their hands,” he told CNN’s Zakaria when asked about the Russian demands.

“You cannot just make a president of another country to recognize anything by the use of force,” he added.

Many details of Russia’s demands, whether Ukraine would accept them and how Ukraine would even implement them remain unclear, a senior NATO official said. That includes what it would mean for Ukraine to adopt a “neutral” status with the West -- a possibility that one congressional source told CNN has caused heartburn for US officials.

“Does that mean they forswear NATO? Does that mean they forswear the (European Union)? Can they not have any other external assistance?” the NATO official said. “My sense is it’s going to be a very complex negotiation.”

### *Neutrality policy*

A European diplomat told CNN last week that if Ukraine were to adopt a neutrality policy and also demilitarize, it would effectively be a surrender -- calling such a move “Moscow-style neutrality.”

The Kremlin has floated the notion that Kyiv could adopt a Swedish or Austrian neutrality policy. However, a Swedish diplomat dismissed the notion of Swedish neutrality, saying the idea that their country is neutral is not true and attempts to try to frame it as such are consistent with longstanding Russian efforts to misrepresent Sweden’s national security policy.

“Whenever the term ‘Austrian neutrality’ comes up, it has to be remembered that this is a model of an armed neutrality. This form of neutrality doesn’t mean that a country lies down its arms and hopes that nobody attacks it. It’s a neutrality where a country -- at least in theory -- is armed and ready to defend itself against all foreign belligerents,” said Martin Weiss, Austria’s ambassador to the US.

The NATO official added that it is unclear what kind of agreement Russia and Ukraine might come to about the territory Russia has taken control of since invading on February 24. The official said the “hope” expressed by both Russian and Ukrainian officials in recent days appears to be belied by the fact that “some pretty clear differences remain” between the parties.

“I think we just need to be mindful that the Russians almost certainly will seek to continue to resupply and will probably continue to fight, up until the time that things are agreed,” the official said. “Whatever the solution, if there’s diplomatic resolution and there’s an agreement, it has to be clear and binding. And it has to be monitorable. ... People will be looking to ensure that the Russians end the war conclusively. And there isn’t some lingering threat that remains.”

While the source familiar with the Biden administration’s view of the talks told CNN that some of the terms Ukraine has said it may be willing to consider seem more feasible than others, the source also indicated that the US will be wary of Russia’s intentions until Putin shows some signs that he is ready to deescalate.

*--CNN’s Kylie Atwood, Jennifer Hansler and Jasmine Wright contributed to this report*

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### **13. Ukraine finally rotates workers at Chernobyl – IAEA**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 21 (0337) | Not Attributed

Ukraine has managed to rotate staff working at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant for the first time since Russia seized it last month as it invaded its neighbour, the UN's nuclear agency said.

Ukraine told the International Atomic Energy Agency that around half of the staff were “finally” able to return to their homes on Sunday after working at the Russian-controlled site for nearly four weeks, IAEA director general Rafael Grossi said.

Those who left were replaced by other Ukrainian staff, Grossi said in a statement late Sunday.

“It is a positive -- albeit long overdue -- development that some staff at the Chernobyl NPP have now rotated and returned to their families,” Grossi said.

“They deserve our full respect and admiration for having worked in these extremely difficult circumstances. They were there for far too long. I sincerely hope that remaining staff from this shift can also rotate soon.”

On February 24, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, Moscow's troops seized the Chernobyl compound, the site of the 1986 core meltdown that sparked the worst nuclear reactor catastrophe in history.

Around 100 technicians have been working under armed guard to maintain the site since then.

Grossi, who had expressed deep concern about the well-being of the Ukrainian staff at the site, “welcomed the news about the partial rotation of personnel,” the IAEA said.

“Before today's rotation, the same work shift had been on-site since the day before the Russian forces entered the area,” it continued.

It is unclear why Russian soldiers seized Chernobyl, where the destroyed reactor is kept under close supervision within a concrete and lead sarcophagus, and the three other reactors are being decommissioned.

In 2017, the site was one of several Ukrainian targets hit by a massive cyberattack thought to have originated in Russia, which briefly took its radiation monitoring system off-line.

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#### **14. Ukraine's military is winning with agile defenses, measured weapons use and fierce will**

##### *Early restraint by Moscow led to heavy Russian losses*

Washington Times Online, Mar. 20 (1940) | Bill Gertz and Mike Glenn

Outgunned Ukrainian forces are winning the war so far against the invading Russians with unique tactics, effective use of weapons and fighters who have exhibited a fierce commitment to defending their nation, military analysts say.

In particular, the anti-tank missiles supplied to Ukraine in advance of the month-old war played a major role in thwarting the advances of Russian tanks and armored vehicles, and the anti-aircraft systems denied Moscow control of the skies.

Ukrainian military forces moved most of their air defense missiles shortly before the start of hostilities last month, blunting the impact of the first wave of Russian missile strikes.

The action prevented the Russians from taking key air bases inside Ukraine, and the invasion force wasted bombs on empty spaces where Moscow's intelligence mistakenly believed air defense batteries were located.

"The Ukrainians are doing a really nice job of staying mobile and agile," said a senior military officer familiar with Ukrainian tactics, with surviving mobile air defense missiles inflicting heavy losses on Russian jets and helicopters.

The Ukrainian military also has leveraged its familiarity with home territory to stymie the invaders.

Several bridges leading from the northern part of the country toward the capital, Kyiv, were destroyed to make it more difficult for tanks and artillery to reach firing areas.

Poor tactics by Russian tank columns also have slowed the attack. Ukrainian forces armed with precision-guided Javelin anti-tank missiles immobilized many columns by blowing up the first and last tanks in a procession, making it difficult for the others to advance.

"It was like [Russian tanks] were driving into a pencil sharpener," the military officer said. "It was a total miscalculation on their ability to maneuver on the battlefield."

##### *New tactic: Bomb civilians*

With the initial assaults bogged down, the Russians now seem to be digging in for siege warfare.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and others on Sunday accused Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces of committing war crimes by deliberately targeting civilians.

“He’s taking these kinds of steps because ... his campaign has stalled,” Mr. Austin said on CBS News’ “Face the Nation.”

Mariupol, a crucial port city on the Azov Sea, has been encircled by Russian troops for weeks. City leaders said on social media that a local art school where about 400 residents — mostly women, children and the elderly — had taken shelter was bombed Saturday.

“The building was destroyed, and peaceful people are still under the rubble,” city leaders said Sunday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the siege would go down in history because of the war crimes being committed.

British military intelligence officials said Russia has increased “indiscriminate shelling of urban areas” across Ukraine.

### *The information battlefield*

Russia’s missteps in Ukraine extend well beyond the conflict on the ground. Moscow’s failure to disrupt communications infrastructure in its neighboring target provided a major boost to Mr. Zelenskyy, who emerged as a powerful, inspirational figure, bolstering military morale and fueling the hopes of an embattled country.

Mr. Zelenskyy appears regularly on Ukrainian and international media as a voice of opposition to the Russian invasion.

Retired Adm. James G. Stavridis, a former NATO commander, said Mr. Zelenskyy has been a major factor in the Ukrainian successes.

“The key to the Ukrainian resistance is clearly their fighting spirit,” Adm. Stavridis said. “It is without question the center of gravity in the conflict, personified by the extraordinary leadership of President Zelenskyy.”

Moscow also has largely failed in its efforts to use disinformation to disrupt Ukrainian resistance. A video supposedly showing Mr. Zelenskyy ordering troops to surrender was quickly exposed as a deep-fake attempt at disinformation.

“It should be obvious by now that the Kremlin’s Active Measures/disinformation machine, which supposedly took control of U.S. (and maybe Western) politics, 2016-20, isn’t quite as awe-inspiring as Twitter told you it was, since they’re getting bested in Ukraine by kids with TikTok,” former intelligence official John Schindler said in a tweet.

### *Every missile counts*

Geography and weather, along with the anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles supplied to Ukraine, combined early to blunt much of the Russian military advantage, said Adm. Stavridis, now with the Carlyle Group.

The Ukrainians expertly marshaled limited domestic and international military resources — fuel and ordnance — better than the Russians. Ukraine’s stock of missiles, arms and equipment have been carefully expended on key targets at optimum times, a senior Pentagon official said.

“They’re hitting the Russians very effectively and not trying to defend everything at once,” the official told The Washington Times.

The Ukrainians also are using drones to deadly effect to pinpoint artillery and guide multiple rocket attacks, according to reports and videos.

The Russian military failed to launch a shock-and-awe-style military operation when the invasion began. Instead, it relied on lesser-equipped and poorly trained national guard troops to be the lead forces in some locations.

Russian military doctrine and the apparent battle plan for taking Ukraine were said to call for accepting large numbers of killed and wounded troops. Estimates of the number of Russians killed in fighting is about 7,000.

Even with those losses, though, the invasion force is substantial. “We assess that the Russians still have approximately 90% of their assembled combat power still available to them,” a senior Pentagon official said Friday.

Russian forces continue to target the capital of Kyiv and have been trying unsuccessfully to advance into positions from the north and northwest, and from the east.

“As you have seen, they are facing heavy resistance from the Ukrainians,” the official said.

### *Moving targets*

The Ukrainian military is beating the Russian army through the use of what the U.S. military calls “mobile defense-in-depth.”

Ukrainian ground force units armed with anti-tank weapons succeeded in attacking Russian columns deep into their advancing lines.

After the strikes, the Ukrainians retreat and allow the reformed tank columns to drive forward before hitting them again with more attack-and-retreat strikes.

Because of weather and ground conditions, Russian armor units in some areas have been forced to stick to roads rather than venture cross-country. On unfrozen terrain, tank formations have been seen stuck in mud, and reports reaching the Pentagon indicate that Russians abandoned significant numbers of immobilized tanks and armored vehicles in fields with soft ground.

### *Better supply lines*

Military logistics also favored the Ukrainian military in the early stages of the conflict.

While Russian advances were frequently stalled because of vulnerable supply lines stretched thin across the country, Ukraine's internal supply system has shown an ability to rapidly obtain and employ internationally supplied weapons and ammunition to its forces. As soon as the weapons arrive in Ukraine from outside the country, mainly through Poland, the arms are moved rapidly to front-line units battling the Russians.

The Pentagon regards this feature as a critical element of the Ukrainian military success.

Success on the battlefield is surprising because Ukraine's armed forces are significantly smaller than those of the Russian military.

Kyiv's total active-duty troops number around 196,000, far fewer than Russia's 900,000 active-duty troops.

The Russian military also has nearly 16,000 tanks and armored vehicles to Ukraine's 3,300. Russian artillery includes more than 4,800 pieces compared with 1,800 Ukrainian artillery pieces.

Russia has more than 150 surface-to-surface missile launchers; Ukraine has 90. Similarly, Moscow's air defenses include more than 714 systems, compared with 142 for Ukraine.

Despite the disparities, the Ukrainian military has prevented the Russian force of more than 100,000 troops from taking any major cities.

Nate Barrick, a former military officer and specialist on the Russian military, said the "extremely effective resistance by Ukrainians" contributed to the successes to date.

The Russian army, he said, is struggling because its forces, as with most other militaries, are better at fighting in defensive operations than offensive attacks.

Mr. Barrick said the initial advance largely failed because the Russians deviated from established military doctrine that calls for using overwhelming force.

Instead, the battle plan appears to have involved relative restraint. In a bid to correct the early errors, Moscow has switched to escalating the conflict with heavier air and artillery strikes that target more civilians.

Russia fired a hypersonic ballistic missile for the first time during the conflict last week. The ultra-high-speed weapon can be used for both conventional and tactical nuclear strikes.

“Putin wants Ukraine’s government to cave; he doesn’t want to own it or occupy it, [and] he might end up with an unplanned occupation due to Ukrainian resistance,” said Mr. Barrick, a former strategist with U.S. Special Operations Command. “His plan is being frustrated by Ukrainian resistance.”

Mr. Putin, in remarks reported on state television Wednesday, defended the invasion. “The operation is being carried out successfully, in strict conformity with the approved plan,” he said.

The remarks indicate that the Russian leader is continuing a military campaign of gradual escalation and pressure and does not regard the setbacks as a sign of failure.

#### *The resistance goes on*

The Ukrainian general staff, in a Facebook post on Friday, called the military’s efforts “the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people to the Russian military invasion.”

The statement said Russian military leaders plan to transfer more forces from a military base in Armenia and that some Russian troops are refusing to fight after clashing with the Ukrainian forces.

About 130 Russian troops from the 20th Guards Motor Rifle Division surrendered, according to the statements.

“The enemy personnel [are] demoralized, suicides and self-mutilation became more frequent,” the statement said.

“The Defense Forces of Ukraine continue step by step to liberate the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine in all directions,” the statement said.

The battle over the southern Ukrainian port of Mykolaiv is one example of a surprisingly decisive Ukrainian victory.

According to a Wall Street Journal report, Russian artillery fired on the city for weeks until the Ukrainian military launched an effective counteroffensive that drove them out.

The city, a strategic gateway to the main Black Sea port of Odesa, was bombarded since the earliest days of the conflict.

Fierce resistance from the Ukrainian military and local defense teams prevented the city from being taken, although not without heavy casualties on both sides.

Mykolaiv Gov. Vitaliy Kim told *The Journal* that the Russians expected an easy victory and would be welcomed, but instead were driven back.

Placed on the defensive outside the city, the Russians are preoccupied with defending their positions and are using fire against the Ukrainian military rather than firing at targets in Mykolaiv.

“Some of the Russian infantry vehicles and tanks are just lost, wandering around. They don’t have communications, they don’t know where they are,” Mr. Kim said. “Sometimes they appear in our rear and start firing at any civilian car they see because they are afraid someone will jump out of that car with a rocket-propelled grenade and blast them.”

Another key battle for the Ukrainians took place in the early days of the operation when the Russians failed to take control of the military airfield at Hostomel, about 20 miles from Kyiv.

Had the Russians controlled the airfield, it would have permitted large numbers of additional forces to be flown into the country for an assault on the capital.

The Ukrainians recognized the urgency of preventing the airfield from falling. The military launched a multipronged attack that was able to defeat hundreds of Russian paratroopers dropped in the area and prevent further aerial drops, according to Ukrainian government reports of the battle.

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## **15. US delivers air defence system to Slovakia**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 20 (1158) | Not Attributed

The US-made Patriot air defence system is on its way to Slovakia, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said Sunday, paving the way for Bratislava to possibly deliver similar hardware to Ukraine.

NATO member Slovakia said this week it was willing to provide its Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft system to Ukraine but only on the condition that it received a substitute to avoid an Alliance security gap.

US President Joe Biden promised to help Ukraine get air defence systems with a longer range than the shoulder-borne Stinger missiles already on the ground, but to do so without entering into direct conflict with Russia.

The old S-300 system would be an ideal weapon since the Ukrainian army is already familiar with the hardware.

“I can confirm that the first units to deploy the anti-aircraft Patriot system are gradually arriving,” Nad said on Facebook, adding the delivery would continue over the next few days.

On Friday, the Netherlands said it would deploy a Patriot battery to the Sliac military base in central Slovakia, and Germany confirmed it would send two more batteries to the country.

Nad reiterated that in the current circumstances, the Russian system had no future in the Slovakian armed forces after the invasion of Ukraine.

Bratislava would instead seek to replace the system with another that would be more compatible with Slovakia’s allies and offer better defence, he said.

Nad added the Patriot system would be temporarily based at Sliac, noting that there would be further consideration about where to deploy the hardware that “covers the largest possible territory in Slovakia”.

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## **16. Signed up to fight, some foreigners wait in frustration**

Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A1 | Sudarsan Raghavan

KYIV, Ukraine -- Before he decided to buy a one-way plane ticket to Ukraine, Adam worked two jobs, as a security guard and as a cashier at a dollar store. He owned guns and fired them at shooting ranges, but the only fighting he had ever done was in mixed martial arts classes.

That didn’t stop the tall, lanky 24-year-old from Thousand Oaks, a Los Angeles suburb, from flying to this war-torn capital earlier this month. He joined a new international legion set up to fight Russian forces about 15 miles outside the city.

Adam, sporting camouflage pants, is unfazed by his inexperience in combat. He will rely, he said, on sheer determination - to save Ukraine and protect American values.

“Democracy and freedom are very important to the whole world,” said Adam, seated in the lobby of a Kyiv hotel, along with other foreigners dressed in their new military camouflage who have joined his unit. “What [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is doing is simply wrong. And Ukraine is the underdog, so they need help.”

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, thousands of Americans and other foreign nationals have signed up to fight for Ukraine, answering a call to action by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Now, with the conflict in its fourth week, a growing number of foreign volunteers are flowing into the capital, signing contracts and receiving weapons and combat training before being deployed to one of the numerous front lines of the war.

They have been compared to the 32,000 foreigners, mostly Americans and Europeans, many of them equally unprepared, who joined the republican forces in Spain's 1936-1939 civil war. That conflict became a losing battle against nationalists led by Gen. Francisco Franco, with the support of Nazi Germany and the fascist Italian government of Benito Mussolini.

In Ukraine's brutal modern war, though, the romance of adventure and political convictions can quickly vanish as volunteers get pounded by airstrikes, Grad rockets and artillery shells, or engage in urban warfare on the streets of cities.

While some experienced American veterans of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are said to be among the volunteers, many of these would-be fighters, like Adam, are novices at best.

They say they do share a sense of righteous conviction. They've seen the images of civilians being killed by Russian bombardments, and like those who went to Spain, they believe they are on the right side of history.

"I've got very little military experience, but I am willing to go and fight and die with this guy," said Brian, a Canadian business analyst, referring to Adam standing nearby, "because my Ukrainian relatives are here."

"I have been a hunter all my life," Brian said. "I got assigned to a sniper team here. I am going to kill every ... Russian I can," he said, using an expletive to describe Russians.

"Never killed a man in my life, but ... I am going to enjoy [it]."

All the foreign volunteers interviewed for this article did not want their last names to be used. Some were concerned about their security, while others wanted to protect their relatives or had not yet told their families they were in Ukraine to fight the Russians.

It remains unclear what added utility the arriving foreign recruits can bring as soldiers, medical aides or logistics personnel on the battlefields.

And the government's volunteer program appears to be disorganized at times, according to interviews with five volunteers and an ethnic Georgian commander who has enlisted Americans and other foreigners into his own paramilitary force in Ukraine. Some would-be fighters are processed in their home nations. Others are landing in the capital without contacts or speaking the language, hoping that someone will get them trained and shipped to the front.

If nothing else, the foreigners may be useful for public relations purposes, demonstrating the global support for Ukraine.

“This is a way of tying in populations from other countries to the Ukrainian war and the outcome of the war,” said Ilmari Kaihko, an associate professor of war studies at the Swedish Defense University who has researched Ukraine’s conflict. “The political might be more important in the long term than the actual military contribution.”

But there is concern that some of these American and other Western volunteers could become liabilities on the battlefield. If Americans get captured by Russian forces, they could become fodder for the Kremlin’s propaganda machine, held up as evidence that Ukraine’s resistance is really an American and Western plot. If they get killed, it could bring more pressure on the United States to retaliate.

Adam just wants to get on the battlefield as soon as possible. His first choice, he said, is to be a medic because he took a first aid class in the United States, he said. His second choice?

“A sniper,” he said.

He has no experience at either job.

In the days after the Feb. 24 invasion, Adam said, he couldn’t stop watching the news. As a Jew with dual U.S.-Israeli citizenship, he said he saw similarities between the Russian assault on Ukraine and Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians. He believed that both Ukraine and Israel were “being attacked unprovoked” and that both nations needed more military help to fight their enemies.

He was working odd jobs and getting a degree in automotive technology at a community college in the San Fernando Valley. “Not much going on at home,” Adam said.

He said he liked “guns, cars, building stuff, basketball, sports and MMA,” referring to mixed martial arts, the sport where fighters battle inside a cage. At shooting ranges, Adam said, he would “shoot moving targets and practice pulling out my weapon and reloading.”

For months, he was planning to move to Israel and join the Israel Defense Forces, he said. But he decided to make a stop in Ukraine first.

Adam didn’t know much about the county, but he felt he knew Eastern Europe because his family descended from Polish and Lithuanian immigrants. He didn’t tell his parents, three sisters and brother that he was going to fight the Russians, he said. He told them instead that he was going to help Ukrainian refugees entering Poland.

He didn’t contact the Ukrainian Embassy or Consulate. Nor did he log into its recruitment website, [fightforUA.org](http://fightforUA.org), where foreign volunteers are supposed to register and learn about the process of joining Ukraine’s armed forces, Adam said.

“I only found out about [fightforUA.org](http://fightforUA.org) when I was already here,” he said.

He flew to Istanbul and then to Warsaw. He hitched a ride to the border and crossed into Ukraine, passing through the western city of Lviv and finally reaching Kyiv.

As many as 20,000 foreigners have expressed interest in joining the International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine, as it is officially called, according to the Ukrainian government. That includes an estimated 4,000 Americans, an official with the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington told The Washington Post last week.

They had to sign contracts saying they will fight until the end of the war. Other volunteers said they were told the contracts meant Geneva Conventions rules would apply if they were captured or killed, though experts say it's unclear if they would be treated with full prisoner of war status.

Each volunteer would receive a salary of roughly \$3,000 a month, the same as a soldier, said Yaroslav, a Ukrainian military officer and head organizer of the International Legion in western Ukraine who declined to give his last name for security reasons.

There are already concerns about the international legion. Volunteers complain of delays in contracts, extensive paperwork, not getting weapons or training quickly enough, and days of waiting before getting assigned to battlefield units.

“There is a big bureaucracy, even now when there is war, and those guys have to experience that bureaucracy,” said Mamuka Mamulashvili, commander of the Georgian National Legion, a paramilitary force that has been fighting Russian separatists and forces in eastern Ukraine for eight years. “For me, it seems very amateur.”

He said “there is a very big flow” of inexperienced Americans and foreigners wanting to fight in Ukraine. “We cannot just take some guy from Brooklyn who wants to fight on the front line,” he said, adding that anyone with no military experience is turned away from his force.

Yaroslav says they are not disorganized. He said there is a thorough vetting process and only those with battlefield experience are allowed to fight.

“When they don’t have any experience, they aren’t useful here. We tell them they can be volunteers for something else.”

Foreigners can also join other Ukrainian militias that have lower requirements to join and allow volunteers to leave more easily for family or work reasons. All could face risks on the battlefield, and not just from bullets and bombs: A spokesman for Russia’s Defense Ministry, Igor Konashenkov, recently described the foreign volunteers as “mercenaries” who, if caught, could be “prosecuted as criminals.”

Legally, Americans can take part in another country's war. But the Biden administration has urged U.S. military veterans and other Americans not to join the Ukrainian forces and to leave if they are already in the country.

Kelso, another volunteer, didn't listen. The Montana-born construction worker left his job after seeing on the news "innocent civilians being directly targeted and attacked," said the tall, slim former U.S. soldier, who was also in Adam's group of foreign volunteers.

He said he had served in the U.S. Army for four years after high school, but had never seen combat. "This is my first war," Kelso said.

He registered on the Ukrainian government's recruitment website and filled out the forms. But he didn't hear back for days. "I am not going to wait for an email response while there are people dying," he said.

So, with some money saved, he paid \$700 for a one-way flight to Poland. He carried warm clothes, a sleeping bag, medical supplies, family photos and a bulletproof vest a friend had donated. When he arrived at the border, he was connected to people with the International Legion, he said.

"I do believe that God is on our side here," Kelso said. "We are on the side of good. What the Russians brought is pure evil."

Steps away stood other volunteers, among them a German who said he had served in Afghanistan for 4½ months with the German military, part of the NATO security forces there, and a Scottish grandfather who said that he was a British army veteran and that he had fought against the Islamic State in Syria with the YPG, or the People's Protection Units, a mainly Kurdish militia.

Some have been waiting for nearly 10 days for their contracts and other paperwork to be approved.

Zelensky "said we would be welcome here and we would be armed and ready to go," said Rob, 61, the grandfather from Edinburgh. "We should be at the front lines. There are young Ukrainians who are at this moment dying. And we are here."

"I came here to fight for Ukraine," Rob said.

Adam has not told his mother that he's part of a fighting unit, despite her concerns about his well-being expressed in messages on WhatsApp.

"I don't really need her to ruin my mental aspect right now," Adam said. "I am here on a mission."

Minutes later came the sound of an air raid siren, from an app on Adam's phone, and a message came up in Ukrainian. "I can't read it," Adam said. "But I know there is a missile somewhere."

On Saturday, when reached by phone, Adam was angry and emotional. Despite the legion's assurances of proper vetting, he was now in the northern section of the capital with a territorial defense unit mostly composed of Ukrainian civilians turned militiamen.

Adam still hadn't received a bulletproof vest, a helmet - or a weapon. And he could hear the sounds of shelling, he said.

"I have been here 15 days now and still nothing is happening," he said in a phone interview. "I am not putting up with that."

"They expect me to guard the base with no guns, no armor, no vest, no helmet and no knowledge of the Ukrainian language," he continued. "It makes absolutely no sense. I am not going to stand around and get hit with a missile with no guns or nothing. If am going to die, I'd rather get to the front line and do that."

So he was now trying to join another unit closer to the front line.

Adam said he intended to get as close as possible to the city of Irpin on Kyiv's northern fringes, a volatile battle zone where three journalists were recently killed.

"I got all the way here by myself. I will be just fine," he said.

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## **17. On NATO's eastern edge, high stakes for exposed Baltics**

Washington Post, Mar. 21 (0115), Pg. A13 | Missy Ryan, Michael Birnbaum, Paul Sonne and Steve Hendrix

TALLINN, Estonia -- Late last month, Estonia's foreign minister, Eva-Maria Liimets, flew into Kyiv to join her counterparts from fellow Baltic nations in an expression of solidarity with Ukraine as tensions mounted with Russia.

Like Ukraine, the three Baltic states - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia - were once part of the Soviet Union. Unlike Ukraine, they had joined NATO in the early 2000s, and now enjoy the protection the alliance's mutual defense guarantee provides.

After she arrived, Liimets, a soft-spoken career diplomat, took a walk around central Kyiv's cobblestone streets in the cold night air. A tense calm suffused the city.

Early the next morning, a little before 6 a.m. on Feb. 24, Estonia's ambassador in Ukraine called her with an urgent message: President Vladimir Putin's invasion had begun. Like it was for millions in Ukraine - where the

airspace was now closed and roads were quickly jammed by people trying to flee - the high stakes of the slow-building showdown with Russia were starkly apparent.

Within minutes, Liimets packed her bags and was on her way to Estonia's nearby embassy, and then, escorted by Ukrainian security, in a convoy headed west toward the Polish border. As they navigated droves of fleeing residents - it took more than four hours to get out of Kyiv - she could hear the sound of distant shelling.

As Russia presses its invasion deeper into Ukraine, Baltic leaders say the world has finally woken up to the admonitions they have been making for years: that Putin is prepared to use force, like he did in Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, to advance his political goals.

"Unfortunately, we were right," Liimets said in an interview. Putin's action in Ukraine, she said, "shows that Russia has not felt enough international pressure and they could continue with their ... plan to invade one of their neighboring countries."

As the global implications of Putin's assault set in, Baltic nations' appeals for greater deterrence are translating into additional troop and aircraft deployments. Already in recent months, new NATO and U.S. forces have been dispatched to the region. In Estonia, a British-led force of some 2,500 NATO troops conducts training and exercises with local forces. Additional NATO forces are there for the Baltic air policing mission, which now includes American F-35s and British and U.S. F-16s. There are also American F-35s in Lithuania.

Such forces provide valuable reassurance for a country like Estonia, which has an active-duty force of 4,000 troops, and no combat aircraft.

At the same time, the region's leaders are urging the bloc to do even more to bolster deterrence along its exposed eastern flank by abandoning a decades-old prohibition on permanent NATO basing there. They also want an expansion of the "air policing" mission over the Baltic Sea and the placement of NATO air defense systems, like Romania and Poland already have.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda issued a stark warning this month, saying that Putin "will not stop in Ukraine."

The NATO reinforcements come after years in which Baltic officials say their fears were dismissed by much of Europe as paranoia or some kind of post-Soviet stress disorder. Even after Russia launched the first state-on-state cyberattack in 2007, a digital assault on Estonia over its decision to relocate a Soviet-era monument, NATO's military planners moved slowly, drawing up detailed defense plans for the region only after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Across the Baltic countries, residents are showing their support for Ukraine, hanging blue-and-yellow flags and protesting outside Russian embassies, and taking what action they can to push back against Putin.

In Lithuania, a volunteer corps of online “elves,” including at least one member of Parliament, methodically debunks and derides Russian trolls and bots. Others post five-star reviews of Russian hotels and restaurants merely as a way of including photographs and data about Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilians. A popular app automatically connects users to one of 40 million randomly generated Russian phone numbers and provides tips on starting a conversation about Ukraine when the call is answered.

“Our biggest weapon is that we understand the Russians and we speak their language,” said Aleksandra Ketleriene, 34, an online reporter for the national broadcasting service.

A large portion of the region’s population remembers the Soviet occupation, which ended in 1991. During the decades of Soviet rule, the Kremlin lured ethnic Russians to the Baltics by giving them better jobs and better housing than what was available to local residents, the most rebellious of whom were sent to prison camps in Siberia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russians who were left behind, especially in Latvia and Estonia, posed a challenge for local policymakers, who faced the difficulty of integrating large numbers of people who looked to Russia as their political and cultural homeland.

“The Ukrainians are fighting for us,” said Dainius Navikas, a management consultant in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital. Last week, he donated a vehicle to be converted to military use and delivered to Ukrainian fighters as part of a private aid campaign that has already netted more than 17 million euros from Lithuania’s 2.8 million citizens. “If they lose, we could be next.”

Others are making preparations for what they fear might be an eventual Russian assault. At social gatherings in Riga, capital of Latvia, young families swap details of their plans to evacuate further west should it become necessary. Some are laying backup plans for their children to leave the country without them if need be. In the Estonian capital, Tallinn, residents are checking their basements in case they need to use them as shelters. In the university town of Tartu, one grocery store’s shelves were empty of iodine, the solution that protects against radiation exposure after a nuclear attack.

“So far we are not being threatened, as far as I understand,” said Dima Golubevs, a 40-year-old Latvian video producer at a recent protest outside Russia’s embassy in Riga. But he noted that he was still a tiny bit nervous about whether NATO would come to the aid of Latvia in the event of a Russian invasion.

“I can say 99 percent I feel safe,” Golubevs said. “But 1 percent is still a lot.”

Even as European leaders show a united front in support of Ukraine, some Baltic officials feel a more urgent threat to their security than do other NATO nations. Last week, Lithuania’s Parliament approved a resolution calling for a no-fly zone over Ukraine, a step the United States and other NATO leaders have said they will not take because it could trigger war with Russia.

While Baltic nations want to support Ukraine, officials feel constrained in the military aid they can supply, mindful of the need to keep weaponry in reserve in case they need it themselves.

More than a frontal attack on NATO, some officials worry about the possibility that Putin could launch a smaller maneuver to show that NATO is weak - for example, seizing an island off the coast of Estonia - or renew hybrid warfare, like the cyberattacks that struck Estonia in 2007.

“If he wins in Ukraine, it will legitimize war for him” as a way to achieve his goals with other countries, said one Baltic official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk frankly.

Despite the stepped-up defenses, there is also concern that the West might relax its resolve, either due to a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia or because of the high cost of economic sanctions on Russia - with potentially problematic results in Eastern Europe.

“My biggest fear is that the minute there is the slightest concession from Russia, countries will rush to lift these sanctions,” said Toomas Ilves, who was Estonia’s president from 2006 to 2016.

While the world may now share the Baltics’ perspective more than ever before, Ilves said, “there is little joy in being right.”

*--Birnbaum reported from Washington, Sonne reported from Riga and Hendrix reported from Vilnius*

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## **18. Is an EU Army Coming?**

*Russia’s war in Ukraine is turning the European Union into a serious military player*

ForeignPolicy.com (Interview), Mar. 20 (1338) | Elisabeth Braw

The war in Ukraine, politicians and pundits agree, is the European Union’s sudden birth as a serious military player. Germany has announced that it will dramatically increase its defense spending and is sending weapons to Ukraine—a previously unthinkable development. The European Union, heretofore mostly known as an outfit that voices concerns about military aggression but does nothing, has already sent Ukraine military aid worth more than half a billion dollars.

But what exactly the EU’s military role should be remains painfully unclear: Member states have widely different opinions on the matter, and European security is of course already being looked after by NATO. What, exactly, can the EU do to grow its military muscle without causing affront to its Brussels neighbor? Severe crises below NATO’s Article 5 threshold, in a way, pose an opportunity for the EU to make a real military contribution. Its Military Committee—composed of member states’ defense chiefs—has the daunting task of mapping a course. At the center sits its chair, Gen. Claudio Graziano.

Graziano, who spent the first part of his career within Italy's elite Alpini mountain infantry, was previously Italy's chief of defense and chief of the army. He also served in Afghanistan as commander of the Kabul Multinational Brigade and commanded the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. He assumed his EU post in 2018 after being elected by his fellow EU defense chiefs. The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

*Elisabeth Braw: The EU has suddenly emerged as a serious actor in the security of Europe, and EU governments are increasing defense spending. Is the EU militarily stronger now than it was two months ago?*

*Claudio Graziano: Absolutely yes. Russia has brought war back to Europe, which was something so serious and dangerous that it wasn't even considered possible. Even for people who had read about the risk, it was impossible to believe it would happen. When it did happen, it was a shock of immense magnitude that provoked a huge common response from the European Union.*

At the Versailles meeting [on March 10-11], the heads of state and government discussed how the European Union can live up to its responsibilities in this new reality. Doing so requires a clear political will, and now the European Union is more united than ever. This gives an incredible push to building a more concrete and credible European defense union. And a defense union is really the only possible answer to this crisis.

We know that's a long path, but we know that we have to do it now because later will be too late. As part of this effort, we'll start developing an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity that will give us the chance to deploy a modular and multidomain force of up to 5,000 troops that can intervene in nonpermissive [hostile] environments.

This force will also have strategic enablers that have in the past normally been provided by the United States—for example, command and control structures, strategic airlift, strategic transport, intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, cyberdefense, unmanned air vehicles, space communication assets, electronic warfare systems, anti-missile defense, and I hope in the near future main battle tanks and next-generation fighter jets.

*EB: But the EU already has battlegroups that have never been deployed. How can you be sure that this deployable force will be successful when the battlegroups have not?*

*CG: The EU battlegroups are designed to be used for stabilization management [crises less severe than war], and it's true that they've never been used. That's because we never reached an agreement among the EU member states on certain issues, such as cost and who was supposed to lead the effort. The other complication was that they shouldn't compete with NATO. In the past, I served in NATO missions for many years, including in Afghanistan, and NATO does foreign deployments well. It also has at least nine rapid reaction corps, and they're much bigger than the EU battlegroups. Our new EU Rapid Deployment Capacity is an effort to answer a security need without competing with NATO. But to be a real answer, the Deployment Capacity must also be used in exercises. And having it on the roster will send a message of European unity to Russia and others.*

*EB: Speaking of unity, Poland wants to give Ukraine its MiG-29 fighter jets but doesn't want this to be just a Polish initiative. The United States said no because it didn't want to be drawn into the war in the active way that sending aircraft from Ramstein Air Base in Germany would mean. Can the EU step in to help Ukraine now?*

*CG: The provision of combat aircraft is currently not on the agenda. But you have to remember that on Feb. 27, only 72 hours after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU adopted an unprecedented aid package to help the Ukrainian armed forces defend Ukraine's territory and population. This aid package included lethal weapons. That's a milestone! It's even more than a historical moment. Remember that in 2013 we weren't able to provide anything to Mali. [Editor's note: Despite having monitored the 2012 Islamist takeover of the country's north closely, the EU failed to intervene militarily. Instead, France launched an intervention in which it was assisted by Germany, Denmark, and other EU member states.]*

Regarding lethal weapons, we're sending whatever the Ukrainians need most—for example, ammunition and anti-tank weapons. This will help the Ukrainians fight for freedom, and their will to do so is the most important surprise in this war. Neither the Russians nor we probably understood how far the Ukrainians would go to defend their freedom. It's so different from Afghanistan this past summer, when we saw the Afghan armed forces melt away.

*EB: What is your own role in this growing military role the EU is taking on? Does the Ukrainian government come to you directly with requests for military assistance?*

*CG: It works a bit differently. The Ukrainians tell us what they need, the EU member states check what they have and can give to the Ukrainians, and we—through the EU military staff—function as the clearinghouse.*

*EB: One idea that keeps being floated in every discussion about the EU and its military capabilities is the prospect of an EU Army. It's clearly not feasible, especially considering that it has taken Germany and the Netherlands years of painstaking work to establish their joint panzer division. Short of complete military integration, what can the EU do to strengthen its military capabilities, beyond increasing defense spending, of course? As we know, countries like to spend money on weapons made by their own companies.*

*CG: Integrating armed forces really is extremely difficult, but it's not impossible. It starts with the political will. But what we can do first to strengthen our military capabilities is to improve interoperability. After this war, we need to conclude that life won't be as it was before and that we've made a backward leap of at least 70 years.*

How do we improve interoperability? Consider this: The U.S. Army, and even the Russian army, uses only one type of main battle tank. We Europeans operate 17 different kinds. That creates enormous problems of maintenance and supply and of training together. Our navies and air forces have similar problems. We're talking about a total of 180 different platforms, while the United States has 30. This really is anachronistic and unacceptable, especially considering that we collectively spend more than 250 billion euros [about \$276 billion]

a year on defense, which is much more than what Russia spends. Yes, we need to spend more, but we also need to spend better by avoiding such duplication.

And it's not just about money. We have to have a mindset that we want to train together and work together. And when you deploy together, you become credible. When I was a lieutenant, I was part of a NATO war group that did exactly this; we deployed to countries on NATO's outer edges, such as Norway and Turkey. It was a very well-trained and credible group. Now that we're going back in history in European security, the EU should be able to do such things, too.

*EB: When will the EU be able to deploy forces?*

*CG:* We've set ourselves the target of 2025 for the Deployment Capacity to be fully operational. That's an ambitious term because it means you need to have all the strategic enablers I mentioned earlier. Then again, you have to remember that the EU is not in charge of collective defense. That's a NATO responsibility. But in the current crisis, we the EU responded immediately not just by sending military aid to Ukraine but by providing military assistance to other countries, too. At the moment, aircraft coordinated by the EU are, for example, flying reconnaissance missions over Bosnia and Herzegovina. That sends a message of solidarity to the people of Bosnia and a message to malicious actors that we're ready to react.

*EB: Your fellow army general Oleksandr Sirsky, commander of the Ukrainian ground forces, faces an unbelievably difficult task. What is your message to him?*

*CG:* I want to send him a message of support. Col. Gen. Sirsky is also in charge of the defense of Kyiv, and Russian President Vladimir Putin's original plan was to quickly capture Kyiv. Thanks to him and his troops, that didn't happen. I want to tell him that we're on their side, we'll remain on their side, and that he can count on us.

*--Elisabeth Braw is a columnist at Foreign Policy and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where she focuses on defense against emerging national security challenges, such as hybrid and gray-zone threats. She is also a member of the U.K. National Preparedness Commission*

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## **RUSSIA**

### **19. Putin Is Seen as Shifting to Plan B**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A1 | Michael R. Gordon and Alex Leary

After Russian forces failed to secure a quick victory over Ukraine, senior U.S. officials see signs the Kremlin is shifting to a new strategy to secure key territorial objectives while seeking leverage to compel the Ukrainian government to accept neutrality between Russia and the West.

The U.S. and its allies had widely interpreted Russian President Vladimir Putin's initial objectives to include the seizure of Kyiv in a matter of days, and the replacement of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's government with a pro-Russian regime.

None of that has come to pass. A senior U.S. official said indications suggest more than three weeks of grueling combat -- in which Ukraine has put up fierce resistance to Russian forces -- has prompted Mr. Putin to adjust his tactics.

The new assessment of Mr. Putin's intentions, which is shared by senior officials within the Biden administration, is to compel Kyiv to accept Russian claims to Ukraine's southern and eastern territories. Having seized both Crimea and regions of Donbas in 2014, Russia seeks to secure a "land bridge" between western Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, and to expand Russian control of the Donbas region.

Mr. Putin would also continue his military pressure, including the pummeling of Ukrainian cities, calculating that it will lead Mr. Zelensky to abandon his hopes of joining the West and agree to a neutral status and other Russian demands.

Should Mr. Putin's demands for territory and neutrality be rebuffed, he is expected to try to hold all of the ground his forces have taken, and fight on, U.S. officials said. "Based on our assessments militarily, it does appear that he is reverting to siege tactics," another U.S. official said.

For Ukraine's beleaguered citizens, the shifting strategy means weeks -- possibly months -- of attacks from a weakened Russian military often content to fire missiles and artillery from a distance, they said. This shift is designed to pressure Mr. Zelensky's government into giving up territory and ceding security arrangements.

The assessment of Mr. Putin's "Plan B," as one official called it, comes with a number of important caveats. U.S. officials note Mr. Putin might expand his war aims, should his military begin to have more success against Ukraine's forces. The status of the capital remains an open question, and given stout Ukrainian resistance, it is unclear whether the Russian military can marshal sufficient troops to tightly cordon off Kyiv and take the Ukrainian capital, some U.S. officials said.

The interpretation of Mr. Putin's strategy isn't the result of a formal intelligence community assessment, but is the view of some U.S. officials with access to classified information who are not saying the strategy will work. Some analysts note the difficulty of assessing Mr. Putin's goals and objectives, and warn against reading too much into battlefield developments.

"His objective has not changed at all," said Daniel Fried, a former senior State Department official who served as U.S. ambassador to Poland. "What has changed is his tactics."

“The quick decapitation of the Ukrainian government didn’t work,” Mr. Fried said. “Now he just wants to pound them because they are resisting and therefore it must be purged. It’s Stalinesque.”

At present, Russian forces are faced with enormous challenges, including faulty logistics, a shrinking supply of precision-guided munitions and growing casualties, which could include as many as 7,000 Russian troops killed in action, according to U.S. calculations.

In Mariupol and other cities, his forces have reverted to some of the siege tactics they employed in Grozny in 1999 and 2000 during the second Chechen war, when Mr. Putin rose to power as prime minister and then president.

In Chechnya, Russian forces sought to gain control of a major city in a Russian territory that is smaller than New Jersey. In Ukraine, Russia faces the challenge of trying to gain control of multiple cities in a country that had a population of more than 40 million before more than three million Ukrainians fled, and is larger than France.

After weeks of tough fighting, Russian troops have pushed into the streets of the port city of Mariupol, an important strategic objective for Moscow as it seeks to establish a corridor from the Crimean Peninsula to western Russia. Seizing control of the city would give the Russians a battlefield victory, though one achieved at a high cost.

“We’ve seen deliberate targeting of cities and towns and civilians throughout in the last several weeks,” U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Sunday to CBS News. “He’s taking these kinds of steps because. . .his campaign is stalled.”

After initial rounds of negotiations, Ukraine and Russia remain far apart on key issues, including the Kremlin’s demands that the Zelensky government recognize Russian sovereignty over Crimea, formally cede control of the Donbas region and renounce its longer-term aspiration to integrate with the West, including its goal of eventually joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

John Herbst, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, agreed that the Russian military had shifted its tactics on the battlefield, but said there was no indication that Mr. Putin had backed away from his maximum demands.

Mr. Putin’s main purpose in agreeing to talks with Ukraine, Mr. Herbst said, was to encourage the West to offer concessions while creating the impression for the Russian public that he is open to diplomacy. The talks, he said, aren’t being led on the Russian side by a top-level official.

“I think he began the negotiations at a much lower level because he realized things were not working out on the battlefield,” Mr. Herbst said. “He is still trying to win the war on the battlefield, but he has in no way publicly endorsed anything other than his maximalist checklist.”

President Biden is traveling to Brussels for a NATO summit on Thursday and will also participate in a European Council meeting. The trip comes as Mr. Biden, a Democrat, has received both praise and criticism at home for his handling of the crisis. Some lawmakers continue to push a plan that would supply Soviet-built MiG-29 combat jets to Ukraine, an idea Mr. Biden and his advisers have rejected.

Mr. Zelensky has sought to apply pressure on Mr. Biden and leaders in other countries to establish a no-fly zone to shield his country from air attacks. The U.S. and NATO nations have rebuffed that proposal and are moving to send more air defense systems to Ukraine so the Ukrainians can better defend their airspace on their own.

Last week, Mr. Biden said the U.S. would send an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, including Stinger anti-aircraft systems to help Ukraine defend its airspace and Javelin anti-tank missiles.

Russia said that it has fired two hypersonic missiles in recent days in an apparent effort to show it could overcome a no-fly zone and any air defenses Ukraine might field, experts said. Mr. Austin said in his television appearance that he wouldn't "confirm or dispute" that the Russians had used such a weapon. But he added the missile wasn't "a game changer."

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## **20. Blame Game Begins For Russia Agencies**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (2020), Pg. A6 | Warren P. Strobel and Michael R. Gordon

WASHINGTON -- Recriminations and finger-pointing have begun within Russia's spy and defense agencies, as the campaign that Moscow expected to culminate in a lightning seizure of Ukraine's capital has instead turned into a costly and embarrassing morass, U.S. officials said.

The blame game, which includes the detention of at least one senior Russian intelligence official, doesn't appear to pose any immediate threat to Russian President Vladimir Putin's iron grip on power, but the U.S. officials are watching the machinations closely.

A U.S. official described as credible reports that the commander of the FSB intelligence agency's unit responsible for Ukraine had been placed under house arrest.

The official, in an interview, said bickering had broken out between the FSB and the Russian Ministry of Defense, two of the principal government units responsible for the preparation of the Feb. 24 invasion.

Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns told Congress earlier this month that Mr. Putin had planned to seize Ukraine's capital of Kyiv within two days, suggesting the Russian leader expected minimal resistance.

Russian forces instead encountered fierce Ukrainian counterattacks and their ground advance stalled amid mounting casualties. Some U.S. government calculations estimate as many as 7,000 Russian troops have been killed in action, though officials caution those are uncertain estimates.

Current and former U.S. officials say Russian intelligence agencies often shy away from telling their bosses bad news and may have reinforced Mr. Putin's views, which he has expressed publicly, that Ukraine was a dysfunctional country whose leadership would rapidly collapse as some of its citizens welcomed Russian troops.

"It is hard to imagine some senior intelligence person talking with Putin and not telling Putin what he wants to hear, especially if it is a belief that is deeply held, like Putin's beliefs about Ukraine," said Jeffrey Edmonds, a former CIA and National Security Council official specializing in the region.

"When it comes to this guy, it's also clear that the culture of 'someone is at fault and is going to pay' is clearly still operative," said Mr. Edmonds, now at the nonprofit research organization CNA, of the Russian president.

The Russian Embassy didn't respond to a request for comment.

The FSB officer said to be under investigation and house arrest is Col.-Gen. Sergei Beseda, head of the intelligence agency's Fifth Service, also known as the Service for Operational Information and International Communications.

Another former U.S. intelligence official who has studied Russia for decades said Mr. Putin, a former FSB chief, helped create the Fifth Service, which operates as the de facto foreign-intelligence arm of the overall agency, which is primarily focused on internal security. It would have shared responsibility for preparing the way for the invasion of Ukraine, the former official said. That, he said, likely included a plot made public by the U.S. and U.K., but denied by Russia, to eliminate Ukraine's leadership and install pro-Moscow successors.

Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov, who co-wrote the first report on Mr. Beseda's house arrest, said Mr. Putin may be blaming the FSB for failing to bring about the rapid collapse of the Ukrainian government that he had expected.

"Putin himself has been absolutely sure that he understands Ukraine really well," said Mr. Soldatov, who is a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, a nonpartisan Washington think tank. "He expected his agencies, and first of all the FSB, to do some groundwork like cultivating political groups that could provide support for the Russian invasion. And now obviously that's not what is happening."

The Russian leader, Mr. Soldatov added, may also suspect the FSB of leaks, given U.S. intelligence agencies' detailed knowledge of the Russian invasion plan, some of which Washington made public.

Andrea Kendall-Taylor, who was U.S. deputy national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia from 2015-18, said Russian security services have overlapping responsibilities and compete for favor from the Kremlin.

Mr. Putin appears to be singling out individuals to “scapegoat and pass the blame,” said Ms. Kendall-Taylor, now at the Center for a New American Security. “I think he’s in a much more precarious position now.”

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## **21. For Putin, ‘Truth’ Is Just Another Front Line**

New York Times, Mar. 21 (0300), Pg. A1 | Steven Lee Myers and Stuart A. Thompson

In the tense weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russian officials denied that it planned anything of the sort, denouncing the United States and its NATO allies for stoking panic and anti-Russian hatred. When it did invade, the officials denied it was at war.

Since then, the Kremlin has cycled through a torrent of lies to explain why it had to wage a “special military operation” against a sovereign neighbor. Drug-addled neo-Nazis. Genocide. American biological weapons factories. Birds and reptiles trained to carry pathogens into Russia. Ukrainian forces bombing their own cities, including theaters sheltering children.

Disinformation in wartime is as old as war itself, but today war unfolds in the age of social media and digital diplomacy. That has given Russia -- and its allies in China and elsewhere -- powerful means to prop up the claim that the invasion is justified, exploiting disinformation to rally its citizens at home and to discredit its enemies abroad. Truth has simply become another front in Russia’s war.

Using a barrage of increasingly outlandish falsehoods, President Vladimir V. Putin has created an alternative reality, one in which Russia is at war not with Ukraine but with a larger, more pernicious enemy in the West. Even since the war began, the lies have gotten more and more bizarre, transforming from claims that “true sovereignty” for Ukraine was possible only under Russia, made before the attacks, to those about migratory birds carrying bioweapons.

Russia’s message has proved successful domestically, where the Kremlin’s claims go unchallenged. Surveys suggest a majority of Russians support the war effort. Internationally, the campaign has seeped into an information ecosystem that allows them to spread virulently, reaching audiences that were once harder to reach.

“Previously, if you were sitting in Moscow and you wanted to reach audiences sitting in, say, Idaho, you would have to work really hard doing that,” said Elise Thomas, a researcher in Australia for the Institute of Strategic Dialogue, referring to disinformation campaigns dating to the Soviet Union. “It would take you time to set up the systems, whereas now you can do it with the press of a button.”

The power of Russia's claim that the invasion is justified comes not from the veracity of any individual falsehood meant to support it but from the broader argument. Individual lies about bioweapons labs or crisis actors are advanced by Russia as swiftly as they are debunked, with little consistency or logic between them. But supporters stubbornly cling to the overarching belief that something is wrong in Ukraine and Russia will fix it. Those connections prove harder to shake, even as new evidence is introduced.

That mythology, and its resilience in the face of fact-checking and criticism, reflects "the ability of autocrats and malign actors to completely brainwash us to the point where we don't see what's in front of us," said Laura Thornton, the director and senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund's Alliance for Securing Democracy.

The Kremlin's narratives today feed on pre-existing views of the war's root causes, which Mr. Putin has nurtured for years -- and restated in increasingly strident language last week.

The strategy to deceive, or at least confuse, international observers was used after the bombing of a maternity ward in Mariupol on March 9.

Twitter and Facebook eventually removed the posts, but gruesome photographs, stamped "Fake," continued circulating across the internet, including on the chat app Telegram.

Another meme gained even more traction, relying on a yearslong campaign in Russia to stoke unfounded fears that the United States was manufacturing biological weapons in Ukraine.

When Russia took such claims to an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, however, it faced withering criticism. "Russia has today brought into the Security Council a series of wild, completely baseless and irresponsible conspiracy theories," the British representative, Barbara Woodward, told the Council. "Let me put it diplomatically: They are utter nonsense."

Russia's accusations about nefarious American activities in Ukraine date back decades, resurfacing in new forms with each new crisis, like the political upheaval in 2014 that led to Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Ukraine is waging an information campaign of its own, aiming to discredit Russia, exaggerate its own military successes and minimize its losses. It has also circulated false reports of heroism, including the martyrdom of soldiers defending an island in the Black Sea and the exploits of an ace fighter pilot in the skies over Kyiv.

By most accounts, Ukraine has so far been winning the information war, led by a powerful social media operation that flooded the internet with its own jumble of anecdotes and myths, bolstering morale among Ukrainians and uniting the Western world behind its cause. The most central figure in their campaign has been President Volodymyr Zelensky himself, whose video messages to Ukrainians and the world have combined bravery with the stage presence of the television performer he once was.

Russia, though, has more tools and reach, and it has the upper hand with weaponry. The strategy has been to overwhelm the information space, especially at home, which “is really where their focus is,” said Peter Pomerantsev, a scholar at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University who has written extensively about Russian propaganda.

Russia’s propaganda machine plays into suspicion of the West and NATO, which have been vilified on state television for years, deeply embedding distrust in Russian society. State media has also more recently echoed beliefs advanced by the QAnon movement, which ascribes the world’s problems largely to global elites and sex traffickers.

Those beliefs make people feel “scared and uncertain and alienated,” said Sophia Moskalenko, a social psychologist at Georgia State University. “As a result of manipulating their emotions, they will be more likely to embrace conspiracy theories.”

Mr. Putin’s public remarks, which dominate state media, have become increasingly strident. He has warned that nationalist sentiment in Ukraine is a threat to Russia itself, as is NATO expansion.

Yet when the invasion began, it seemed to catch the organs of the propaganda apparatus unprepared. Officials and state media had just spent weeks accusing the Biden administration of exaggerating what Russia claimed were simply regular military exercises, not the buildup of an invasion force.

“Clearly, they did not prepare the information warfare machine,” Mr. Pomerantsev said. “It takes months to prepare something like this.”

That could explain the changing, disjointed nature of Russia’s campaign. The threat of biological weapons in Ukraine -- let alone secret American weapons factories producing them there -- was not cited as a rationale for the “special military operation” that Mr. Putin announced at dawn on Feb. 24. These falsehoods emerged only later.

“They throw stuff out and they see what works,” said Ms. Thomas, the researcher from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. “And what’s really working for them at the moment is the biolabs stuff.”

The Kremlin’s campaign has gone beyond simply propagating its message. It has moved swiftly to silence dissenting points of view that could cut through the fog of war and discourage the Russian population.

For now, the campaign appears to have rallied public opinion behind Mr. Putin, according to most surveys in Russia, though not as high as might be expected for a country at war.

“My impression is that many people in Russia are buying the government’s narrative,” said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center. “They have doctored images on state-controlled media. Private

media don't cover the war, fearing 15 years in prison. Same goes for people on the social media. Russia has lost information warfare globally, but the regime is quite successful at home."

The question is for how long.

Cracks have appeared in the information fortress the Kremlin is building.

A week after the invasion began, when it was already clear the war was going badly for Russian troops, Mr. Putin rushed to enact a law that punishes "fake news" with up to 15 years in prison. Media regulators warned broadcasters not to refer to the war as a war. They also forced off the air two flagships of independent media -- Ekho Moskvyy, a liberal radio station, and Dozhd, a television station -- that gave voice to the Kremlin's opponents.

Access to Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and most recently Instagram has also been severed inside Russia -- all platforms the country's diplomats have continued to use outside to misinform. Once spread, disinformation can be tenacious, even in places with a free press and open debate, like the United States, where polls suggest that more than 40 percent of the population believes the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald J. Trump.

"Why are people so surprised that this kind of widespread disinformation can be so effective in Russia when it was so effective here?" Ms. Thornton of the German Marshall Fund said.

As the war in Ukraine drags on, however, casualties are mounting, confronting families in Russia with the loss of fathers and sons. That could test how persuasive the Kremlin's information campaign truly is.

The Soviet Union sought to keep a similar veil of silence around its decade-long quagmire in Afghanistan in the 1980s, but the truth seeped into public consciousness anyway, eroding the foundation of the entire system. Two years after the last troops pulled out in 1989, the Soviet Union itself collapsed.

*--Claire Fu contributed research*

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## **22. U.S. envoy to U.N. decries 'disturbing' accounts of Ukrainians deported to Russia**

Reuters, Mar. 20 (1350) | Ted Hesson and Richard Cowan

WASHINGTON -- Accounts that thousands of residents of Ukraine's besieged port city of Mariupol have been forcibly deported to Russia are "disturbing" and "unconscionable" if true, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Sunday.

Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," Thomas-Greenfield said the United States had not yet confirmed the allegations made on Saturday by the Mariupol city council via its Telegram channel.

“I’ve only heard it. I can’t confirm it,” she said. “But I can say it is disturbing. It is unconscionable for Russia to force Ukrainian citizens into Russia and put them in what will basically be concentration and prisoner camps.”

Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, igniting a conflict that has led to more than 900 civilian deaths and nearly 1,500 injuries as of March 19, according to the U.N. human rights office.

Mariupol, a key connection to the Black Sea, has been a target since the start of the war, which Russian President Vladimir Putin calls a “special military operation” to demilitarize and “denazify” Ukraine. Ukraine and the West say Putin launched an unprovoked war of aggression.

The Mariupol city council also said Russian forces bombed an art school on Saturday in which 400 residents had taken shelter, but the number of casualties was not yet known.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports by the city council. The Russian Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment, but Russia denies targeting civilians.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called on Saturday for comprehensive peace talks with Moscow.

The United States supports those attempts, Thomas-Greenfield said on Sunday, adding that the negotiations “seem to be one-sided,” with little response from Russia.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will hold an emergency meeting on Thursday to discuss the conflict and the response of the 30-member alliance.

Poland will formally submit a proposal for a peace-keeping mission in Ukraine at the meeting, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said last week.

When asked about the Polish proposal, Thomas-Greenfield reiterated President Joe Biden’s commitment to refrain from sending U.S. troops into Ukraine.

“Other NATO countries may decide that they want to put troops inside of Ukraine,” she said. “That will be a decision that they have to make.”

‘TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN’

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, speaking on CNN later on Sunday, said she would press NATO to strengthen its military capabilities in Eastern Europe and urge all member countries to devote at least 2% of their gross domestic product to defense.

Kallas said the allegations of Ukrainians deported to Russia were reminiscent of thousands of Estonians sent to Siberian labor camps in the 1940s.

“Right now we are in a different position, because we are NATO allies,” she said. “But we are trying to do everything we can to support and help Ukraine to fight this war.”

Turkey is also attempting to mediate a ceasefire in Ukraine, which NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praised during an interview on Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

“Turkey is doing some real effort to try to facilitate, support talks between Russia and Ukraine,” Stoltenberg said. “It’s far too early to say whether these talks can lead to any concrete outcome.”

Earlier this month, NATO rejected Ukrainian calls to set up a “no-fly zone” over Ukraine to help it protect its skies from Russian missiles and warplanes.

When asked on Sunday whether a no-fly zone would be considered if Russia used chemical weapons in Ukraine, Stoltenberg raised concerns that such a step could escalate the conflict.

“Our allies support Ukraine,” he said. “But at the same time it is extremely important we prevent this conflict from becoming a full-fledged war between NATO and Russia that will cause much more damage, much more death, destruction than what we are seeing now in Ukraine.”

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### **23. Why Russia’s tank war stalled in Ukraine**

CBSNews.com (Sunday Morning), Mar. 20 (0914) | Not Attributed

The stalled and sputtering spectacle the Russian military is making of itself in Ukraine came as a revelation to General Frank McKenzie – and almost certainly to Vladimir Putin as well. “I am surprised at the problems they were having,” McKenzie said. “It should be very concerning to Russian leadership.”

As commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, McKenzie has spent the last three years operating in close proximity to the Russians in Syria, and knows their history as one of the world’s great tank armies – all of which has been belied by the first three weeks of war.

“They haven’t been able to maneuver their armor effectively,” McKenzie told CBS News national security correspondent David Martin. “There’s a tremendous history of that, actually, in the Russian military, being able to do deep-armored operations. At the end of the Second World War, they were as good at that as anybody else. But these guys don’t seem to have remembered that.”

“Should heads roll?” Martin asked.

“I would not be happy if that’s the way U.S. forces were performing,” McKenzie replied. “We have non-commissioned officers that are the backbone of the joint force. They’re the people that actually make sure things are done, that continuing actions are taken, that you dig in, that your tanks don’t run out of fuel.”

McKenzie, himself a tank commander as a young officer, watched in disbelief as an entire armored column advancing on Kyiv literally ran out of gas.

“If you’re going to drive and operate a main battle tank as a commander, and I have, then you are thinking all the time about fueling that beast. If you’re not thinking about fueling that beast, then you’re behind. And they appear to have not taken those basic logistical considerations and trying as they move forward.”

Martin asked, “Are you surprised they seem to be sticking to the roads?”

“That’s a lack of training,” he said. “You’ve got to get off the roads to maneuver. The roads are death traps, particularly for armored vehicles, particularly when you’re fighting people that have good anti-tank systems, and the Ukrainians do have good anti-tank systems.”

On Wednesday President Biden promised the U.S. will send 9,000 more anti-tank weapons. “The United States and our allies and partners are fully committed to surging weapons of assistance to the Ukrainians,” he said, “and more will be coming.”

Including the shoulder-fired Javelin, which dives down on the top of a tank where the armor is thinnest. Using everything from the high-end Javelin to the workaday rocket-propelled grenade launcher, the Ukrainians have destroyed several hundred Russian vehicles.

Martin asked, “How much of this is due to Russian incompetence as opposed to Ukrainian skill?”

“That’s a great question, and I think we’re going to have to see how this progresses a little further to be able to finally answer that question. I would say this: the Ukrainians have shown great bravery in defending their country. It’s less clear to me how aggressive and motivated Russian forces are down at the individual soldier level, the platoons that are actually driving on the roads, you know, meeting the enemy.”

Ukrainian resistance foiled Russia’s plan to take the capital of Kyiv with a lightning strike in the opening days of the war. With their vaunted tank army stalled, the Russians have reverted to siege tactics — pounding cities and their residents with rockets and artillery. But they are expected to regroup and try again.

“Is it conceivable to you that Russia could just flat-out fail to take Kyiv?” asked Martin.

“I would be surprised if that outcome happened,” McKenzie replied. “Taking Kyiv is very important to them. I predict they’ll try very hard to take it, and I think there could be a horrific price, actually, to be paid in the civilian population as they move against the city.”

--Story produced by Mary Walsh

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## CHINA

### **24. China Will Work to De-Escalate War in Ukraine, Diplomat Says**

Bloomberg News, Mar. 20 (2256) | Tony Czuczka

China’s top envoy to Washington pledged his country “will do everything” to de-escalate the war in Ukraine, but refused to condemn Russia’s attack and branded such requests “naive.”

“There’s disinformation about China providing military assistance to Russia,” Ambassador Qin Gang said on CBS’s “Face the Nation” on Sunday. China isn’t sending “weapons and ammunitions to any party,” he said, calling Beijing’s “common interests” with Russia an “asset” that could help peace talks.

“Condemnation doesn’t solve the problem,” he added. “I would be surprised if Russia will back down by condemnation.”

Qin’s comments came days after President Joe Biden warned President Xi Jinping of “implications and consequences” should China support Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Xi assured Biden his country didn’t want the war, according to Chinese readouts of the video call on Friday -- the first between the two leaders since the invasion.

China is walking a diplomatic tightrope as the Biden administration steps up international pressure on President Vladimir Putin to end the attacks. While Beijing has said it opposes the war, it has stopped short of blaming Putin for the invasion that came weeks after Xi declared a “no limits” friendship with the Russian leader.

Hu Xijin, former editor-in-chief of the Communist Party backed Global Times newspaper, said Sunday that Beijing’s “back-to-back” strategic relationship with Moscow was critical to its long-term ability to oppose what he characterized as U.S. efforts to limit China’s rise.

“Two countries -- China and Russia -- resisting U.S. hegemony verses one country facing the U.S. alone are completely different geopolitical dynamics,” he said in a post on China’s Twitter-like Weibo, where he has some 24 million followers.

“If the U.S. carries out extreme strategic coercion against China, with Russia as a partner, China will not be afraid of the U.S. imposing an energy blockade,” he added. “Our food supply will be more secure, as will many other raw materials.” Hu did not post the comments to his Twitter account.

Hu’s pro-Russia comments echoed that of China’s Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng in a Saturday speech that framed NATO’s eastward expansion as the catalyst for the war, and equated that policy with the U.S.’s Indo-Pacific strategy, which Beijing views as a plan to contain it.

“The Indo-Pacific Strategy is as dangerous as the NATO strategy of eastward expansion in Europe,” Le told the Fourth International Forum on Security and Strategy via video link. “If allowed to go on unchecked, it would bring unimaginable consequences, and ultimately push the Asia-Pacific into a fiery pit.”

The chorus of support for Moscow in China comes in the wake of what U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield called an “extraordinarily frank” conversation between Xi and Biden.

“We made our position clear to the Chinese,” she said on CNN’s “State of the Union” on Sunday. “They’re in an uncomfortable position.”

*--With assistance from Jing Li and Philip Glamann*

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## **INDO-PACIFIC**

### **25. India’s Dependence on Russian Weapons Tethers Modi to Putin**

Bloomberg News, Mar. 20 (1900) | Sudhi Ranjan Sen

For all the success of the U.S.-led campaign to isolate Russia on the world stage, India has stood out as one major democracy that has been reluctant to criticize Vladimir Putin -- and billions of dollars in weapons purchases mean that’s unlikely to change anytime soon.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government is facing more pressure from fellow members of the Quad -- the U.S., Japan and Australia -- to help push Russia toward a cease-fire. After meeting Modi in New Delhi on Saturday, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for more cooperation between democracies while noting Putin’s war has “shaken the global order.” Modi, by contrast, only spoke on economic issues.

Modi is slated to hold a virtual summit later on Monday with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, while U.S. Undersecretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland -- who has helped coordinate the American response to Ukraine -- is expected to visit New Delhi later this week.

India, the world's largest buyer of Russian weapons, plans to push back by arguing the purchases are necessary to counter China's growing military assertiveness and its other neighbor, Pakistan. Modi's government will also say the alternatives to Russian weapons are too expensive, according to people familiar with the situation, who asked not to be identified because they are not authorized to speak with the media.

India operates more than 250 Su-30 MKi Russian-made fighter jets, seven Kilo-class submarines and more than 1,200 Russian-made T-90 tanks -- all of which are operational for another decade, the people said. In the pipeline are weapon systems worth about \$10 billion, including a nuclear submarine to be leased to India and S-400 air defense system batteries.

India's Ministry of Defense didn't immediately reply to a request for comment outside of regular business hours.

"Despite efforts at diversification, India's military hardware is still almost 70% Russian," said Manjari Chatterjee Miller, a senior fellow for India, Pakistan and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of "Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the path to Great Power." India "has to continue to rely on Russia for parts, maintenance and upgrades," she added.

The cost for India to replace all of its Russian-origin equipment is daunting. The country's entire defense budget for 2021-22 is \$70 billion, and a long-delayed plan to procure 114 fighter jets to replenish its fleet and replace some older Russian fighters is estimated to cost India between \$15 billion and \$18 billion even if produced domestically, the people said.

"New Delhi also lacks options to replace military systems like air defense platforms it cannot easily get elsewhere," said Ian Hall, professor of international relations at Griffith University and author of "Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy."

While India has supported calls for a cease-fire and a diplomatic solution, it abstained at the United Nations on votes for draft resolutions condemning Russia's invasion that were ultimately vetoed by Moscow. Still, so far the U.S. and its allies have sought to avoid an open rift with India: a joint statement after Quad leaders spoke in the wake of Putin's invasion failed to condemn Russia.

That's largely because India remains an important partner in countering China, particularly after deadly clashes along their Himalayan border prompted Modi to move more troops and Russian weapons to key hotspots. India has also changed laws to restrict Chinese companies and investment, banned over 300 China-affiliated mobile applications and cut back on visas for Chinese businessmen as the border standoff escalated.

"India is a really important security partner of ours now," Donald Lu, assistant secretary of state at the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, told a U.S. Senate committee on March 2 when asked whether India could face sanctions for buying Russian weapons.

“We value moving ahead in that partnership,” he added, noting that India had recently hit the brakes on more orders for Russian MiG-29 fighter jets, helicopters and anti-tank weapons. “And I hope that part of what happens with the extreme criticism that Russia has faced, is that India will find it’s now time to further distance itself.”

India is also keen to avoid Russia becoming even closer to Pakistan, which is more likely if Modi’s government joined U.S. allies in censuring President Vladimir Putin. India and Pakistan have fought three wars, and their militaries remain on high alert.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan last month led the country’s first delegation to Moscow in two decades just as Putin’s invasion got underway. Last year, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Pakistan as Moscow sought to increase its stature in the region, particularly in Afghanistan after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal.

Pakistan was the world’s eighth-largest weapons buyer in 2017-2021, with Russia accounting for a small fraction of imports. India is concerned that more acquisitions of Russian weapons could “provide Pakistan a qualitative advantage,” according to Richard M. Rossow, Wadhvani Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies at The Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Still, India will find it hard to maintain a “truly neutral position” without alienating the U.S. and other Quad countries particularly because Russia has viewed New Delhi’s positions as “silent support,” said Miller of the Council on Foreign Relations.

“The Ukraine crisis is not a geographically confined regional European crisis that does not affect India,” she said. “It has implications for the future of the liberal international order.”

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## **26. Eyeing China, Japan breaks with past for strong Ukraine response**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 20 (2153) | Not Attributed

Japan has broken with years of precedent in its tough response to the Ukraine invasion, and the conflict could reshape Tokyo’s defence strategy as it confronts China’s regional ambitions, analysts say.

When Russia last pushed into Ukraine in 2014, Japan’s response was seen as lukewarm, but this time around it has marched in lockstep with Western allies on unprecedented sanctions and tough rhetoric, even sending non-lethal military aid.

And the crisis is already impacting debates on security spending and capacity in a country whose constitution limits its military to defence.

“Japan has been accused before of paying its way out, in a way, just giving money but not being directly involved in any crisis,” said Valerie Niquet, an Asia expert at France’s Foundation for Strategic Research think tank.

This time, Tokyo is “putting a lot of emphasis on what they are doing... to show that they are not just sitting by and waiting to see how things will evolve”.

And the speed with which Tokyo has moved on measures such as individual sanctions has been “completely remarkable”, said Tobias Harris, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress.

“This is much further than I thought we would see the Japanese government go.”

In part, that reflects the extraordinary nature of the conflict, but several other key factors are at play, including the departure of former prime minister Shinzo Abe, who long sought closer ties with Moscow.

Abe, who resigned in 2020, had hoped warmer relations would lead to a breakthrough over disputed islands held by Russia, which Moscow calls the Kurils and Japan calls the Northern Territories.

But with Abe gone and years of deadlock on the dispute, Japan’s government has felt freer to act against Moscow, though fears about energy needs have so far stopped Tokyo from pulling out of joint energy projects with Russia.

Looming even larger though is China, with its growing ambitions in the region, including its desire to “reunify” Taiwan and its claims to disputed islands it calls the Diaoyu, known as the Senkaku in Japan.

In the past, Tokyo worried aggressive actions on Russia could push Moscow into Beijing’s arms, said James D.J. Brown, an associate professor of political science at Tokyo’s Temple University.

“Now however, that’s completely flipped around,” he told AFP.

Instead, the view is that “Japan has to be tough on Russia, because otherwise it sets a precedent, and perhaps encourages China to think that they could do the same thing”.

In the immediate term, Japan is expected to completely overhaul its view of Russia in its National Security Strategy due later this year.

“Definitely Russia will be very much described as a threat,” said Niquet.

“In the last one, in 2013, Russia was seen more as, if not an opportunity, certainly not a threat. That will change completely.”

And the Ukraine crisis is likely to strengthen the hand of those calling for more defence spending.

In campaigning last year, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party set a long-term goal of raising the defence budget to more than two percent of GDP, up from its traditional one percent.

That is “now something that they can realistically push towards”, said Brown.

Discussion of obtaining a strike capacity such as attack drones that could carry out first strikes against an enemy has been controversial given the constitutional limits on Japan’s military.

But “the images we’ve seen out of Ukraine are going to be useful for people who want Japan to have a more robust national defence”, Harris said.

“Self-defence is going to look increasingly like a fig leaf, I suspect.”

Even more controversially, Japan’s ruling party is set to debate nuclear deterrence, after suggestions from lawmakers including Abe that the possibility of “nuclear-sharing” be considered.

That is likely to remain a bridge too far, at least for now.

While Japan relies on the US nuclear umbrella, its long-standing policy bars it from producing, possessing or hosting the weapons.

But even a discussion of the issue in a country that suffered the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bomb attacks indicates the far-reaching effects of the Ukraine crisis.

“I think we haven’t seen fully the impact this war will have on Japan’s internal discussions,” Harris said.

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## **27. Biden administration rules Myanmar army committed genocide against Rohingya**

Reuters (Exclusive), Mar. 20 (1508) | Humeyra Pamuk and Simon Lewis

WASHINGTON -- The Biden administration has formally determined that violence committed against the Rohingya minority by Myanmar’s military amounts to genocide and crimes against humanity, U.S. officials told Reuters, a move that advocates say should bolster efforts to hold the junta that now runs Myanmar accountable.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will announce the decision on Monday at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, U.S. officials said, which currently features an exhibit on the plight of the Rohingya. It comes nearly 14 months after he took office and pledged to conduct a new review of the violence.

Myanmar's armed forces launched a military operation in 2017 that forced at least 730,000 of the mainly Muslim Rohingya from their homes and into neighboring Bangladesh, where they recounted killings, mass rape and arson. In 2021, Myanmar's military seized power in a coup.

U.S. officials and an outside law firm gathered evidence in an effort to acknowledge quickly the seriousness of the atrocities, but then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declined to make a determination.

Blinken ordered his own "legal and factual analysis," the U.S. officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity. The analysis concluded the Myanmar army is committing genocide and Washington believes the formal determination will increase international pressure to hold the junta accountable.

"It's going to make it harder for them to commit further abuses," said one senior State Department official.

Officials in Myanmar's embassy in Washington and a junta spokesperson did not immediately respond to emails requesting comment on Sunday.

Myanmar's military has denied committing genocide against the Rohingya, who are denied citizenship in Myanmar, and said it was conducting an operation against terrorists in 2017.

A U.N. fact-finding mission concluded in 2018 that the military's campaign included "genocidal acts," but Washington referred at the time to the atrocities as "ethnic cleansing," a term that has no legal definition under international criminal law.

"It's really signaling to the world and especially to victims and survivors within the Rohingya community and more broadly that the United States recognizes the gravity of what's happening," a second senior State Department official said of Blinken's announcement on Monday.

A genocide determination does not automatically unleash punitive U.S. action.

Since the Cold War, the State Department has formally used the term six times to describe massacres in Bosnia, Rwanda, Iraq and Darfur, the Islamic State's attacks on Yazidis and other minorities, and most recently last year, over China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslims. China denies the genocide claims.

Blinken will also announce \$1 million of additional funding for the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), a United Nations body based in Geneva that is gathering evidence for potential future prosecutions.

"It's going to enhance our position as we try to build international support to try to prevent further atrocities and hold those accountable," the first U.S. official said.

## FOCUS ON MILITARY

Days after U.S. President Joe Biden took office, Myanmar generals led by Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing seized power on Feb. 1, 2021, after complaining of fraud in a November 2020 general election won by democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi's party. Election monitoring groups found no evidence of mass fraud.

The armed forces crushed an uprising against their coup, killing more than 1,600 people and detaining nearly 10,000, including civilian leaders such as Suu Kyi, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a campaign group, and setting off an insurgency.

Reuters was unable to independently verify the figures from the AAPP. The junta has said the group's figures are exaggerated and that members of the security forces have also been killed in clashes with those opposing the coup. The junta has not provided its own figures.

In response to the coup, the United States and Western allies sanctioned the junta and its business interests, but have been unable to convince the generals to restore civilian rule after they received military and diplomatic support from Russia and China.

Blinken's recognition of genocide and crimes against humanity refers mainly to events in 2017, before last year's coup. The step comes after two State Department examinations -- one initiated in 2018 and the other in 2020 -- failed to produce a determination.

Some former U.S. officials told Reuters those were missed opportunities to send a firm message to the Myanmar generals who later seized power.

Activists believe a clear statement by the United States that genocide was committed could bolster efforts to hold the generals accountable, such as a case in the International Court of Justice where The Gambia has accused Myanmar of genocide, citing Myanmar's atrocities against the Rohingya in Rakhine state.

Myanmar has rejected the charge of genocide and urged the court's judges to drop the case. The junta says The Gambia is acting as a proxy for others and had no legal standing to file a case.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), a separate court at The Hague, is also investigating the deportation of Rohingya from Myanmar, and the IIMM in Geneva is gathering evidence that could be used in future trials.

Myanmar opposes the investigations and has refused to cooperate, asserting the ICC does not have jurisdiction and that its decision to launch a probe was swayed by "charged narratives of harrowing personal tragedies which have nothing to do with the legal arguments in question."

John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, said Myanmar's military has faced "few real consequences for its atrocities, whether against Rohingya or other ethnic minority groups in Myanmar."

As well as imposing more economic sanctions on the junta, the United States should press for a U.N. Security Council resolution that would refer all the military's alleged crimes to the International Criminal Court, Sifton said. If Russia and China veto a resolution, as is likely, Washington should lead action in the U.N. General Assembly, he said.

"Condemnations of Myanmar should be coupled with concrete actions," he said.

Before Blinken made the decision this month, officials debated whether blaming Myanmar's government -- rather than specifically its military -- for the atrocities could complicate U.S. support for the country's deposed democratic forces, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The State Department opted to pin the blame on the military, said the second senior department official.

"It's not clear to what degree the civilian leadership had control over actions that were happening in Rakhine State and so that's where the determination ends at this point," said that official, who did not comment on the internal deliberation.

Suu Kyi, forced to share power with the generals, traveled to the International Court of Justice in 2019 to reject the genocide charges brought by The Gambia.

She said the country would itself prosecute any soldiers found to have committed abuses, but maintained the alleged violations did not rise to the level of genocide, for which the specific intent to destroy a group has to be proven.

When they seized power, the generals put Suu Kyi on trial in nearly a dozen cases that could see her sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. She remains in detention.

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## MIDDLE EAST

### **28. U.S. Delivers Patriot Missiles to Saudis**

Kingdom sent urgent request for resupply to repel drone attacks by Iran-backed rebels  
Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A12 | David S. Cloud

WASHINGTON -- The Biden administration has transferred a significant number of Patriot antimissile interceptors to Saudi Arabia within the past month, fulfilling Riyadh's urgent request for a resupply amid sharp tensions in the relationship, senior U.S. officials said.

The transfers sought to ensure that Saudi Arabia is adequately supplied with the defensive munitions it needs to fend off drone and missile attacks by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in neighboring Yemen, one of the officials said.

The Saudi military had been appealing to the U.S. since late last year for more Patriot interceptors --- used to shoot down airborne weapons -- warning that their supply was running dangerously low.

U.S.-Saudi relations have deteriorated since President Biden took office over issues such as a White House decision to remove the Houthis from a list of designated terrorist groups as well as Mr. Biden's dealings with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto leader.

The longstanding Saudi request for more interceptors had been a point of contention between Washington and Riyadh, feeding Saudi officials' displeasure over what they contend was a lack of U.S. support for their intervention in the Yemen civil war.

U.S. officials said the decision to send the interceptors had taken months because of the high demand for the weapons by other U.S. allies and the need to go through normal vetting -- not because the White House was deliberately delaying the resupply.

The interceptors and other munitions sent to Saudi Arabia were taken from U.S. stockpiles elsewhere in the Middle East, one of the officials said.

The decision to go ahead with the arms transfer was part of an effort by the administration to rebuild its relationship with Riyadh. Among other things, the U.S. hopes Saudi Arabia will pump more oil to mitigate soaring crude prices, officials said. But providing Patriot interceptors hasn't resolved all the strains in the relationship.

Mr. Biden also publicly criticized Saudi Arabia over its protracted war in Yemen and cut off the flow of some weapons Riyadh could use to target Houthis. The president also reversed a move by his predecessor that put the

Houthis on the U.S.'s official list of global terrorist groups, a move that Saudi leaders said had emboldened the Yemeni force and thwarted efforts to broker a cease-fire.

The latest attacks on Saudi Arabia came late Saturday and early Sunday when Houthi forces in Yemen fired missiles and drones at energy and water-desalination facilities run by Aramco, the Saudi state oil company.

The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attacks, which a spokesman said were in response to "the continued aggression and unjust siege of our people."

Jake Sullivan, Mr. Biden's national-security adviser, condemned the Houthi attacks Sunday.

"The Houthis launch these terrorist attacks with enabling by Iran, which supplies them with missile and UAV components, training, and expertise," he said, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones.

The missiles and drone attacks were fired at a water-desalination plant in Al-Shaqeeq; a distribution station in Jizan; a liquefied-natural-gas plant in Yanbu; a power station in Dhahran al Janub; and a gas facility in Khamis Mushait. Aramco said there were no casualties or impact on its supplies, while the Saudi-led military coalition backing the Yemeni government said the strikes damaged civilian vehicles and homes in the area.

Patriot antimissile batteries are only one of the weapons used by the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates to counter the Houthi attacks. Many of the slow-flying drones are shot down by fighter aircraft.

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## **AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN**

### **29. How Afghanistan's Militant Groups Are Evolving Under Taliban Rule**

Voice of America News, Mar. 20 (1305) | Jeff Seldin

WASHINGTON — Intelligence agencies worldwide are warning that Taliban rule in Afghanistan is radically reshaping terrorist and militant groups in South Asia and around the world.

Specifically, intelligence and counterterrorism officials say that despite Taliban promises to sever ties with al-Qaida and oppose terror groups such as the Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, as codified in the 2020 Doha agreement with the United States, there has been scant evidence of progress.

"The Taliban is attempting to maintain pressure on ISIS [Islamic State group]," the top general at U.S. Central Command told lawmakers in Washington on March 15. "They're finding it difficult to do."

“They’re much less firm on the al-Qaida issue, in terms of opposing them and trying to limit them,” CENTCOM’s General Kenneth “Frank” McKenzie added.

A recent United Nations report based on member state intelligence echoed those fears.

“There are no recent signs that the Taliban has taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country,” the report said. “On the contrary, terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom there than at any time in recent history.”

Despite such concerns, some diplomats, such as the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan, have expressed hope the Taliban will crack down.

Thomas West told the U.S. Institute of Peace on Feb. 15 that he believed the Taliban were “very sincere in their intent to contain” Islamic State terrorists.

Here is a look at the Taliban and the major terrorist organizations now operating in Afghanistan, and how they have fared in the six months since U.S. and coalition forces left the country.

### *Taliban*

Since its emergence in 1994, the Taliban movement, which calls itself the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, has been led by an emir, a central figure ostensibly appointed for life by a religious council of Taliban leaders.

Like his two predecessors, the current emir, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has made no public speeches and leads a reclusive life in southern Afghanistan’s Kandahar province. He has left the management of day-to-day government affairs to his appointed caretaker Cabinet in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

Various estimates by U.S. intelligence agencies and United Nations member states put the number of Taliban fighters between 58,000 and 100,000, with numbers fluctuating according to the time of year and battlefield conditions.

A U.N. report issued in June 2021, prior to the U.S. withdrawal, noted the Taliban force size was “robust in spite of significant attrition rates” over the past few years.

The Taliban have also benefited from the presence of some 8,000 to 10,000 foreign fighters in Afghanistan, most of whom are aligned with the Taliban. The Taliban’s defense minister recently said in an interview that the group is trying to build a 110,000-strong army.

Intelligence shared publicly by the United States and United Nations member states further accuses the Taliban of continuing to work closely with al-Qaida and maintaining ties with other terrorist groups, pushing some to become part of a new Taliban-run Afghan military force.

And even if the Taliban are planning to crack down on cells of IS-Khorasan, Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan, they may not have the right capabilities.

"I don't think what we'll see from the Taliban will be traditional [counterterrorism] as we think of it," Colin Clarke, director of research at the global intelligence firm The Soufan Group, told VOA last year.

"It's much easier to play a spoiler role than to perform effectively in the role of counterinsurgent," he said. "I think the Taliban could be effective in clearing an area, but it will struggle more with holding it."

For their part, Taliban officials have publicly denied that terrorism is an issue for Afghans under their leadership.

"We do not see anyone in Afghanistan who has anything to do with al-Qaida," Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told a news conference in Kabul last September.

"The ISIS that exists in Iraq and Syria does not exist here," he added. "We are committed to the fact that from Afghanistan, there will not be any danger to any country."

### *Islamic State Khorasan Province*

The Islamic State terror group's Afghan affiliate is a sworn enemy of both the Taliban and al-Qaida, which has deep and long-standing ties to Taliban leadership. But IS-Khorasan is also one of the groups that has benefited the most from the Taliban takeover.

As Taliban forces asserted control over Afghanistan, they emptied out many of the country's prisons, including the Parwan prison at Bagram Airfield, which had held hundreds of IS-Khorasan fighters.

Taliban commanders quickly executed former IS-Khorasan leader Abu Omar Khorasani, but many other IS followers were allowed to escape.

At the time, U.S. military officials said the prison releases helped swell IS-Khorasan's ranks from several hundred to at least 2,000 "hardcore" fighters. IS-Khorasan was also blamed for the August 26 bombing at Kabul airport that killed 13 Americans and more than 170 Afghans.

Intelligence shared by U.N. member states suggests that since then, IS-Khorasan has nearly doubled in size, to about 4,000 fighters, half of which may be from outside Afghanistan.

The same intelligence estimates say that the group, which lost all the territory under its control in early 2020, now “controls limited territory in eastern Afghanistan” and that it is “capable of conducting high-profile and complex attacks.”

IS-Khorasan also appears to be benefitting from financial support from its core in Syria and Iraq, receiving more than \$500,000 over the past six months, according to some intelligence estimates.

U.S. defense officials have further voiced concern about IS-Khorasan regenerating the capability to launch attacks against the U.S. and other foreign targets, initially warning that the group could launch global operations starting in April 2022.

More recent assessments by U.S. military intelligence officials indicate that the group is more focused at the moment on cementing its support within Afghanistan itself and that IS-Khorasan may not be ready to carry out external operations for another 12-18 months.

#### *Al-Qaida core*

Since its initial statement at the end of August congratulating the Taliban on its victory, al-Qaida leadership has been mostly silent on the situation in Afghanistan, though al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri referenced “the defeat of the Americans” in a video released this month.

Zawahiri himself is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan, and intelligence agencies from a number of countries assess he is in ill health.

Intelligence shared with the U.N. for a recent report, however, indicates al-Qaida is benefitting from “a significant boost” due to the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

“Some of its [al-Qaida’s] closest sympathizers within the Taliban now occupy senior positions in the new de facto Afghan administration,” according to the U.N. report, which also says chances are now good that Zawahiri’s likely successor, Saif al-Adel, will seek to leave Iran and establish himself in Afghanistan.

Western counterterrorism estimates from before the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan suggested the al-Qaida core perhaps commanded several hundred fighters across at least 15 Afghan provinces. And in September, a top U.S. intelligence official said that there were “indications of some potential movement of al-Qaida [officials and followers] to Afghanistan,” though, he cautioned, “It’s still early days.”

While U.S. officials remain concerned that al-Qaida will focus again on conducting foreign attacks, a recent report based on U.S. military intelligence assessments indicates that the group has been keeping a low profile at the Taliban’s request, and that the Taliban, who are seeking to gain international recognition for their new government, are likely to dissuade al-Qaida leaders from launching attacks.

### *Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent*

One of al-Qaida's key offshoots, al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent, has as much of a presence in Afghanistan as the group's core.

Intelligence estimates from U.N. member states say AQIS has up to 400 fighters in Afghanistan, spread across Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Paktika and Zabul provinces.

AQIS fighters, including native Afghans and fighters from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Myanmar (Burma), are said to have fought alongside Taliban against the U.S.-backed government prior to its collapse. Earlier U.S. intelligence assessments said it appeared that AQIS fighters were actively integrated into Taliban units.

AQIS leader Osama Mehmood and AQIS deputy Atif Yahya Ghouri are both thought to reside in Afghanistan.

### *Haqqani network*

The Haqqani network is widely considered to be the most influential and strategically successful extremist group in the region. While nominally loyal to the Taliban, the network, as described by the U.N., is "semi-autonomous," maintaining ties with both al-Qaida and IS-Khorasan.

The group boasts a "highly skilled core of members who specialize in complex attacks and provide technical skills, such as improvised explosive device and rocket construction," according to the U.N.

It also oversees a force of between 3,000 and 10,000 traditional armed fighters in Khost, Paktika and Paktiya provinces.

The network is run by Sirajuddin Haqqani, a son of the late mujahedeen commander and network founder Jalaluddin Haqqani. For much of its existence, the group has been based in Pakistan's tribal areas as it operated across the border in Afghanistan. The more than 40-year-old Haqqani has a \$10 million bounty on his head from the U.S. government and works as a deputy emir of the Taliban as well as the interior minister of Afghanistan.

The Haqqanis have been accused of perpetuating some of the deadliest and most sophisticated attacks against U.S., Indian and former Afghan government targets in Afghanistan since 2001.

The network is believed to have strong ties to Pakistani intelligence and al-Qaida. The U.S. designated it a foreign terrorist organization in 2012.

Intelligence gathered over the past year from some U.N. member states said that at times, the Haqqanis have acted as a go-between for the Taliban and IS-Khorasan, and that with the tacit approval of the Taliban, they directed the Islamic State affiliate to attack the now defunct U.S.-backed Afghan government.

#### *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*

Most active on the 2,640-kilometer-long border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, is an insurgent group involved in terrorist attacks in both countries.

The latest U.N. intelligence estimates put the number of TTP fighters at between 3,000 and 5,500.

The group's stated objectives are to end the Pakistani government's control over the Pashtun territories of Pakistan and to form a strict government based on Islamic Shariah law.

U.S. forces in Afghanistan and the Pakistani military have killed or captured several TTP leaders over the past two decades.

The group's current leader, Noor Wali Mehsud, has publicly declared allegiance to the Afghan Taliban leader.

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has reportedly reenergized the TTP, and Pakistani officials have sought the Afghan Taliban's assistance in dealing with the group.

The U.N. says those efforts have made some progress.

"Mediation from the Taliban has led to a reduction in TTP attacks against Pakistan," a recent U.N. report found, adding that one country's intelligence agency said the Taliban have been involved in talks aimed at allowing TTP family members to peacefully resettle in Pakistan.

#### *The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU, was founded in the late 1990s with help and financial support from al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden, and several IMU leaders have served as part of the al-Qaida hierarchy. The group has sought to replace the Uzbek government with a strictly Islamic regime.

IMU launched its first attack in February 1999 by simultaneously detonating five car bombs in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. The group is also believed to have carried out attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In 2015, then-IMU leader Usman Ghazi and other senior members of the group shifted allegiance from al-Qaida to the rival Islamic State. But the move did not sit well with Taliban leaders, who launched a major military campaign against Ghazi, killing him and nearly wiping out the group.

IMU's force size was estimated at several hundred in 2018, but the group was reportedly battered by a large-scale Taliban onslaught in Afghanistan's Faryab province that same year.

As of mid-2021, intelligence suggested IMU had broken into Uzbek and Tajik factions, with the Uzbek faction possibly entertaining the idea of joining IS.

Recent intelligence suggests the remnants of IMU were fighting alongside the Taliban as they took over Afghanistan, which has earned the terror group more freedom of movement.

#### *Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari*

Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari (KIB) was founded in 2011 by fighters who left the IMU and fought alongside the Taliban against the U.S.-backed Afghan government.

The group is led by Dilshod Dekhanov, a Tajik national.

KIB's forces are in Afghanistan's Badghis province, though the group is also thought to have about 100 or so fighters in Syria, possibly in Latakia or Idlib governorates.

According to the U.N., KIB's numbers in Afghanistan have been growing due to the successful recruitment of locals. KIB not only has received money from the Taliban but also raises funds through its leadership in Syria.

Intelligence shared with the U.N. indicates Dekhanov visited Kabul in September, asking the Taliban to unify KIB and IMU under his leadership.

Dekhanov's request was denied, reports say, with Taliban officials pushing to make the KIB part of a new Taliban army.

#### *Islamic Jihad Group*

According to intelligence assessments shared with the U.N., the Islamic Jihad Group is considered "the most combat-ready Central Asian group in Afghanistan" and known for expertise in "military tactics and the manufacture of improvised explosive devices."

The group is led by a Kyrgyz national named Ilimbek Mamatov. The group's second-in-command, Amsattor Atabaev, hails from Tajikistan.

IJG's fighters operate across Badakhshan, Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, fought alongside Taliban forces against the previous government, and even got some financial support from the Taliban over the past year.

Like KIB's leader, Mamatov is reported to have asked Taliban leaders to unite key Central Asian groups under his leadership. But, reports say, his request was rejected.

#### *Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement/Turkistan Islamic Party*

The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), was first established in the Xinjiang region of China, with its first reported attack in 1998.

After 2001, it began getting help from both al-Qaida and the Taliban, and it has been consistently active in Afghanistan since 2007.

According to intelligence estimates provided by U.N. member states, ETIM has between 200 and 700 fighters in Afghanistan training and plotting for attacks on Chinese targets.

Most of the ETIM fighters had been in Badakhshan province, which borders China. But according to a recent U.N. report, the Taliban recently relocated many of the fighters "to both protect and restrain the group."

Recent intelligence suggests that ETIM fighters have embraced the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and that members have been encouraged to forge deeper ties with Afghanistan.

"They also anticipate that the Taliban de facto administration will provide them with refugee status and passports, enabling them to travel internationally," the U.N. said in a recent report.

In addition to the group's close ties with the Taliban and al-Qaida, it has been reported to collaborate with other groups in Afghanistan including TTP and Jamaat Ansarullah, an ethnically Tajik faction of the IMU.

Intelligence also suggests that IS-Khorasan has increased its recruiting of ETIM members.

#### *Lashkar-e-Islam*

Lashkar-e-Islam was founded in the Khyber district of Pakistan in 2004 but relocated to Afghanistan's Nangarhar province in 2014, following clashes with the Pakistani military.

Since coming to Afghanistan, Lashkar-e-Islam has clashed with IS-Khorasan, with major skirmishes taking place in 2018 as the two groups fought for control of territory and resources.

#### *Hezb-e-Islami*

Hezb-e-Islami, or "Party of Islam," was founded in 1976 by former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The group shares much of the same ideology as the Taliban, and its fighter have assisted in Taliban in the past.

In 2015, Hekmatyar ordered his followers to help IS fighters in Afghanistan but never pledged allegiance to IS.

Hezb-e-Islami was known to target U.S. forces in Afghanistan, carrying out a series of attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in from 2013-15.

### *Lashkar-e-Taiba*

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), or “Army of the Pure,” was founded in Pakistan in the 1990s and is sometimes known as Jamaat-ud-Dawa.

Led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and aligned with al-Qaida, the group is perhaps best known for carrying out the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, India, which killed more than 160 people.

LeT established an office in Quetta, Pakistan, in 2006 to assist the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the group has also reportedly sent fighters to Afghanistan to assist the Taliban in their efforts.

In June 2021, a blast outside Saeed’s home killed three people. The U.S. is offering a \$10 million reward for information leading to Saeed’s conviction in the Mumbai terror attacks.

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## **MARINE CORPS**

### **30. Marines Corps identifies Marines killed in Norway Osprey crash**

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 20 (2045) | Phillip Walter Wellman

EVENES, Norway -- The Marine Corps on Monday identified four Marines killed during a training accident in northern Norway last week.

Capt. Matthew J. Tomkiewicz, 27; Capt. Ross A. Reynolds; 27, Gunnery Sgt. James W. Speedy; 30; and Cpl. Jacob M. Moore, 24, died when their MV-22B Osprey crashed near the town of Bodoe on Friday, the Marine Corps said in a statement.

All four were assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 261, Marine Aircraft Group 26, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., the statement said.

U.S. and Norwegian officials are still investigating what caused the Osprey to crash. There had been severe weather warnings in the region at the time.

“The pilots and crew were committed to accomplishing their mission and serving a cause greater than themselves,” Maj. Gen. Michael Cederholm, commander of the Marine Aircraft Wing, said in a letter to the Marines’ families.

The deceased are expected to be reunited with their families through dignified transfer in the coming days.

“We will continue to execute the mission while keeping these Marines and their service on the forefront of our minds,” Cederholm said. “We will never allow these Marines’ sacrifice to go unnoticed or unappreciated.”

The four Marines were among some 30,000 NATO and partner troops participating in Exercise Cold Response, which includes land, sea and air drills and is scheduled to run until April.

Their Osprey was scheduled to arrive in Bodoe at 6 p.m. Friday, according to a Norwegian armed forces statement. A missing persons report was received at about 6:30 p.m. and rescue aircraft were launched shortly afterward.

The crash site was discovered by air at about 9:15 p.m. the same day, but poor weather meant it couldn’t be reached until 1:30 a.m. Saturday, when police arrived and confirmed the deaths, the Norwegian military said.

Marines assisted with the Norwegian-led recovery effort, while numerous NATO allies and partner nations also offered an outpouring of operational support during and following the incident, the Marine Corps said Monday.

Tomkiewicz, of Fort Wayne, Ind., joined the Marine Corps in 2015 and served as an MV-22B Osprey pilot. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

Reynolds, of Leominster, Mass., joined the Corps in 2017. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

Speedy, of Cambridge, Ohio, had been a Marine since 2009, and served as an administrative specialist. His decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with two gold stars, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, the Marine Corps Drill Instructor Ribbon.

Moore, of Catlettsburg, Ky., served as an MV-22B Osprey crew chief after joining the Corps in 2018. His decorations include the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

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## MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY

### 31. Q&A with Dr. Martin Lindsey, Science & Technology Advisor to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

National Defense Magazine Online, Mar. 20 (1918) | Stew Magnuson

Dr. Martin Lindsey is the principal science and technology Advisor to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. He advises command staff and advocates for S&T activities that better enable warfighters serving in the region to accomplish their assigned missions. He also engages with service and agency laboratories and pursues cooperative efforts with international partners and allies within the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

Prior to assuming his current duties, Dr. Lindsey retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel with 20 years of service.

He spoke by phone with National Defense Editor in Chief Stew Magnuson after the conclusion of the Pacific Operational Science and Technology (POST) conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, organized by the National Defense Industrial Association. The interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

*National Defense Magazine: What are the top three items on your wish list — some technologies that industry can help you with?*

*Dr. Martin Lindsey: A wish list from my seat out here as the science and technology advisor from industry would be of course to address [PACOM Commander Adm. John C.] Aquilino's priorities for the command, which are all about seizing the initiative in the theater, and making sure that we are postured correctly with the right forces and the right capabilities forward in order to do our contribution to integrated deterrence and be prepared should deterrence fail.*

*A little more specifically than that, we're obviously very interested in our ability to have a common operational picture and see what's going on throughout the theater — both to allow us to have better indications and warnings of instability as well as to be postured to respond to that.*

*We need the ability to protect our forces that we project forward. In that regard, [we need] the ability to move and maneuver as we need to move in the theater and protect those forces. That's a high priority.*

*And of course, should unfortunately we end up in some sort of conflict scenario, the ability to project force longer distances over the horizon from all domains is a big priority for us.*

I think those would be kind of the Top Three for industry. I don't want to leave out ... collaboration with our allies for all of those areas as well as industry. That is huge for us. And so we work very hard on increasing those partnerships.

*National Defense Magazine: None of those broad areas would have a single solution. Can you drill down further on some specifics? For example, for the common operating picture, are you looking at satellites or robotic systems to carry sensors?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* It's a combination of all those things — a multi-domain layered approach — because if we put all our capabilities in one domain or one basket then we just create a new center of gravity for an adversary to make it easy for them to take that away from us.

So definitely satellites. We are keenly interested in increasing the resilience and the robustness of our space-based capabilities. To that end, we follow what's going on with proliferated [low-Earth orbit satellite systems] quite closely and those technology developments both on the government side and the commercial side, because we see both as great contributors to that common operational picture.

You mentioned robotic systems and similarly the rapid advancements in AI-enabled, semi-autonomous human on-the-loop systems. It's very rapidly advancing and so we already see capabilities that are still in the development stage, but they are getting quite close to being suitable for fielding in capacities. And we are already working with the providers of those in the government and industry side to make sure that they will be suited for the vast geographic environment that's out here.

*National Defense Magazine: The last thing you mentioned was international cooperation. National Defense has been writing a lot about the Quad [the loose alliance of the United States, Japan, Australia and India] and its potential for cooperation developing technologies. What are you doing in those regards? Are you reaching out to the Quad members for more tech cooperation?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* We do — and with respect to the all three of the countries you mentioned — we do engage with them and even at POST we had engagements with those countries, and we will continue to follow those up and build off of those.

Specific to the relationship of the Quad and science-and-technology engagement under the auspices of the Quad, we have not to date looked into adding an S&T component into that from where we sit. I can't speak to whether that's going on elsewhere at the [Defense Department] but I find that personally very interesting to ponder: how we might do that. But to date we have not.

*National Defense Magazine: Where to you see potential areas of cooperation with these partners?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* I don't see areas where we couldn't potentially cooperate from a technology standpoint. If you look at [Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering Heidi] Shyu's top 14 technology priorities — by and large — I can't find areas within all 14 of those where we could not cooperate with all three of those countries. From our perspective, it's more a vantage of prioritizing scarce resources of time and personnel.

With each country in the Quad, we kind of take a different approach. Our relationship with Australia is very mature and very robust ... We work with them in a lot of areas and we have — for lack of a better word — “operationalized” our S&T engagement with our Australian counterparts.

We are working to do the same thing with Japan. We're just kind of starting down that road with them. But we are working in those areas and identifying the areas of mutual cooperation that are priorities.

[With] India, similarly to Japan, we have just kind of scratched the surface again from our office's perspective. And we are very keen with both of those countries to develop those relationships which starts with just having these conversations from our respective positions. What are our technology priorities at Indo-PACOM from our end and our counterparts in those countries? What are our mutual priorities to collaborate on? All the 14 that Ms. Shyu is prioritizing for the department, I see places where those countries have capabilities, and we could do cooperation with them.

*National Defense Magazine: Switching to hypersonics, there are some programs coming to fruition — at least people hope — in the next couple of years. What will be the command's role in deploying, fielding and testing some of these new hypersonic weapons?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* That's one of my personal roles here at the command. I work in the hypersonic technology area. ... So our role here — and this won't be a surprise — is as a combatant command, we establish requirements and prioritize those requirements for what capabilities we need. And obviously, we're on the record: Hypersonics is one of those areas that we need.

As these systems are being developed and matured and are entering into flight tests, we are engaged with those program offices. We are similarly engaged with the [Office of the Secretary of Defense's], principal director of hypersonics to make sure that as these capabilities ... when they are fielded they will be ready for implementation if called upon.

Because we have been working really fast to get capability to the field, we haven't necessarily gone through and stood up and run through the entire whole program-of-record traditional acquisition process because we just don't have the luxury of taking all of that time to make that happen. We need to get capability fielded as soon as we can.

With that in mind, here at the combatant command, we've probably taken on additional roles that we normally would not do to ensure that those capabilities are ready when they hit early operational capability.

And by that, I mean the kind of the roles that you would traditionally just expect the services to do as part of the developmental testing and engineering phase the ... type of things that normally the service does before they present a capability. We're not doing all that but we are much more hands on in advising and helping shape the services do that then would be seen in a traditional acquisition.

*National Defense Magazine: So what you're saying is pretty much when they think the technology is good to go as far as basic capabilities, you're going to field and test at the same time?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* Yes, and that's no different than any acquisition program in the sense of even when you hit an [initial operating capability milestone] that the development, test and evaluation continues while you are going from IOC to fully operationally capable.

The terminology that I see a lot is "early operational capability" as opposed to "initial" and I think the nuance there is again, some of these programs aren't formal acquisition programs, so they just adopt different lingo. But in our minds an "early operational capability" is an "operational capability." It would be available for use if called upon.

*National Defense Magazine: As for the annual Rim of the Pacific international exercise that happens near Hawaii each year, how do you use it to test new technologies? Or is it mostly training on systems you already have?*

*Dr. Lindsey:* It's both. The emphasis at RIMPAC is that it's a training exercise — the largest multinational maritime training exercise in the world. But we do experimentation at RIMPAC. It is a Third Fleet-run exercise and it's naval centric. So the experimentation that takes place is run by and planned and executed by the Navy.

Having said that, Indo-PACOM does contribute to the planning of some of the experimentation — and in cases where we see we have joint experiments that we are interested in — we get more or less hands-on involved depending on specific experiments. And that applies to coalition stuff as well. So we will also support coalition experimentation that we're interested in.

*National Defense Magazine: And interoperability with allies is a big part of that?*

That's a huge part of it. Both from just the training perspective, as well as testing out new concepts and new technologies.

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **32. Don't Go Wobbly on Ukraine Now**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 21 (0200), Pg. A20 | Editorial

The Ukrainian people are making great sacrifices fighting against Russia's war machine, and their resistance is helping the free world. As NATO's leaders meet this week in Brussels, now is the time for the alliance to repay this fortitude by escalating support for Kyiv.

"Ukrainian forces have defeated the initial Russian campaign of this war. That campaign aimed to conduct airborne and mechanized operations to seize Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and other major Ukrainian cities to force a change of government in Ukraine," concludes the Washington-based Institute for the Study War (ISW) in a Saturday analysis. "Russian forces continue to make limited advances in some parts of the theater but are very unlikely to be able to seize their objectives in this way."

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This is a remarkable achievement. Contrary to Western intelligence predictions, Ukraine's military and burgeoning civil-defense forces have fought the Russian invaders to a stalemate. The easy victory Vladimir Putin anticipated to install a puppet government has been stymied -- albeit at great cost in lost lives and ruined cities.

Yet Mr. Putin shows every sign of continuing his campaign of bombing and starving cities. The rape of Mariupol should be a permanent scar on Russia, like Stalin's 1940 murder of 22,000 Polish officers and intellectuals in the Katyn forest. Europe hasn't seen anything like this since World War II. ISW says Russians are digging in around cities as if they plan a long siege. Civilian casualties aren't incidental. They are central to the dictator's war strategy.

Mr. Putin hopes to break Ukrainian morale, and sooner or later kill President Volodymyr Zelensky to rob Ukraine of his charismatic leadership. The Russian also hopes to crack NATO's resolve by issuing threats of nuclear escalation while flooding Western Europe with millions of refugees -- at least three million so far.

As NATO meets, the temptation in Brussels will be to look for a way out of the war. The Washington Post is filled with reports, clearly informed by U.S. officials, fretting that Mr. Zelensky doesn't seem to have an "end game" for the war. The risk as the conflict continues is that the will of Team Biden and NATO will flag and at some point they will pressure Ukraine to settle.

That's exactly the wrong message to send to Ukraine and Russia, and the NATO leaders should signal the opposite this week. The top priority is escalating weapons shipments to Kyiv, especially air defenses against Russia's long-

range missiles and high-altitude aircraft. Ukraine also needs more Turkish drones that have been effective against Russian tanks and artillery.

The leaders should also banish talk of giving Mr. Putin an exit ramp other than complete withdrawal from Ukraine. He can take that exit at any time. But if he refuses, then the Western goal should be to inflict as much pain as possible on Russia as a lesson to Mr. Putin and any other country that might try to conquer its neighbors.

That means following Mr. Zelensky's lead on what Ukraine is willing to accept. Ukraine has earned the right to determine what concessions, if any, it can live with. The Ukrainian president has already taken NATO membership off the table, but he understandably is refusing to concede Russian control over Ukrainian territory. No one in the West should pressure him to accept such terms.

The U.S. and Europe can also increase the sanctions pressure on the Kremlin. Sanctions on Russian energy sales still aren't in place, though they would hurt Mr. Putin's war financing the most. Sanctions relief for Russia shouldn't even be on the table until Mr. Putin withdraws his tanks and concedes Ukraine's right to be an independent state.

What should be on NATO's agenda is why Western intelligence misjudged the war. The CIA did very well in anticipating that Mr. Putin would invade, but it vastly overestimated the ability of his military to conquer Ukraine. That pessimism may have convinced President Biden that more military aid earlier wouldn't have made a difference. Congress's intelligence committees should investigate.

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Ukraine's brave resistance has given the West an opportunity to push back against Russia and show the world's authoritarians that democratic states can unite in defense for a righteous cause. As Margaret Thatcher once famously told George H.W. Bush, now is not the time to go wobbly.

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### **33. The Next NATO Expansion**

*If Finland and Sweden want in, the alliance should welcome them*

Wall Street Journal Online, Mar. 20 (1655) | Editorial

One lesson of Russia's assault on Ukraine is that NATO continues to be vital to European security. Would Ukraine be under siege today if it were a member of the alliance? This is something to keep in mind as discussions about Sweden and Finland pursuing membership advance.

Unlike Ukraine, Sweden and Finland are members of the European Union and have been qualified to join NATO for years. They have held off for fear of angering Russia—and because joining was unpopular with the public in the traditionally neutral countries.

“If Sweden were to choose to send in an application to join NATO in the current situation, it would further destabilize this area of Europe and increase tensions,” Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said this month. Finnish President Sauli Niinistö recently acknowledged the status quo wasn’t working for his country but warned that a NATO membership application would create “major risk” for escalation on the Continent.

Whether to join NATO is up to Finland and Sweden, but the idea that the act of joining is destabilizing is mistaken. Tensions could increase in the short term simply because Vladimir Putin would be upset that the defense alliance is larger, but a Europe with better defenses is inherently more stable.

The Finnish and Swedish political classes are moving cautiously, but they may start feeling more pressure. A February survey showed 41% of Swedes backed joining the alliance, compared with 35% opposed. It was the first time more citizens showed greater support for accession than opposition. A poll published last week showed 62% of Finns supported membership. Mr. Putin’s bloody invasion has upended decades of skepticism.

Current NATO members always have to ask if admitting a country makes the alliance stronger. The answer is yes for Sweden and Finland. Both countries are “enhanced opportunities partners” with NATO: They train with alliance forces and increasingly use interoperable equipment. Their strategic position would help NATO in a war with Russia in the Baltic Sea.

Sweden doesn’t have a land border with Russia and isn’t at risk of invasion as Ukraine or Georgia were. Although defense spending is well below NATO’s 2% of gross domestic product target, it has been growing and Stockholm said it will reach 2%. As a wealthy and technologically advanced country, it could afford to do more and would contribute to the alliance.

Finland shares an 830-mile border with Russia and has a history of being invaded by its eastern neighbor. But it takes the threat seriously and can punch above its weight. The country of 5.5 million has roughly the same number of reservists as Germany, population 83 million. In February Helsinki finalized a deal to buy 64 F-35 jets by 2030.

The Russian Foreign Ministry recently threatened “serious military-political consequences” if Finland and Sweden pursue NATO membership. The threat is exactly why they should be welcomed into the alliance if they decide to go for it.

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# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, March 22

## OVERVIEW

Ukraine's Defense ministry claimed that Ukrainian troops forced Russian troops out of the Kyiv suburb of Makariv, retaking control of a key highway and preventing encirclement from the northwest, according to the *Associated Press*. Separately, Biden administration officials announced the U.S. would transfer previously obtained, Soviet-made, air defense equipment, including the legacy SA-8 system, to Ukraine to "surge new assistance" to blunt Russia's aircraft and missile attacks, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Also of note, a senior Pentagon official said that while the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a "9/11 event for Europe" and the U.S. would "enhance our posture alongside our allies in Europe," the upcoming National Defense Strategy would still deem China as the top priority, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote.

## TOP STORIES

### **1. Ukraine Retakes Key Kyiv Suburb; Battle for Mariupol Rages**

*Associated Press, Mar. 22 (0413) | Cara Anna*

Ukrainian forces said they retook a strategically important suburb of the capital early Tuesday, while Russia's attack on the embattled southern port of Mariupol raged unabated, with fleeing civilians describing relentless bombardments and corpses lying in the streets. While Russian forces carried on with the siege of Mariupol after the southern port city's defenders refused demands to surrender, the Kremlin's ground offensive in other parts of the country advanced slowly or not at all, knocked back by lethal hit-and-run attacks by the Ukrainians.

### **2. U.S. Sends Soviet Air Defenses to Ukraine**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A1 | Nancy A. Youssef and Michael R. Gordon*

The U.S. is sending some of the Soviet-made air defense equipment it secretly acquired decades ago to bolster the Ukrainian military as it seeks to fend off Russian air and missile attacks, U.S. officials said. The weapons are familiar to Ukraine's military, which inherited this type of equipment following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The U.S. over the decades has acquired a small number of Soviet missile defense systems so that they could be examined by U.S. intelligence experts and help with training U.S. forces.

### **3. Pentagon to Build Up European Presence**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A6 | Gordon Lubold, David S. Cloud and Lindsay Wise*

The U.S. plans to boost military spending and increase its military presence near Russia in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, while trying to maintain a long-term focus on countering China, current and former officials said.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Austin to join Biden's trip this week to NATO, Poland**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 21 (1743) | Corey Dickstein*

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will return to Europe for a second consecutive week, joining President Joe Biden's trip Wednesday to NATO headquarters in Brussels and visit Polish leaders later in the week, the Pentagon announced Monday. Biden and Austin are expected to meet with other NATO leaders Thursday before traveling to Poland on Friday, officials said. Biden will also meet with the European Council and G7 leaders to "discuss international efforts to support Ukraine and impose severe and unprecedented costs on Russia for its invasion," according to a White House statement.

### **5. Pentagon officials say the human element is key to JADC2's success**

*C4ISRNET.com, Mar. 21 (1632) | Colin Demarest*

The Pentagon's tech-centric campaign to overhaul military communications and better handle streams of data will not succeed if the human side of things is neglected, a top official recently warned.

## **COVID-19**

### **6. Biden pushes a new normal amid worries over next surge**

*Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A1 | Lena H. Sun and Yasmeeen Abutaleb*

Cathy Colledge, who has Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer, feels like she's on her own trying to avoid a coronavirus infection that might kill her. But for many other Americans, there was palpable relief on Feb. 25, when the CDC shifted the vast majority of U.S. counties from red, signaling high transmission, to green, meaning low levels of disease and no need to mask indoors. The changes were based on a new framework designed to protect communities from the worst, a surge so big that it might overwhelm local hospitals, while being less disruptive to everyday life, amid falling case counts and a desire among many for relief from masking and other public health measures. But some worry it leaves the country unprepared for another wave and abandons those who are most vulnerable.

### **7. A Sign of the Times? DoD Skips Publishing Weekly COVID-19 Numbers**

*Military.com, Mar. 21 (1803) | Patricia Kime and Travis Tritten*

In a sign of the continued decline of COVID-19 across the country, the Defense Department last Wednesday skipped its update of coronavirus case numbers -- data it faithfully has published weekly since July 2021. The department released the information three times a week during the first year of the pandemic, while states across the U.S. reported the data daily. But as case numbers have dwindled, more than a dozen states have cut their output to once or twice a week, and it appears the DoD is following suit.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

**8. Biden, allies discuss Russia’s ‘brutal’ war in key week for Western unity**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 21 (1703) | Sebastian Smith*

President Joe Biden and European allies discussed Russia’s “brutal” war in Ukraine on Monday, kicking off a crucial week in the Western standoff with Moscow that will see Biden visit Poland after attending NATO and EU summits. Biden hosted the call, lasting just under one hour, with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson “to discuss their coordinated responses,” the White House said.

**9. Biden warns business leaders to prepare for Russian cyber attacks**

*CNN.com, Mar. 21 (1852) | Maegan Vazquez, Donald Judd, Sean Lyngaas and Zachary Cohen*

President Joe Biden on Monday issued an urgent warning to American business leaders, telling them to strengthen their companies’ cyber defenses immediately. Speaking at the Business Roundtable Quarterly Meeting in Washington, Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely to use cyber attacks as a form of retaliation against the United States for its actions to counter Russia’s incursion on Ukraine.

**10. Biden says Russia is considering using chemical, biological weapons in Ukraine**

*Reuters, Mar. 21 (2259) | Not Attributed*

Ukraine’s military said on Tuesday residents should brace for more indiscriminate Russian shelling of critical infrastructure, as U.S. President Joe Biden issued one of his strongest warnings yet that Moscow is considering using chemical weapons. Without citing evidence, Biden said Russia’s false accusations that Kyiv had biological and chemical weapons illustrated that President Vladimir Putin was considering using them himself.

**11. White House Bureaucracy Is Costing Ukrainian Lives, Senators Say**

*DefenseOne.com, Mar. 21 (1729) | Jacqueline Feldscher*

After seeing the situation on the ground this weekend, as Ukrainian refugees flood across the Polish border to escape violence, 10 senators have a message for the White House: Go faster. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, led a group of 10 lawmakers who visited Germany and Poland to see American troops and observe the fallout from Russia’s war in Ukraine. At a press conference Monday, senators said they were touched by conversations with activists fighting for their country and single mothers fleeing Ukraine to keep their children safe, and they emphasized that aid is only helpful if it gets there in time.

**12. Bipartisan lawmakers call on Biden to form ‘aid airlift into Ukraine’**

*FoxNews.com, Mar. 21 (1703) | Houston Keene*

A bipartisan group of lawmakers called on President Biden to form an “international humanitarian aid airlift” into Ukraine amid Russian President Vladimir Putin’s brutal war. Reps. Young Kim, R-Calif., and Lou Correa, D-Calif., are leading the letter, which was first obtained by Fox News Digital.

### **13. Congressional spending bill boosts military outlay in Pacific**

*Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Mar. 21 (N/A), Pg. B4 | Kevin Knodell*

Congress has passed a fiscal year 2022 appropriation measure that includes billions of dollars in funding for military projects in Hawaii and the Pacific. The bill includes over \$700 million for response efforts to contamination of the Navy's water system by fuel from its Red Hill storage facility, \$235 million for military construction projects throughout the islands, and billions to fund the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, a Pentagon project to counter China's increasing military power.

## **EUROPE**

### **14. Russia may not stop with Ukraine – NATO looks to its weakest link**

*Reuters, Mar. 21 (1554) | Sabine Siebold and Robin Emmott*

It looks a lot like a return to the past. Founded in 1949 to defend against the Soviet threat, the NATO alliance is facing a return to mechanised warfare, a huge increase in defence spending, and potentially a new Iron Curtain falling across Europe. After struggling to find a new post-Cold War role, countering terrorism following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States in 2001 and a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, NATO is back defending against its original nemesis. But there's a difference. China, which split with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, has refused to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow calls a "special military operation." And the old Cold War blueprints no longer work, as NATO has expanded east since the 1990s, bringing in former Soviet states – including the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 2004.

### **15. EU nations circle the wagons in new 'Strategic Compass'**

*Defense News Online, Mar. 21 (1753) | Sebastian Sprenger*

The defense ministers of European Union nations adopted the long-awaited "Strategic Compass" document on Monday, presenting a plan to beef up the bloc's defenses in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Also part of the Strategic Compass is the plan of creating a 5,000-strong "EU Rapid Deployment Capability" allowing the "swift deployment of a modular force ... in a non-permissive environment" by 2025. EU officials said they would develop "operational scenarios" to guide the formation's future employment during 2022, and begin regular live-fire exercises in 2023 to prepare its forces.

### **16. The Next Two Weeks Could Determine the Fate of Ukraine**

*Politico Online, Mar. 21 (1731) | Paul McLeary and David Brown*

After the initial shock of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the biggest surprise of the war may be how badly the Russian army has performed. What did experts get wrong — and what does it mean for the next phase of the war? Michael Kofman, one of the most prominent U.S. authorities on the Russian military, told POLITICO in a lengthy interview that he and other experts "generally overestimated the Russian military, which is good. It's very good." And, he adds, "we really underestimated the Ukrainian military."

**17. ‘The only thing Putin understands is strength’: U.S. aircraft carrier flexes muscle in the Med**

*Politico Europe, Mar. 21 (2306) | Hannah Roberts*

The 20-story nuclear-powered Truman is the flagship of a strike group, a mobile fighting force of up to 10 destroyers and submarines, 8 aircraft squadrons and a missile cruiser that can move anywhere in the world’s seas, launching missile or air strikes or merely providing visible proof of American resolve. As a mobile U.S. airbase, the Truman will be on the front line if NATO decides to enforce a no-fly zone, or should the worst happen and NATO forces be drawn into a direct conflict. “The role of Truman, with other allies, is to deter Russians from further aggression and to be on constant standby for orders that might be given from our president or from other leaders around the world for the protection of Ukraine and the people of Ukraine,” Secretary of the U.S. Navy Carlos Del Toro told POLITICO during a visit to the carrier.

**RUSSIA**

**18. Ukraine refuses to surrender Mariupol**

*Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A1 | David L. Stern, Missy Ryan, Dan Rosenzweig-Ziff and Ellen Nakashima*

Russia’s assault on Ukraine grew more destructive Monday, as civilians faced deadly obstacles in their attempts to flee the besieged city of Mariupol and a staggering flow of displaced Ukrainians strained neighboring countries. In Kyiv, a massive explosion hit a shopping mall, killing at least eight people and providing further evidence of Russia’s intent to capture the capital city. American officials said Russian forces are stalled about nine miles to the northwest and about 18 miles to the east of Kyiv.

**19. Air War Ramps Up in Russia-Ukraine Conflict as Russian PGMs Run Out**

*Air Force Magazine Online, Mar. 21 (1859) | Abraham Mahshie*

The air war is changing over Ukraine, with Russia picking up the pace of sorties but running low on precision-guided munitions, a senior defense official said March 21. Russia also has allegedly fired hypersonic weapons, a move possibly made to gain momentum after nearly a month of fighting and no major population centers under its control. “They are beginning to face some inventory issues with precision-guided munitions,” a senior defense official told reporters on a telephone briefing, explaining the increased use by Russia of unguided bombs, or “dumb bombs.”

**20. Intentions of Russian Amphibious Warships in Black Sea Still Unclear**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 21 (1807) | Heather Mongilio*

About a dozen Russian warships remain in the Black Sea, raising concerns that Moscow is still considering an amphibious assault on the Ukrainian city of Odesa. It is unclear what Russia is planning for the ships, which include amphibious and surface combatants vessels, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Monday. The Pentagon noted the increased naval activity last week, USNI News previously reported.

**21. ‘Winging It’: Russia Is Getting Its Generals Killed on the Front Lines**

*ForeignPolicy.com, Mar. 21 (1756) | Jack Detsch*

Russia has lost at least five generals fighting in Ukraine in less than a month, Western officials said Monday, as communications failures and a lack of discipline among hundreds of thousands of conscripted Russian troops have made it more difficult to communicate orders to the front lines. The tally of Russian generals killed in the nearly monthlong conflict—most of them one- and two-star commanders, including at least one lieutenant general—is likely the highest casualty rate among general officers in the Russian military since World War II.

**22. Smaller Bombs Raise a Specter Of Atomic War**

*New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A1 | William J. Broad*

In destructive power, the behemoths of the Cold War dwarfed the American atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Washington’s biggest test blast was 1,000 times as large. Moscow’s was 3,000 times. On both sides, the idea was to deter strikes with threats of vast retaliation -- with mutual assured destruction, or MAD. The psychological bar was so high that nuclear strikes came to be seen as unthinkable. Today, both Russia and the United States have nuclear arms that are much less destructive -- their power just fractions of the Hiroshima bomb’s force, their use perhaps less frightening and more thinkable.

**23. DoD official: Russia’s hypersonic missile boast ‘a bit of a head-scratcher’**

*Politico Online, Mar. 21 (1908) | Quint Forgey*

Russia may have launched a hypersonic missile over the weekend in an assault on a Ukrainian munitions depot, a senior Defense Department official said Monday, but Moscow’s claim about the nature of the weapon is “a bit of a head-scratcher.”

**24. Satellite jamming ‘normal’ by militaries during conflict, not peacetime – State Dept. official**

*BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 21 (1215) | Theresa Hitchens*

The Russian military’s jamming of GPS signals and communications satellites in Ukraine is considered by the US government as essentially a routine wartime activity, according to a senior State Department official. Judging from actual real world actions during recent conflicts around the globe, Washington and Moscow appear to be on the same page with this issue — a good thing for avoiding conflict between the two nuclear powers. But there may be a growing disconnect between the two sides on the question of satellite interference outside of direct conflict, with a senior Russian official earlier this month making the surprising claim that doing so is an act of war.

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**25. Russia sends more warships through Japanese strait, halts peace treaty talks after sanctions**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 22 (0250) | Seth Robson and Hana Kusumoto*

In a move Japan's prime minister called "totally unacceptable," Russia has halted talks over a post-World War II peace treaty with Japan and ended visa-free entry for former residents of four Russian-controlled islands.

**26. Australia Forms A Space Force As Tensions Rise**

*New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A4 | Damien Cave*

Two years after the United States inaugurated a military Space Force to mixed reviews, Australia has created its own Space Command to counter threats from China, Russia and other extraterrestrial powers. The new force will expand Australia's space capabilities and contribute to "a larger, collective effort among like-minded countries to ensure a safe, stable and secure space domain," Peter Dutton, Australia's defense minister, said on Tuesday.

**27. U.S., Calling '17 Purge Genocide, Condemns Myanmar's Military**

*New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A6 | Lara Jakes*

Against the backdrop of a war in Ukraine and atrocities in Ethiopia, the United States on Monday formally accused Myanmar of committing genocide against its minority Rohingya population. "The day will come when those responsible for these appalling acts will have to answer for them," Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, which is exhibiting evidence of decades of discrimination and abuse against Rohingya Muslims by Myanmar's military.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

**28. Revolutionary Guard at Center of Talks**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A10 | Laurence Norman*

The effort to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement hinges on perhaps the most politically sensitive issue in the negotiations: Whether to remove the U.S. terrorism designation for Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, the country's powerful security force, diplomats said. Senior U.S. officials say a failure to find a compromise with Iran on the issue quickly could cause a breakdown in negotiations that -- over almost a year -- have resolved nearly every other disagreement.

**29. Oil Thirst Is Forcing Biden to Pivot U.S. Back to Saudi Arabia**

*Bloomberg News, Mar. 21 (1545) | Nick Wadhams, Annmarie Hordern and Matthew Martin*

President Joe Biden has been reluctantly drawn into closer ties with Saudi Arabia's king-in-waiting, forced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine to rethink a standoffish approach as the U.S. struggles to curb soaring oil prices. The problem is Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman isn't ready to play along.

## **AFRICA**

**30. EU Freezes Some Mali Army Training Over Mercenary Concerns**

*Associated Press, Mar. 21 (1629) | Lorne Cooke*

The European Union's top diplomat said Monday that he has ordered the suspension of combat training for soldiers in Mali until he receives guarantees from the government there that the trainees will not be working with Russian mercenaries. "Clearly, our training mission cannot be implicated, in any way, in activities that could call into question the European Union's reputation," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters after chairing a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers.

## **MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY**

### **31. DOD sets FY-28 target for demonstrating hypersonic defense system**

*InsideDefense.com, Mar. 21 (1835) | Not Attributed*

The Defense Department has set a fiscal year 2028 target for demonstrating a prototype hypersonic defense system to defeat long-range, ultrafast maneuvering glide vehicles during mid-flight -- more than 10 years after Congress directed the U.S. military to establish a program to plug an anticipated hole in U.S. air- and missile-defense capabilities.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **32. There's Still Much More Sanctions Can Do**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A17 | Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA)*

By starting the largest land war on the European continent since World War II, Russia, a nuclear power, has unleashed the greatest threat to global security in recent memory. Not only are the Ukrainian people's lives and livelihoods at stake, but so is the security of people around the world. If Vladimir Putin does not conclude that his invasion was a disastrous mistake, the consequences for U.S. national security and the security of Europe, especially the Baltics and Poland, are grave. An insufficient Western response could be seen as a permission slip by other revisionist authoritarians, such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, for their own territorial ambitions.

### **33. Don't Expect China to Bring About Peace in Ukraine**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Mar. 21 (0930) | Minxin Pei*

Any hopes that U.S. President Joe Biden might persuade his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to help stop the war in Ukraine should probably be put aside. China wants to see an early end to the conflict. But it won't use its leverage to bring one about.

### **34. A Crisis in U.S.-Arab Relations**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A19 | Firas Maksad*

When the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates decline phone calls from the president of the United States, rebuff his requests to help lower oil prices, and shy away from condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and when the U.A.E. hosts Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad in Abu Dhabi, there is no doubt that a major crisis in U.S.-Arab Gulf relations is under way.

### **35. The West is underestimating Russia's brutality**

*Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A21 | Andriy Yermak*

Ukraine's resistance against Russia's horrific invasion has exceeded every outside prediction. Many in the West did not understand Ukrainians' love for their freedom, for their democracy. For us, losing our country would be worse than death. And that's why we fight - because defeat is not an option. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered this message to a joint session of the U.S. Congress and to parliaments across Europe. He also pleaded for greater military assistance and the establishment of a no-fly zone for humanitarian - not military - purposes. Many countries have stepped up to provide critical military and humanitarian assistance. However, given Russian President Vladimir Putin's clear intention to ramp up the bloodshed, Ukraine still needs more.

## **TOP STORIES**

### **1. Ukraine Retakes Key Kyiv Suburb; Battle for Mariupol Rages**

*Associated Press, Mar. 22 (0413) | Cara Anna*

LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian forces said they retook a strategically important suburb of the capital early Tuesday, while Russia's attack on the embattled southern port of Mariupol raged unabated, with fleeing civilians describing relentless bombardments and corpses lying in the streets.

While Russian forces carried on with the siege of Mariupol after the southern port city's defenders refused demands to surrender, the Kremlin's ground offensive in other parts of the country advanced slowly or not at all, knocked back by lethal hit-and-run attacks by the Ukrainians.

Early Tuesday, Ukrainian troops forced Russian forces out of the Kyiv suburb of Makariv after a fierce battle, Ukraine's Defense Ministry said. The regained territory allowed Ukrainian forces to retake control of a key highway and block Russian troops from surrounding Kyiv from the northwest.

But the Defense Ministry said Russian forces battling toward Kyiv were able to partially take other northwest suburbs, Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin, some of which had been under attack almost since Russia's military invaded late last month.

With troops bogged down in many places, Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces are increasingly concentrating their air power and artillery on Ukraine's cities and the civilians living there, killing uncounted numbers and sending millions fleeing.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the military's assessment, said Russia had increased air sorties over the past two days, carrying out as many as 300 in the past 24 hours, and has fired more than 1,100 missiles into Ukraine since the invasion began.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who is heading to Europe later in the week to meet with allies, suggested Monday evening that worse may be still to come.

“Putin’s back is against the wall,” Biden said. “He wasn’t anticipating the extent or the strength of our unity. And the more his back is against the wall, the greater the severity of the tactics he may employ.”

Biden reiterated accusations that Putin is considering resorting to using chemical weapons.

In a video address Monday night, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed those who have fought back against Russia.

“There is no need to organize resistance,” Zelenskyy said. “Resistance for Ukrainians is part of their soul.”

Talks between Russia and Ukraine have continued by video but failed to bridge the chasm between the two sides. Zelenskyy told Ukrainian television late Monday that he would be prepared to consider waiving any NATO bid by Ukraine — a key Russian demand — in exchange for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of Russian troops and a guarantee of Ukraine’s security.

Zelenskyy also suggested Kyiv would be open to future discussions on the status of Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014, and the regions of the eastern Donbas region held by Russian-backed separatists. But he said that was a topic for another time. Zelenskyy plans to speak to Japanese lawmakers on Tuesday, part of a series of addresses to foreign legislatures as he seeks to drum up support.

In Mariupol, with communications crippled, movement restricted and many residents in hiding, the fate of those inside an art school flattened on Sunday and a theater that was blown apart four days earlier was unclear. More than 1,300 people were believed to be sheltering in the theater, and 400 were estimated to have been in the art school.

Perched on the Sea of Azov, Mariupol is crucial port for Ukraine and lies along a stretch of territory between Russia and Crimea. As such, it is a key target that has been besieged for more than three weeks and has seen some of the worst suffering of the war.

It is not clear how close its capture might be. Ukraine’s Defense Ministry said Tuesday that their forces were still defending the city and had destroyed a Russian patrol boat and electronic warfare complex.

Over the weekend, Moscow had offered safe passage out of Mariupol — one corridor leading east to Russia, another going west to other parts of Ukraine — in return for the city’s surrender before daybreak Monday. Ukraine flatly rejected the offer well before the deadline.

Mariupol had a prewar population of about 430,000. Around a quarter were believed to have left in the opening days of the war, and tens of thousands escaped over the past week by way of the humanitarian corridors. Other attempts have been thwarted by the fighting.

Mariupol officials said on March 15 that at least 2,300 people had died in the siege, with some buried in mass graves. There has been no official estimate since then, but the number is feared to be far higher after six more days of bombardment.

For those who remain, conditions have become brutal. The assault has cut off Mariupol's electricity, water and food supplies and severed communication with the outside world, plunging residents into a fight for survival. Fresh commercial satellite images showed smoke rising from buildings newly hit by Russian artillery.

Those who have made it out of Mariupol told of a devastated city.

"There are no buildings there anymore," said 77-year-old Maria Fiodorova, who crossed the border to Poland on Monday after five days of travel.

Olga Nikitina, who fled Mariupol for the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, where she arrived Sunday, said gunfire blew out her windows, and her apartment dropped below freezing.

"Battles took place over every street. Every house became a target," she said.

A long line of vehicles stood on a road in Bezimenne, east of Mariupol, as residents of the besieged city sought shelter at a temporary camp set up by Russian-backed separatists in the Donetsk region. An estimated 5,000 people from Mariupol have taken refuge in the camp. Many arrived in cars with signs that said "children" in Russian.

A woman who gave her name as Yulia said she and her family sought shelter in Bezimenne after a bombing destroyed six houses behind her home.

"That's why we got in the car, at our own risk, and left in 15 minutes because everything is destroyed there, dead bodies are lying around," she said. "They don't let us pass through everywhere there are shootings."

In all, more than 8,000 people escaped to safer areas Monday through humanitarian corridors, including about 3,000 from Mariupol, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

Russian shelling of a corridor wounded four children on a route leading out of Mariupol, Zelenskyy said.

Russia's invasion has driven nearly 3.5 million people from Ukraine, according to the United Nations. The U.N. has confirmed over 900 civilian deaths but said the real toll is probably much higher. Estimates of Russian deaths vary, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands.

*--Associated Press writer Yuras Karmanau in Lviv, Ukraine, and other AP journalists around the world contributed to this report*

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## **2. U.S. Sends Soviet Air Defenses to Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A1 | Nancy A. Youssef and Michael R. Gordon

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. is sending some of the Soviet-made air defense equipment it secretly acquired decades ago to bolster the Ukrainian military as it seeks to fend off Russian air and missile attacks, U.S. officials said.

The systems, which one U.S. official said include the SA-8, are decades old and were obtained by the U.S. so it could examine the technology used by the Russian military and which Moscow has exported around the world.

The weapons are familiar to Ukraine's military, which inherited this type of equipment following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The Pentagon declined to comment on the U.S. decision to reach into its little-known arsenal of Soviet weapons, which comes as the Biden administration is mounting a major push to expand Ukraine's air defense capabilities.

The U.S. over the decades has acquired a small number of Soviet missile defense systems so that they could be examined by U.S. intelligence experts and help with training U.S. forces.

The secretive efforts received public attention in 1994 when a Soviet-made transport plane was observed at the Huntsville, Ala., airport within sight of a major highway. It was later disclosed that the plane was carrying an S-300 air defense system that the U.S. had acquired in Belarus as part of a clandestine project involving a Pentagon contractor that cost \$100 million, according to a former official involved in the mission.

The S-300 -- called the SA-10 by NATO -- is a long-range, advanced air defense system intended to protect large areas over a much wider radius. The SA-8 is a short-range, tactical air defense system designed to move with ground forces and provide cover from aircraft and helicopters. While the SA-8 has a shorter range, it is highly mobile and potentially easier to hide.

Some of the Soviet weapons have been kept at the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, which its website notes serves as "the Army's center for missile and rocket programs." At least some of what the U.S. sent was from that base, said officials, who added that C-17s recently flew to a nearby airfield at Huntsville.

The S-300 from Belarus wasn't among the systems that are being sent to Ukraine, one U.S. official said.

The annual government spending bill recently passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden includes language that authorizes the administration to transfer to the Ukrainian military and to North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners aircraft, ammunition, vehicles, and other equipment that is either already overseas or in existing stockpiles.

Staffers with Sen. Joni Ernst (R., Iowa), who advocated for the language, said Soviet-era air defense systems would be covered by the new legislation. Congress was notified about the U.S. decision, officials said.

Ukraine already possesses some Russian air defense systems, including the S-300. It needs more such systems, however, that can operate at medium and long range to blunt Russia's aircraft and missile attacks. The shoulder-fired Stinger missiles that the U.S. and NATO nations are providing to Ukraine are effective only against helicopters and low-flying aircraft.

The U.S. is hoping that the provision of additional air defenses will enable Ukraine to create a de facto no-fly zone, since the U.S. and its NATO allies have rebuffed Ukraine's appeals that the alliance establish one. Such a step, Biden administration officials have said, could lead to a direct confrontation between the U.S.-led alliance and Russian forces, which it is determined to avoid.

Mr. Biden is traveling to Brussels this week for a NATO summit to discuss "ongoing deterrence and defense efforts" for Ukraine. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said. Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin also have visited the eastern bloc to discuss ways to bolster Ukraine's defensive weapons.

"We are continuing to work with our allies and key partners to surge new assistance, including Soviet- or Russian-origin antiaircraft systems and the necessary ammunition to employ them, every day to Ukraine," a U.S. official said.

Mr. Austin visited Slovakia last week to explore if the country would send an S-300 from its arsenal. Slovakia has said that it would do so if the U.S. would provide it with a replacement, but such an arrangement has yet to be agreed.

U.S.-made weapons such as the Patriot air defense system are in short supply and require U.S. military personnel or months of U.S. training to operate. German and Dutch Patriot units are being sent to Slovakia as a stopgap, those governments have said.

"We've been in discussion" with the U.S., Slovakia Minister of Defense Jaroslav Nad' said during a joint news conference with Mr. Austin on Thursday. "Should there be a situation that we have a proper replacement or that

we have a capability guaranteed for a certain period of time, then we would be willing to discuss the future of [the] S-300 system.”

--Gordon Lubold, Lindsay Wise and Courtney McBride contributed to this article

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### **3. Pentagon to Build Up European Presence**

*U.S. seeks to counter Moscow, while keeping its long-term focus on Beijing*

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (2020), Pg. A6 | Gordon Lubold, David S. Cloud and Lindsay Wise

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. plans to boost military spending and increase its military presence near Russia in response to Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, while trying to maintain a long-term focus on countering China, current and former officials said.

The Feb. 24 invasion has triggered calls from Republicans and Democrats in Congress for tens of billions more in military spending, while allies in Europe have described the war as a wake-up call requiring military steps unthinkable only months ago. The Biden administration, however, is seeking to balance what it sees as a pivotal moment for Europe with a desire to keep the U.S. focused on Asia.

“I think it’s a 9/11 event for Europe,” said a senior Pentagon official, who added that while the Pentagon will respond accordingly to what those countries need, the main focus remains on countering Beijing. “I think there is room to enhance our posture alongside our allies in Europe without it being this huge sucking sound that prevents us from being able to focus on China.”

Since 2018, the Pentagon’s strategy has defined China and Russia as primary concerns and North Korea, Iran and violent extremism as secondary threats. That “two-plus-three” approach -- two chief adversaries with three secondary ones -- was expected to be supplanted by a “one-plus-four” strategy, which put China first and placed Russia among the lesser threats.

Despite the heightened focus on Moscow, a new U.S. defense strategy, which was due to be released earlier this year, had been held up as the Russia crisis brewed. Policy makers all but finished the document late last year and tweaked the language slightly after the invasion, officials said. But they didn’t do a wholesale rewrite of the document, and when it is released in the coming months, the strategy will still assign Russia a secondary priority behind China, according to the Pentagon official.

“China remains in our assessment the only country that can systematically challenge the United States for now and for the rest of this century, that means diplomatically, technologically, economically, militarily, geopolitically,” the official said. “And Russia is not in that camp, they weren’t a year ago, they’re not today.”

The invasion of Ukraine has sparked concerns among top policy, diplomatic and military officials about losing sight of the strategic threat from China, however.

“There is strong pressure in the building not to overdo Russia’s importance over the long term because of Ukraine,” said Mackenzie Eaglen, a senior fellow at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute, referring to the Pentagon. “I think that what will ultimately come out will be a watered-down version of where they were going already, which was that China was the priority, including over Russia.”

Even so, Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine is forcing U.S. officials to grapple anew with countering two major adversaries at once, a problem that has revived long-dormant Cold War debates about quantity versus quality in apportioning scarce forces between Europe and Asia.

The White House declined to comment on changes to its military strategy, or on a separate, overarching strategy plan, called the national security strategy, which has also been delayed.

While it is unclear how much additional money would be available to the Pentagon to help ease these trade-offs, both Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill say that Russia’s invasion has transformed the debate over military priorities, making a sharp increase in military spending a virtual certainty.

Republican aides say GOP leaders’ target is more than \$800 billion for the Pentagon’s base budget in fiscal year 2023 -- far above the approximately \$740 billion authorized for fiscal year 2022. And some Democrats have signaled they, too, would support a substantial spending boost.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D., Va.), vice chairwoman of the House Armed Services Committee and a former Navy commander, says the U.S. needs to spend 5% of its GDP on defense, up from its current rate of less than 4%. “I think people are sort of waking up out of the snooze that we were living somewhere in a secure world,” she said.

Even with additional funding, the Pentagon isn’t likely to return to the massive force posture it had permanently deployed in Europe decades ago. But Moscow’s invasion has prompted the alliance to set aside for now restrictions it has observed since the 1990s on basing large numbers of combat troops on the territory of North Atlantic Treaty Organization members in Eastern Europe, the officials said.

The U.S. has already rushed more than 15,000 troops to Europe amid the crisis in Ukraine, raising American force levels in Europe to more than 100,000 personnel for the first time in decades. NATO members have also deployed reinforcements to the Baltics, Poland, Hungary and Romania.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met at NATO headquarters last week with his counterparts from other alliance members to discuss beefing up forces even further. They directed military planners from all of the NATO members to draft plans that are likely to be discussed when President Biden meets with other alliance heads of government in Europe this week.

There, Mr. Biden will meet with leaders of the eastern NATO members who are eager for additional American commitments to the region. “We need some defenses, rocket artillery, this is what we need and of course, we would like to have American soldiers here permanently based,” Artis Pabriks, the Latvian defense minister, told reporters in Europe earlier this month.

But until the immediate crisis is over, Pentagon officials are loath to make those kinds of long-term commitments, said a U.S. military official familiar with the planning. “We’re just starting to wrestle with these issues.”

The question that NATO and the U.S. face is how quickly they can shift from a posture that relied largely on deterring Russia through political engagement to a more robust military approach, said Michal Baranowski, a senior fellow in Warsaw for the German Marshall Fund, a European think tank.

U.S. forces, he added, are still key, because NATO allies in the east see them as far more of a deterrent to Moscow than troops from other European countries and because Russia itself would see any move against NATO as more risky.

“In some ways, it goes back to a much more Cold War force posture,” Mr. Baranowski said. “For Russia, it’s really the American component that’s key.”

*--Eliza Collins contributed to this article*

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## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Austin to join Biden’s trip this week to NATO, Poland**

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 21 (1743) | Corey Dickstein

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will return to Europe for a second consecutive week, joining President Joe Biden’s trip Wednesday to NATO headquarters in Brussels and visit Polish leaders later in the week, the Pentagon announced Monday.

The U.S. leaders’ trip this week comes as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine nears its one-month anniversary and just days after Austin returned to Washington from a meeting March 15 with NATO defense ministers in Brussels. Austin met with leaders in Slovakia and Bulgaria late last week, as those NATO eastern flank nations seek to bolster their own security amid Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

Biden and Austin are expected to meet with other NATO leaders Thursday before traveling to Poland on Friday, officials said. Biden will also meet with the European Council and G7 leaders to “discuss international efforts to support Ukraine and impose severe and unprecedented costs on Russia for its invasion,” according to a White House statement.

The meetings also come as Poland pitches a NATO peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, according to a Reuters news report on Friday. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declined to discuss the Polish proposal, but he confirmed the Pentagon expected it would be formally submitted Monday.

“It kind of goes without saying, but I’ll say it anyway — there shouldn’t be a need for a peacekeeping force because there shouldn’t have been a war of choice by [Russian President Vladimir] Putin,” Kirby told reporters. “And he can end it today by negotiating in good faith and getting his troops out of Ukraine and stopping the killing and the death and destruction that he and his forces are responsible for. But again, I’m not going to get ahead of international discussions here in this particular proposal.”

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told CNN on Sunday that American troops would not participate in such a peacekeeping force, reiterating Biden’s position that U.S. troops would not enter Ukraine to fight the Russian military.

“American troops will not be on the ground in Ukraine at this moment,” she said. “The president has been clear on that. And other NATO countries may decide that they want to put troops inside of Ukraine. That will be a decision that they have to make.”

Biden and other leaders of NATO countries have pledged new assistance for Ukrainian forces in recent days, as they fend off the Russian invasion. The United States expects to send some \$350 million in defensive weapons this week to Ukraine and another \$800 million of aid — including anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, rifles, ammunition, drones and body armor — in the coming weeks, Kirby said Monday.

A Pentagon official said Monday that Russian troops appeared to be struggling with low morale and have gained little ground in recent days. The Russian military has launched more than 1,000 missiles since it invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, the official said, adding the Pentagon has observed an uptick in Russian air activity in recent days.

Nonetheless, the Russian military has made little progress in its goal of capturing Ukraine’s capital Kyiv and taking out its pro-West government. The official said Russian struggles to supply its troops with fuel, water and ammunition and to coordinate its air and ground efforts have likely led to an increase in attacks on civilian targets, including apartment buildings, hospitals and a shopping mall on Monday.

Kirby declined to say if the Pentagon believed Russia was altering its battle plans to inflict more pressure on ordinary Ukrainians, but he said the U.S. military believed Russia’s military was deliberately targeting civilians.

“We continue to see indiscriminate attacks on civilians, which we believe in many cases is intentional,” he said. “There’s no justification for it. So, I’m not even going to try to do that. But, clearly, they are causing increased numbers of civilian casualties.”

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## **5. Pentagon officials say the human element is key to JADC2’s success**

C4ISRNET.com, Mar. 21 (1632) | Colin Demarest

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon’s tech-centric campaign to overhaul military communications and better handle streams of data will not succeed if the human side of things is neglected, a top official recently warned.

Without the right people and without the right recruitment and retention considerations, Joint All-Domain Command and Control will fall short of its true potential, Director of Command, Control and Communications for the Joint Staff Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall told reporters March 18.

“Data is the element that we’re pursuing, and data-centricity has three parts to it. The first, really, is people. We hardly ever speak of this because we are so focused on the second tenet, which is technology,” Crall said. “And then the third piece is process or policy. If you want to capture data-centricity, you’ve got to line all three of those up.”

The general spoke to media days after Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks signed a JADC2 implementation plan laying out milestones and defining who is responsible for what and after the Pentagon unveiled an unclassified summary of its JADC2 strategy.

Among the summary’s highlights is an effort to establish the so-called JADC2 human enterprise. The endeavor hopes to reform the workforce as well as address “the professional development needed to train and educate leaders to be proficient in operations across all warfighting domains.”

Joint All-Domain Command and Control — more a philosophy than an actual product, the summary suggests — would enable the military to take data from any domain and service and quickly process and feed it to the correct people, who could then take action.

“We must maintain continued focus and momentum on these initiatives and programs, which enhance department capabilities to face current and future threats,” Hicks said in a March 17 statement. “Command and control in an increasingly information-focused warfighting environment have never been more critical. JADC2 will enable the DoD to act at the speed of relevance to improve U.S. national security.”

While Crall is confident the technical pieces of JADC2 will fall into place, he is less so about the human element, meaning changes are necessary.

“I really appreciate the question in the sense that we’ve got to take a look at people as strongly as we do technology,” Crall said. “Otherwise, this enterprise, the JADC2 experiment that we’re going through now in attempt to delivery, will not be successful.”

“There’s a whole smattering of things that we need to look at that would attract the right workforce,” he continued, “and recruitment is a key piece of this because it directly impacts our ability to execute JADC2.”

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin approved the full JADC2 strategy in May 2021. Officials, including Crall, at the time suggested the approval would really get the ball rolling.

“Planning is good. Talk is good,” the general said. “Now it’s delivery time, and we’ve been given a clear signal to begin pushing these outcomes to the people who need them.”

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## **COVID-19**

### **6. Biden pushes a new normal amid worries over next surge**

Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A1 | Lena H. Sun and Yasmeen Abutaleb

Cathy Colledge, who has Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer, feels like she’s on her own trying to avoid a coronavirus infection that might kill her.

New guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Centers for Disease Control and Prevention telling 99 percent of Americans living in counties labeled green or yellow that they can safely go without masks puts the onus on her to protect herself, whether she goes to the grocery store or travels to Florida to see her grandchildren.

“I want to move on, too,” said Colledge, 70, of Salt Lake City. “It’s kind of confusing for me because I feel like, ‘What about me? Why am I safer now than I would’ve been, I don’t know, three months ago?’”

The unsettling answer for Colledge is that her risk continues to be dangerously high because of her illness, even though transmission of the coronavirus has dropped significantly. That means she must now do a risk-benefit calculus for every journey outside of her home.

But for many other Americans, there was palpable relief on Feb. 25, when the CDC shifted the vast majority of U.S. counties from red, signaling high transmission, to green, meaning low levels of disease and no need to mask indoors.

The changes were based on a new framework designed to protect communities from the worst, a surge so big that it might overwhelm local hospitals, while being less disruptive to everyday life, amid falling case counts and a desire among many for relief from masking and other public health measures. But some worry it leaves the country unprepared for another wave and abandons those who are most vulnerable.

The plan's adequacy may soon be tested if the United States sees the same sharp increase in coronavirus cases now bedeviling Europe, a possibility federal officials are anticipating. If such increases lead some communities to be reclassified as red, it remains an open question whether state and local officials would be willing to reinstate controversial indoor masking guidelines. There may be little political appetite for such measures, even in Democratic-led areas.

"Convincing a large swath of the population to put masks back on will be very difficult," said Nirav Shah, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

For President Biden and his administration, which has vowed to "follow the science," navigating a return to normalcy in the third year of the pandemic is an inherently messy and uncertain process. Federal officials have developed new metrics, based on previous coronavirus waves, that will anticipate the burden of severe disease on local hospitals by incorporating county data on covid-19 hospital admissions, as well as case counts.

But there are no distinct steps to a new pandemic normal, only judgment calls that will have to be continuously adjusted, depending on how an unpredictable virus mutates, said several senior administration officials and outside experts.

There are "tons of trade-offs" and "it's a messy business," Eli Perencevich, an infectious-disease physician at the University of Iowa, said of the effort to navigate a return to normalcy. "But I do think CDC is, you know, trying their best in a very, very continuously difficult situation. There's no policy that's going to please everybody."

Some experts worry the new framework moves the burden of protection almost entirely to individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, including the immunocompromised and families with children too young to get vaccinated.

Others wonder whether the agency's new metrics will alert communities in time to take action to avert future surges, especially if they face variants with more immune evasion and severity than the omicron variant or its cousin, BA.2, now fueling cases in Europe. Whether officials will act if they have sufficient notice is another question.

"I'm especially concerned about what seems to me to be a high hospitalization threshold for triggering implementation of community measures like indoor masking," Jeffrey Duchin, health officer for Seattle and King County in Washington state, said in an email, noting the CDC triggers range from the equivalent of to twice the highest weekly hospitalization rates for influenza over the past 12 seasons.

### *Officials say country is ready*

Several experts heralded the new guidelines and said they were appropriate as cases drop, especially given the nation's broad immunity. For most people who are vaccinated and boosted, the coronavirus is unlikely to result in severe infection, hospitalization or death, even though some immune protection wanes after a few months.

Experts and administration officials note that the picture in March 2022 is far different from March 2020, with access to coronavirus vaccines, treatments and tests, as well as N95 masks that offer stronger protection and a better understanding of the virus.

"I acknowledge how this pandemic has disproportionately affected certain communities, whether they are vulnerable by virtue of where they live and work, or by virtue of coexisting disease," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in an interview. "The benefit of where we are now compared to a year ago is that we have a whole host of things we can do with and for people," including widespread testing and vaccination.

Yet as the United States and the world have learned repeatedly, there is no guarantee cases will remain low when the virus is still circumnavigating the globe, creating hot spots in parts of Asia and Europe that in the past have preceded outbreaks in the United States.

When CDC released the new metrics, Walensky said they could be dialed up or down if an evolving virus posed challenges. Agency officials implied, but did not state forcefully, that another large surge would mean a return to indoor mask recommendations.

The effectiveness of the new metrics, as well as the willingness of officials to act, could be tested soon amid signs that the level of virus in wastewater is ticking up in New York, California, Colorado, Florida, Ohio, Maine and West Virginia, although it is not yet clear whether cases and hospitalizations will follow suit, as they have in parts of Asia and Europe.

"Science doesn't provide all the answers," said Richard Besser, president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a former acting CDC director. "The frustration that people are feeling, this sense that some people are feeling liberation and joy, and others are feeling a sense of fear and abandonment, I totally get that and expect that's how it's going to be for some time until this pandemic does hopefully one day recede."

### *Ringling alarms when needed*

In much of the country, particularly states and cities led by Republicans, mask mandates fell away long ago. But in February, a number of Democratic governors began lifting their mandates before the CDC updated its metrics.

The agency was in regular discussions with state health officials about what the rapid drop in cases meant and how to navigate the next phase of the pandemic. Despite polls showing the majority of Americans still favored some restrictions, including mask mandates, state and local leaders said residents were growing restive.

They wanted guidance from the CDC to help determine when mandates could be relaxed and when they might need to be reinstated, one senior administration official and two state health officials said. State officials said they asked that the capacity of their hospitals be included. These officials, along with others in this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

Given the transmissibility of the omicron variant, almost the entire country's map was still red even as the surge was waning toward the end of February. The CDC metrics were still based on case counts and test positivity. But many infections go undetected because people have no symptoms or do not seek treatment for mild symptoms.

In addition, the results of rapid at-home tests are often not reported in official case counts. At the same time, many experts had been pushing for measurements of disease severity because the vast majority of those who were vaccinated, and especially those who received booster doses, would have mild or asymptomatic disease, according to three people familiar with the conversations.

Under its previous metrics, the CDC was “ringing the alarm constantly throughout the pandemic, saying transmission is high, transmission is high, transmission is high,” said a senior CDC adviser. But it “didn’t mean anything” while the current metrics “allow us to ring the alarm when we really need to. And to turn the alarm off when things are a little better and give people a break from the siren.”

Implicit in the latest guidance is a basic fact that the country is “at the point where we’re not able to prevent transmission from the virus from occurring,” said Aubree Gordon, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at the University of Michigan. “The severity of infection has dropped. A huge part of that is because of population-level immunity. I do think it’s appropriate guidance for the moment we are in now.”

With that in mind, officials “really thought through what is it that matters right now in this pandemic. And while cases are important, really, what we are most concerned about was medically significant disease,” the senior CDC adviser said. They wanted to be able to predict “when our hospitals are going to fill up, when our ICU beds are going to be full, and when are we going to see an increase in the risk of death in the community from covid-19. Those are the things that really mattered. We wanted to predict those.”

Officials spent weeks identifying new metrics and then validating that they would accurately predict the impact on health systems three weeks later. They sought indicators that were available at the county level, reported at least weekly, and directly reflected the goal of minimizing severe disease or strain on the health system, according to a CDC scientific brief posted a week after the new guidance was released.

Death rates were not used because they lag new infections by weeks. Emergency visits for covid-19 and wastewater surveillance would be solid early-warning systems, but data is not available for the whole country, so they were not included. One new hospital metric, coronavirus cases per 100,000 population in the past seven days, is important early in a surge to signal anticipated medical strain, the CDC scientific brief said.

But some people are pessimistic that the new metrics will alert communities in sufficient time to reinstate measures such as indoor masking to avert surges. New hospital admissions lag infections by at least a week, and by that time, a community could have significant amounts of disease.

The new metrics are of greater use “on the downside of a surge than on the upside,” said Andrew Pavia, a professor of pediatrics and infectious diseases at the University of Utah. “We need sensitive indicators to allow us to institute control measures when a new surge is beginning, not just to tell us when it is reasonable to stop them.”

Administration officials acknowledge the metrics are not perfect but believe they will sound alarms in time. Two senior administration officials said in a country as large and diverse as the United States, it remains difficult to get to a recommendation that makes sense for every state or county. In the end, they acknowledged, the new framework is a combination of science and judgment calls.

Figuring out when to reinstate prevention measures will require such judgment calls, the senior CDC adviser said. “When should you ask people to put on a mask? When should communities consider screening testing? When should schools think about test-to-stay programs? Those types of prevention measures are really hard to model” and there is no precise number, backed by evidence, indicating when you should implement each one, the adviser said. “That’s where I think policy came in and where judgment came in.”

Administration officials noted that even before they unveiled the new framework and withdrew masking guidance for much of the country, many people had stopped wearing face coverings. Studies have shown cloth masks do not offer sufficient protection, and mandates had not specified what types of masks people should be wearing.

None of which is any consolation to Jacki and Ken Churchill, who fear for his survival. Ken, 52, has an immune deficiency that prevents his body from producing antibodies. The couple continue to order groceries online, avoid eating out and home-school their 14-year-old son. Mask mandates in their corner of Alaska, outside Anchorage, had afforded some peace of mind on Ken’s rare trips to doctor appointments. Not anymore.

“We’re just left to protect ourselves,” said Jacki, 51, a cardiac nurse who is preparing to fly to Maine to help care for a sick family member. She worries that if she should pick up an infection at an airport or on a plane, that could prove deadly for Ken. To plan for her journey, she plans to “scarf down pre-packed food” in the open spaces where dogs are walked during her long layovers. “We’re not trying to dampen anybody’s party,” Jacki said. “We’re just trying to live.”

*--Dan Keating contributed to this report*

## **7. A Sign of the Times? DoD Skips Publishing Weekly COVID-19 Numbers**

Military.com, Mar. 21 (1803) | Patricia Kime and Travis Tritten

In a sign of the continued decline of COVID-19 across the country, the Defense Department last Wednesday skipped its update of coronavirus case numbers -- data it faithfully has published weekly since July 2021.

The department released the information three times a week during the first year of the pandemic, while states across the U.S. reported the data daily. But as case numbers have dwindled, more than a dozen states have cut their output to once or twice a week, and it appears the DoD is following suit.

“There’s been no decision ... to slim down our flow of information,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told Military.com during a press conference Monday, though he did not say how often the information will be published. “We’re still working on this very, very hard.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the DoD has logged 608,650 cases of COVID-19, including 391,341 cases among U.S. service members. More than 680 people have died, including 93 troops, 414 civilian employees, 35 dependents and 139 contractors, according to its published statistics.

In March 2020, DoD officials ordered individual military installations and combatant commands to cease publishing COVID-19 case numbers, citing concerns for operational security. The overall department numbers have been published online during the last two surges in the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Kirby noted that 97.7% of active-duty personnel are fully vaccinated and 93.8% of the National Guard and Reserve forces have received at least one dose.

Since the COVID-19 vaccinations were approved for emergency use, the DoD has administered more than 7 million shots, he added.

“Nobody’s doing any spiking of any footballs here. We know this pandemic is still ongoing, that the virus is still dangerous and deadly,” Kirby said. “We’re watching this every single day, and we’re not afraid to make adjustments.”

Speaking on PBS NewsHour last week, Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, said the country is “going in the right direction” in terms of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, but needs to be mindful of the rise of variants, including the new BA.2 subvariant of omicron in Europe.

“I would not be surprised ... if, in the next few weeks, we do see an uptick in cases,” Fauci said, adding that it didn’t appear, however, based on cases in the United Kingdom, that BA.2 is any more severe than omicron.

The White House has asked Congress for \$22.5 billion to continue funding COVID-19 response and research, to include surveillance, testing and monitoring.

Last week, officials wrote to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi asking her to back the additional funding, given that current pandemic support expires this month.

According to Shalanda Young, the director of the White House's Office of Management and Budget, and Jeffrey Zients, White House coordinator for COVID-19 response, the money is needed to continue testing, surveillance, research and more.

Without it, they added, the country could be "blindsided" by a future variant.

"Failing to provide additional funding for the COVID response now will leave us unequipped to deal with a future surge," they wrote in a letter published by NPR.

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## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **8. Biden, allies discuss Russia's 'brutal' war in key week for Western unity**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 21 (1703) | Sebastian Smith

President Joe Biden and European allies discussed Russia's "brutal" war in Ukraine on Monday, kicking off a crucial week in the Western standoff with Moscow that will see Biden visit Poland after attending NATO and EU summits.

Biden hosted the call, lasting just under one hour, with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson "to discuss their coordinated responses," the White House said.

"The leaders discussed their serious concerns about Russia's brutal tactics in Ukraine, including its attacks on civilians," a White House statement said.

"They underscored their continued support for Ukraine, including by providing security assistance to the brave Ukrainians who are defending their country from Russian aggression, and humanitarian assistance to the millions of Ukrainians who have fled," it said.

On Wednesday, Biden will depart on the most momentous foreign trip of his presidency to date. He attends the twin summits on Thursday in Brussels, then meets President Andrzej Duda in Poland, on the frontline of the West's confrontation with Russia, Saturday.

Russia's war is about to enter its second month, and US and Western allies have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Moscow, crippling the ruble and stock market, while going after President Vladimir Putin's wealthy supporters.

On the ground in Ukraine, Western-supplied weapons, backed by years of training and funding, have helped the country's military to bloody the Russian invaders on multiple fronts.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that Biden's mission was to make sure the West maintains closed ranks.

"Unity has been front and center for the president," Psaki said. "Unity with our European counterparts, unity among NATO, unity among the G7. And that doesn't happen by accident. And so, coming out of this what the president is hoping to achieve is continued coordination and a unified response to the continued escalatory actions of Putin."

However, with the war starting to look like a stalemate, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is making increasingly desperate appeals for the West to do more.

What those additional steps could be remains far from obvious.

One big hole in the sanctions regime is China, the world's second biggest economy. Beijing is refusing even to condemn ally Russia and a nearly two-hour talk between Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Friday appeared to result in no change.

While the sanctions have sent severe shockwaves through Russia's economy, US and especially European economies -- which rely heavily on Russian energy imports -- are likewise vulnerable.

The United States and Britain have already announced their own bans on Russian oil imports. A wider ban by EU countries would mark a huge escalation hurting Moscow -- but also Western consumers.

Brent North Sea crude traded at \$114.55 a barrel early Monday and earlier this month hit \$139, up from about \$79 at the beginning of the year.

A broad oil embargo "will hit everyone," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned.

Neither is there an easy path to significantly upgrading Ukraine's military.

Zelensky is pleading for more powerful tools beyond the effective but limited anti-tank rockets and Stinger missiles used to hit low flying aircraft.

But Biden has firmly rejected Zelensky's calls for a NATO-imposed no-fly zone, saying this would require the United States to go to war against Russia.

The alliance has also stumbled over a failed push by Poland to send Soviet-designed MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine through a US air base. Again, Washington said this would risk Russia declaring that NATO had actively entered the war.

Now, there is growing discussion about furnishing Ukraine with another piece of Russian-origin technology -- the S-300 anti-aircraft system. This would be a step up for Ukraine's defenders, because the missiles can hit planes at high altitude.

Slovakia says it is willing to provide the system it has in its arsenal to Ukraine, but only if NATO provides a replacement for its own defense.

One thing Biden won't be doing this week, the White House says, is making a trip to Kyiv himself.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, along with the Czech and Slovenian prime ministers, traveled to the embattled capital last week. But "there are no plans to travel into Ukraine," Psaki said, citing security concerns.

There is speculation, however, that Biden could meet with some of the nearly 3.5 million refugees who have fled Ukraine while he's in Poland.

Psaki said that the refugee issue would be "a key component" of his trip.

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## **9. Biden warns business leaders to prepare for Russian cyber attacks**

CNN.com, Mar. 21 (1852) | Maegan Vazquez, Donald Judd, Sean Lyngaas and Zachary Cohen

President Joe Biden on Monday issued an urgent warning to American business leaders, telling them to strengthen their companies' cyber defenses immediately.

Speaking at the Business Roundtable Quarterly Meeting in Washington, Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin is likely to use cyber attacks as a form of retaliation against the United States for its actions to counter Russia's incursion on Ukraine.

Biden said, "The magnitude of Russia's cyber capacity is fairly consequential and it's coming."

He added that “one of the tools (Putin’s) most likely to use, in my view -- in our view -- is cyber attacks. They have a very sophisticated cyber capability,” and later argued, “The point is that he has the capability. He hasn’t used it yet, but it’s part of his playbook.”

The President told business leaders the national interest is at stake, suggesting that it’s “a patriotic obligation that you invest as much as you can in making sure -- and we will help in any way -- that you have built up your technological capacity to deal with cyber attacks.”

Earlier Monday, Biden issued a statement pointing to “evolving intelligence” to suggest Russia could conduct malicious cyber activity against American companies and critical infrastructure.

While the Biden administration has been warning the nation of the prospect of cyber attacks by Russia for months, most recently as a response to the economic restrictions imposed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, the President’s statement suggests “evolving intelligence” has heightened the threat.

The details of exactly what that intelligence is remain unclear, but deputy national security adviser Anne Neuberger said during Monday’s White House briefing that Russia had been conducting “preparatory activity” for cyber attacks, which she said could include scanning websites and hunting for software vulnerabilities.

Neuberger said the administration is reiterating its warnings “based on evolving threat intelligence that the Russian government is exploring options for potential cyber attacks on critical infrastructure in the United States,” but also underscored that “there is no certainty there will be a cyber incident on critical infrastructure.”

The administration last week “hosted classified briefings with companies and sectors we felt would be most effective and provided very practical, focused advice,” Neuberger told CNN’s Phil Mattingly during Monday’s briefing.

Biden said in his statement that the administration would “continue to use every tool to deter, disrupt, and if necessary, respond to cyber attacks against critical infrastructure,” but acknowledged that “the federal government can’t defend against this threat alone.”

“Most of America’s critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector and critical infrastructure owners and operators must accelerate efforts to lock their digital doors. The Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has been actively working with organizations across critical infrastructure to rapidly share information and mitigation guidance to help protect their systems and networks,” the statement said.

The administration is recommending several steps to help private sector partners prevent against cyber attacks, including using multi-factor authentication, consulting with cyber security professionals to make sure systems are

protected against all known vulnerabilities, changing passwords across networks to prevent stolen credentials from being used, backing up and encrypting data and educating employees on cyber security.

### *Concerns that Putin might lash out*

The decision for Biden to issue the warning reflects concerns within the administration about what Putin might be willing to do next as it becomes increasingly clear his invasion of Ukraine is not going as expected, according to a US official familiar with the internal discussions on cyber security.

Biden officials have been discussing how the state of Russia's ground campaign might change Putin's calculus and how options are being considered in Russia as a result, the official said, noting the situation -- in some ways -- is more volatile than ever.

Russia still maintains its cyber capabilities and the administration believes Putin may be more willing to use those tools as he gets more desperate, the official added. The official would not provide details about the kinds of options for potential cyber attacks the US believes Russia may be exploring, but there has been an increase in observed activity, according to a source familiar with the situation.

The official said it is difficult to determine whether this is just noisy Russian activity meant to send a message to the US about what it could do or actual preparation of the environment.

"If you're Russia, disinformation doesn't seem to be working, they're not going to fire a shot at us, and so what's left is something in the middle: cyber," a second official added.

The US departments of Energy, Treasury and Homeland Security, among others, have briefed big electric utilities and banks on Russian hacking capabilities, and urged businesses to lower their thresholds for reporting suspicious activity. The FBI has been wary that Russian speaking ransomware groups could lash out at US businesses.

While the administration has issued warnings about possible Russian hacking activity for months, when the statement comes from the President, "it's generally because [the threat] has taken on additional significance in the eyes of the government," a third US official said.

Ukrainian government agencies have been hit by a series of cyber attacks before and after the Russian invasion but not the level of hacking that some analysts feared.

Cyber attacks have nonetheless played a supporting role in the war. As the Russian military began attacking Ukraine on February 24, satellite modems that provide internet service for tens of thousands of customers in Europe, including some in Ukraine, were taken offline in a cyber attack on US telecommunications provider Viasat.

The US government is investigating the hack of Viasat as a potential Russian state-sponsored cyber attack, a US official familiar with the matter previously told CNN.

Neuberger on Monday did not identify who was responsible for the hack. She said US officials continue to investigate the incident.

Earlier in March, a bipartisan group of senators also shared their concerns with the Biden administration about the potential of widespread Russian cyberattacks in the US as retribution for harsh sanctions against Russia in the wake of President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas Sunday evening obtained by CNN, 22 senators, led by Nevada Democratic Sen. Jacky Rosen and South Dakota Republican Sen. Mike Rounds, raised questions about America's readiness for Russian cyber and disinformation threats.

Additional correspondence obtained by CNN indicated that DHS responded to the senators on Monday, saying that the CISA's Office of Legislative Affairs will work with the group to prepare a briefing on the matter.

*--CNN's Eva McKend contributed to this report*

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## **10. Biden says Russia is considering using chemical, biological weapons in Ukraine**

Reuters, Mar. 21 (2259) | Not Attributed

MARIUPOL/LVIV/KYIV, Ukraine -- Ukraine's military said on Tuesday residents should brace for more indiscriminate Russian shelling of critical infrastructure, as U.S. President Joe Biden issued one of his strongest warnings yet that Moscow is considering using chemical weapons.

Russian troops have failed to capture any major Ukrainian city more than four weeks into their invasion, and increasingly are resorting to causing massive destruction to residential areas using air strikes, long-range missiles and artillery.

The southern port of Mariupol has become a focal point of Russia's assault and lies largely in ruins with bodies lying on the streets, but attacks were also reported to have intensified on the second city Kharkiv on Monday.

Ukraine's armed forces said in a statement issued on Tuesday that Russian forces were expected to continue to attack critical infrastructure using "high-precision weapons and indiscriminate munitions".

Without citing evidence, Biden said Russia's false accusations that Kyiv had biological and chemical weapons illustrated that President Vladimir Putin was considering using them himself.

Putin's "back is against the wall and now he's talking about new false flags he's setting up including, asserting that we in America have biological as well as chemical weapons in Europe, simply not true," Biden said at a Business Roundtable event.

"They are also suggesting that Ukraine has biological and chemical weapons in Ukraine. That's a clear sign he's considering using both of those."

The Russian embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Biden also told businesses to be alert for possible cyber attacks by Russia. "It's part of Russia's playbook," he said in a statement.

Washington and its allies have previously accused Russia of spreading an unproven claim that Ukraine had a biological weapons programme as a possible prelude to using such weapons itself, but Biden's remarks on Monday were some of his strongest yet on the subject.

Russia says it does not attack civilians although the devastation wrought on Ukrainian towns such as Mariupol and Kharkiv are reminiscent of previous Russian assaults on cities in Chechnya and Syria.

Putin calls the war, the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two, a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from "Nazis". The West calls this a false pretext for an unprovoked war of aggression.

Biden is due to travel to Europe this week for meetings with allied leaders to discuss tighter sanctions on Russia, on top of the unprecedented financial penalties already announced. Ahead of the trip he discussed Russia's "brutal" tactics in a call with European leaders on Monday, the White House said.

Russia's siege and bombardment of Mariupol port, which European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called "a massive war crime", is increasing pressure for action.

But EU foreign ministers on Monday disagreed on whether and how to include energy in sanctions, with Germany saying the bloc was too dependent on Russian oil to declare an embargo.

## NO SURRENDER

The conflict has driven almost a quarter of Ukraine's 44 million people from their homes, and Germany predicted the refugee number could reach as high as 10 million in coming weeks.

Ukraine on Monday rejected a Russian demand to stop defending besieged Mariupol, where hundreds of thousands of civilians are suffering through Russian bombardments laying waste to their city.

A part of Mariupol now held by Russian forces, reached by Reuters on Sunday, was an eerie wasteland. Several bodies lay by the road, wrapped in blankets. Windows were blasted out and walls were charred black. People who came out of basements sat on benches amid the debris, bundled up in coats.

Some, though, have managed to escape. About 8,000 were safely evacuated on Monday through seven humanitarian corridors from towns and cities under fire, including about 3,000 from Mariupol, Ukraine's deputy prime minister said.

The eastern cities of Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv have also been hard hit.

Among the dead in Kharkiv is Boris Romanchenko, a 96-year-old Holocaust survivor whose flat was shelled by Russian forces last week.

"Please think about how many things he has come through," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said late on Monday.

"But (he) was killed by a Russian strike, which hit an ordinary Kharkiv multi-storey building. With each day of this war, it becomes more obvious what denazification means to them."

On Monday night, a witness in Kharkiv said she saw people on the roofs of apartment buildings dropping grenades or similar ordnance onto the streets.

A second witness, outside the city, reported hearing more intense explosions than on any day since Russian troops began attacking last month.

Reuters could not immediately verify the accounts.

In Kyiv, six bodies were laid on the pavement by a shopping mall struck overnight by Russian shelling. Emergency services combed wreckage to the sound of distant artillery fire.

The governor of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region said buses evacuating civilians from front line areas were hit by shelling on Monday and four children were wounded in separate incidents.

Ukrainian officials hope that Moscow will negotiate a withdrawal. Both sides hinted last week at progress in talks on a formula which would include some kind of "neutrality" for Ukraine, though details were scarce.

Japan reacted angrily on Tuesday after Russia withdrew from peace treaty talks citing Tokyo's decision to join the international campaign of sanctions. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Russia's decision was "completely unacceptable".

## **11. White House Bureaucracy Is Costing Ukrainian Lives, Senators Say**

***Lawmakers are urging Biden to send more aid and enforce sanctions as quickly as possible to help Ukraine beat Russia***

DefenseOne.com, Mar. 21 (1729) | Jacqueline Feldscher

After seeing the situation on the ground this weekend, as Ukrainian refugees flood across the Polish border to escape violence, 10 senators have a message for the White House: Go faster.

Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, led a group of 10 lawmakers who visited Germany and Poland to see American troops and observe the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine. At a press conference Monday, senators said they were touched by conversations with activists fighting for their country and single mothers fleeing Ukraine to keep their children safe, and they emphasized that aid is only helpful if it gets there in time.

"There's a belief by Ukrainians that we are way too slow," said Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan. "We are late now. We were late yesterday....A slow march of bureaucratic policies and efforts does not save lives. It costs lives."

"Time is of the essence," echoed Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, adding that he is seeking answers about how long it takes for aid to arrive in Ukraine after Congress passes legislation. "We don't have weeks and months. We have hours and days. That is one of the things we are all committed to."

Moran also asked for an opportunity to meet with President Joe Biden ahead of his departure Wednesday on a trip to Brussels and Poland, to explain what the bipartisan congressional delegation saw on their visit.

In a virtual address last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked Congress for additional weapons, including aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems, to counter Russian attacks. Hours after the speech, Biden met many of those demands in an \$800-million military assistance package that included anti-aircraft systems, shoulder-mounted missiles to target tanks, small arms, ammunition, and drones.

But senators say the administration is still not doing enough, and they specifically urged the White House to send more lethal weapons, try Putin as a war criminal for his bombings of schools and hospitals, and more strictly impose sanctions on Russian officials. Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan., also said that all Western companies must stop doing business in Russia.

"We're only doing a fraction of what we could be doing," Marshall said. "We don't need to debate it. We don't need to talk about the pros and the cons. Get them the damn weapons."

Multiple Republican senators urged Biden to complete the transfer of MiG-29 fighter jets from Poland to Ukraine and give Warsaw updated F-16s to backfill its fleet of aircraft. Earlier this month, Poland offered to send their Soviet-era jets to Ramstein Air Base in Germany, making the United States responsible for facilitating their transfer to Ukraine. U.S. officials quickly rejected the idea, though it will almost certainly be discussed when Biden meets with Polish President Andrzej Duda on Saturday.

“We have to provide the Ukrainians with the means to prevent this bombardment,” said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine. “That means not only giving them the MiGs that the administration has held up, it means providing them with additional aircraft defenses.”

“We do not have time for endless debate and delay. If we delay, thousands more innocent Ukrainians will die,” she continued.

Other senators, however, said they understood the White House’s rationale in not sending the jets to Ukraine, which could further provoke Russia and may not be useful in winning the war.

“There is a lot we can be sending them immediately without having to make that ultimate decision on those particular aircraft,” said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. “The way they’re going to win this war is not through the air, it is through the ground, so they need the ground defenses.”

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## **12. Bipartisan lawmakers call on Biden to form ‘aid airlift into Ukraine’**

*The strategic airlift would not impose a no-fly zone, but would come with risks*

FoxNews.com, Mar. 21 (1703) | Houston Keene

A bipartisan group of lawmakers called on President Biden to form an “international humanitarian aid airlift” into Ukraine amid Russian President Vladimir Putin’s brutal war.

Reps. Young Kim, R-Calif., and Lou Correa, D-Calif., are leading the letter, which was first obtained by Fox News Digital.

“We write to you today in support of establishing an international humanitarian aid airlift into Ukraine to deliver urgently needed supplies to the Ukrainian people,” they wrote. “As the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to kill civilians and destroy homes, it is necessary for the United States to act immediately to save lives.”

The letter was sent to Biden on Monday.

“While we commend your Administration for taking action to approve Congressional funding for humanitarian and military aid for Ukraine and working with our allies and partners to impose sanctions on Russian President Putin and his government, more must be done to support the people of Ukraine and stop the war,” they continued.

The lawmakers wrote that Ukrainians “are trapped in bomb shelters, basements, and subways where they have limited access to food, water, and medicine, among other necessary supplies” and slammed Russia for attacking humanitarian corridors in the war-torn nation.

“As your Administration searches for more options, we strongly urge the consideration of a humanitarian airlift of urgently needed nonmilitary supplies organized and supported by the U.S.,” they wrote. “In response, Russia would be forced to either agree to supporting the delivery of humanitarian aid or threaten to shoot down planes carrying food and water to a war-torn country, which would further isolate Russia on the world stage and motivate stronger international action.”

Ukraine has long called for the implementation of a no-fly zone over the country as the war rages on, which U.S. officials warn would rope America into the conflict as Russia would view it as an act of war.

A strategic airlift, however, does not impose a no-fly zone, but the lawmakers on the letter conceded that their proposal for the airlift “does carry risks that planes could be shot down entering Ukrainian airspace.”

“Therefore, we urge your Administration to immediately reach out to nations viewed as nonthreatening to recruit pilots for these flights, including Brazil, India, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates,” they wrote.

“Flights flown from countries viewed as non-hostile to Russia into Ukraine for humanitarian missions makes it difficult for President Putin to declare them as enemy combatants and motivates Russian forces to take strict measures to avoid targeting them.”

The lawmakers also called on Biden to instruct United Nations (UN) Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield “to build support” for an international humanitarian airlift for Ukraine at the UN.

Joining Young and Correa on the letter are several of their colleagues, including Republican Reps. French Hill of Arkansas, Fred Upton of Michigan, and Victoria Spartz of Indiana, who was born in Ukraine.

“The U.S. has a moral responsibility to save lives where possible in Ukraine,” they wrote. “Establishing and organizing an international humanitarian aid airlift provides the U.S. and our allies and partners with a non-escalatory method of accomplishing this while countering Putin’s goal to starve the people of Ukraine.”

The letter was also sent to several Biden administration officials, including Thomas-Greenfield, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator Samantha Power.

Putin's barbaric war continues to rage in Ukraine, creating carnage that has driven Biden to label his Russian counterpart a war criminal.

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### **13. Congressional spending bill boosts military outlay in Pacific**

Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Mar. 21 (N/A), Pg. B4 | Kevin Knodell

Congress has passed a fiscal year 2022 appropriation measure that includes billions of dollars in funding for military projects in Hawaii and the Pacific.

The bill includes over \$700 million for response efforts to contamination of the Navy's water system by fuel from its Red Hill storage facility, \$235 million for military construction projects throughout the islands, and billions to fund the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, a Pentagon project to counter China's increasing military power.

Approved earlier this month by both the Senate and House of Representatives, the measure awaits President Joe Biden's signature.

The Red Hill funding includes \$686 million to continue supporting displaced service members, civilians and their families as well as \$50 million to the Navy for planning and design of future water treatment and distribution infrastructure projects to address the Red Hill drinking water crisis.

It also includes \$5 million to continue improving the safety of underground fuel storage tanks at Red Hill as the Navy works to defuel the facility, and requires the Pentagon give Congress a report within 90 days that would identify future military construction and remediation requirements for Red Hill's permanent shutdown.

"These funds are in addition to the \$403 million in emergency funding we obtained in another bill we passed just weeks ago, bringing Congress' total funding for all aspects of Red Hill in the current fiscal year alone to over \$1.1 billion," U.S. Rep. Ed Case, D-Hawaii, said Monday in a news release. "But billions more will be required to complete all aspects of the cleanup, stabilization, de-fueling and closing of Red Hill and the relocation of its fuel and build fuel storage capacity elsewhere."

The Red Hill water crisis has strained relations between military leaders and lawmakers. However, Hawaii's congressional delegation has continued to push for boosting military budgets and operations in Hawaii and the Pacific.

Hawaii is the headquarters of U.S. Indo-Pacific command, which oversees all operations in the Pacific Ocean, much of the Indian Ocean and parts of the Arctic region.

INDOPACOM's top officer, Adm. John Aquilino, told Congress last week that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been "a real wake-up" on the possibility of a major conflict in the region.

“I see actions that give me concern that the timeline is shrinking, and the mission that I’ve been given is to be prepared for it,” Aquilino told lawmakers.

He cited Beijing’s crackdown on Hong Kong and China’s actions in setting up positions in disputed territory in the South China Sea and skirmishing with Indian forces in disputed territory along the Chinese-Indian border.

The bill includes \$75 million to continue development of Homeland Defense Radar-Hawaii, along with \$19 million for advance planning and design efforts to support its construction.

The HDR-H has been a controversial project. Originally approved in 2018, the Pentagon has repeatedly tried to defund the program, citing a desire to explore alternatives and the potential difficulties placing it in Hawaii, while Hawaii’s congressional delegation has continued efforts to fund it.

“Given the prominence of Hawaii’s military and strategic value, Hawai’i has become far more of a target to those who wish to do us harm. The need for a fixed, persistent and comprehensive missile defense cannot be understated,” Case said. “The Homeland Defense Radar Hawaii is the solution. It is regarded by the Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command as vital and appropriate.”

Congress also appropriated \$65 million to upgrade Marine Corps Base Hawaii’s aging electrical system. The base in Kaneohe is at the center of an ambitious restructuring of the Marine Corps. The Marines this month officially activated their first littoral regiment at the base, which will focus on amphibious and missile warfare, and is expected serve as a blueprint for reorganizing the entire service.

The bill puts \$51 million toward construction of the West Loch Naval Magazine Annex. The Army has made plans to move its munitions from its current storage facilities at the Navy’s Lualualei Annex near Waianae to the Navy’s West Loch Annex.

That move has been controversial, with the military facing pushback from Ewa Beach residents who believe it would put stockpiles of explosive munitions too close to residential areas. Army and Navy officials have argued that keeping the munitions there will be safer and more efficient than at the aging facilities in Lualualei.

The bill also includes \$59 million in the Pacific Defense Initiative for INDO-PACOM to support planning and design efforts to advance future construction projects throughout the region. Congress created the PDI in the 2021 fiscal year as a means of channeling funding into specifically countering China.

The PDI funding also includes \$80 million for the missile defense programs on Guam, twice the amount the Biden administration had included in its budget request.

During a March 9 congressional hearing, Aquilino told lawmakers he was concerned about the proliferation of hypersonic weapons and “the speed and pace they are showing up” in China’s arsenal and the threat they could pose to Guam, in particular.

“The area in the Indo-Pacific is expansive — half the globe and a lot of it water,” Aquilino told lawmakers. “About \$11 billion worth of construction, as we work through our posturing of our forces ... will end up on Guam, and we have to protect it.”

Guam is home to the new Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, which is under construction and is expected to become a duty station for approximately 5,000 Marines.

Hawaii companies have been involved in building the base. Last year the Navy awarded the Hensel Phelps-Shimizu Joint Venture of Honolulu an initial \$53.9 million for the construction of what will be the base’s headquarters building.

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## **EUROPE**

### **14. Russia may not stop with Ukraine – NATO looks to its weakest link**

Reuters, Mar. 21 (1554) | Sabine Siebold and Robin Emmott

ON BOARD THE SUPPLY SHIP ELBE, Latvia -- Hours after Russian missiles first struck Ukrainian cities on Feb. 24, German naval commander Terje Schmitt-Eliassen received notice to sail five warships under his command to the former Soviet Republic of Latvia to help protect the most vulnerable part of NATO’s eastern flank.

The hasty dispatch was part of Germany’s scramble to send “everything that can swim out to sea,” as the navy’s top boss phrased it, to defend an area military strategists have long deemed the weakest point for the alliance. The vessels’ sudden departure demonstrated how NATO, and Germany, were propelled by Russia’s invasion into a new reality and face what officials, diplomats, intelligence officials and security sources agree is the most serious threat to the alliance’s collective security since the Cold War.

Schmitt-Eliassen, who is based in the German Baltic port of Kiel, spoke to Reuters on the flight deck of the supply ship Elbe. Moored next to it, within sight of the church towers of the Latvian capital Riga, were a Latvian and a Lithuanian ship, and vessels and sailors from nations including Denmark, Belgium and Estonia were due to join the group later.

A total of 12 NATO warships with some 600 sailors on board are due to start a mine-clearing operation in the coming days.

On Feb. 16, when intelligence showed an invasion was imminent, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called the current era a “new normal.”

It looks a lot like a return to the past. Founded in 1949 to defend against the Soviet threat, the NATO alliance is facing a return to mechanised warfare, a huge increase in defence spending, and potentially a new Iron Curtain falling across Europe. After struggling to find a new post-Cold War role, countering terrorism following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States in 2001 and a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, NATO is back defending against its original nemesis.

But there’s a difference. China, which split with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, has refused to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow calls a “special military operation.” And the old Cold War blueprints no longer work, as NATO has expanded east since the 1990s, bringing in former Soviet states including the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 2004.

In early February, China and Russia issued a powerful joint statement rejecting NATO’s expansion in Europe and challenging the Western-led international order.

Direct confrontation between NATO and Russia could touch off a global conflict.

“We have reached a turning point,” said retired German general Hans-Lothar Domroese, who led one of the highest NATO commands in the Dutch town of Brunssum until 2016.

“We have China and Russia acting in concert now, boldly challenging the United States for global leadership ... In the past, we have been saying deterrence works. Now we have to ask ourselves: Is deterrence enough?”

This is underscored by Schmitt-Eliassen’s mission – a regular exercise that was brought forward by Russia’s invasion.

The issue is access. Before the Soviet Union was dissolved, NATO could have moved to contain the Soviet Union by blocking the western entrance of the Baltic Sea. That would seal in the Soviet Union’s Baltic Fleet to prevent it from reaching the North Sea where its warships could attack U.S. supply convoys.

Today, NATO’s and Russia’s roles have been reversed: An emboldened Moscow could encircle NATO’s new Baltic members, and cut them off from the alliance. If a new Iron Curtain is to fall, NATO needs to ensure its members are not behind it.

The three tiny countries, with a combined population of some six million people, have a single overland link to the alliance’s main territory. A corridor of some 65 km (40 miles) is squeezed between the heavily armed Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on the west and Belarus on the east.

So Schmitt-Eliassen's goal is to keep the waterway open, as a supply line also for non-NATO states Finland and Sweden. Millions of tons of old mines, ammunition and chemical weapons are believed to lie on the bed of the shallow Baltic Sea, a legacy of two World Wars.

Mines – whether old and unexploded or freshly laid – can have an impact beyond destruction, Schmitt-Eliassen said. A mine sighting, or rumoured sighting, can close harbours for days while the area is swept. If that happens in the Baltic, there's a risk "the supermarket shelves will remain empty."

Even commercial ships can become a military factor in the narrow western entrance to the Baltic, he said, referring to scenarios such as the March 2021 incident when the Ever Given container ship blocked traffic through the Suez Canal for days.

"You cannot blame anybody for this (kind of incident), it is not attributable," the chief of the German navy, vice-admiral Jan Christian Kaack, told Reuters.

#### NEXT TARGET?

Crucial for the Baltics is the land link between Kaliningrad and Belarus. Called the Suwalki Gap, its seizure would cut the Baltic states off.

"Putin could quickly seize the Suwalki Gap," said Domroese, the retired German general, adding this will not happen today or tomorrow, "but it could happen in a few years."

Putin's recent actions have not all been predictable. He put Russia's nuclear forces on high alert on Feb. 28, with rhetoric that Stoltenberg told Reuters is "dangerous, it's reckless."

The Kremlin did not respond to a request for comment. Putin says Russia's concerns expressed over three decades about NATO's expansion were dismissed by the West, and post-Soviet Russia was humiliated after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

He says NATO, as an instrument of the United States, was building up its military on Ukraine's territory in a way that threatened Russia.

On March 11, Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin the West was beefing up military forces close to Russia's Western borders. Putin asked Shoigu to prepare a report on how to respond.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelinskiy has warned that the Baltic states will be Russia's next target. The Baltic Sea is a large and busy shipping market for containers and other cargo, connecting Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia with the rest of the world.

It “has gone from being a normal peaceful area, to an area where you tread carefully,” said Peter Sand, chief analyst at the air and ocean freight rate benchmarking platform Xeneta. With demand and logistics disrupted, the fees shippers pay to move cargoes from Hamburg to Saint Petersburg and Kaliningrad are down 15% since the invasion, according to Xeneta data.

For almost 25 years, the West believed Russia could be tamed by diplomacy and trade to maintain stability and security in Europe. In 1997, NATO and Russia signed a “founding act” that was designed to build trust and limit both sides’ force presence in eastern Europe.

The alliance also sought to build a partnership with Russia, which took part in NATO exercises in the Baltic as recently as 2012, according to retired U.S. Admiral James Foggo, who commanded U.S. and NATO fleets in Europe for almost a decade until 2020.

After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, NATO created small, multinational combat units in Poland and the three Baltic states, which serve as a forward presence to deter Moscow. But the force numbers are designed not to violate the “founding act,” which has hindered NATO’s ability to move troops into the Baltics and Poland on a permanent basis.

“We all thought that there wouldn’t be an enemy anymore,” Admiral Rob Bauer, the chairman of NATO’s military committee, told Reuters. “We now are confronted with a nation that is showing that it is aggressive, that it has forces that we thought were not going to be used anymore.”

While the numbers are changing all the time, the number of troops under the command of NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR) Tod Wolters has more than doubled since Russia’s invasion, to around 40,000, according to NATO diplomats and officials.

NATO allies have also moved five aircraft carriers into European waters, in Norway and the Mediterranean, increased the number of warplanes in the air in NATO airspace and more than doubled the size of the combat units in the Baltics and Poland. Host nation forces number some 290,000 in the region, but mainly under national control.

## GERMANY’S MOMENT

The biggest shift in NATO’s “new normal,” diplomats, former officials and experts say, is Germany’s reversal of a decades-long policy of low defence spending. Held back by guilt over its wartime past and resulting pacifism among its population, Germany resisted pressure from the United States to increase this to a NATO target of 2% of economic output. France and Britain both meet the goal, but Germany’s defence spending was only 1.5% in 2021.

With ageing equipment and personnel shortages, Berlin had been seen for decades as a weak partner because of its reluctance to send troops to combat operations.

But on Feb. 27, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Berlin would now meet the 2% target - and promised a 100 billion euros (\$110 billion) injection into the military.

Germany has been concerned by Moscow's presence in the Baltic Sea for a while. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Berlin forged an alliance of the western navies on the Baltic Sea.

"We simply had to take note of the fact that - whether we like it or not - we are the 900 pound gorilla in the ring," said navy chief Kaack. "The way we look up to the United States as a smaller partner, that's how our partners here look at us."

Soon after Russia's invasion, Berlin announced it would buy 35 Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets from the United States to replace its ageing Tornado fleet.

#### NO MORE CONSTRAINTS

The United States is also moving more military equipment into Europe, including vehicles and weapons to Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Poland that could be used immediately by newly arriving U.S. troops, rather than waiting weeks for tanks and trucks to be shipped from U.S. bases.

Douglas Lute, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, told Reuters that NATO's "new normal" should be a step up from what the alliance agreed after Crimea. It is likely to be set down in writing in NATO's official master strategy document, known as its "Strategic Concept," which will be agreed at the next NATO summit in Madrid in June.

"You'll see a push forward of combat capability to both reassure eastern allies and to make an even more prominent deterrence message to Russia," Lute said.

He said NATO's existing multinational combat units in the Baltics and Poland - originally some 5,000 troops in total - should be significantly increased in size. He said he expected "more sophisticated air defence systems postured forward," including Patriot and other systems in the Baltics and Poland.

And he expects more U.S. weapons and military equipment to be pre-positioned in Europe. More NATO troops could be stationed in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary.

The U.S. delegation to NATO declined to comment. Its envoy, Julianne Smith, said on March 15 the alliance was making commitments to "have more force posture in Central and Eastern Europe and develop new policy tools."

But just as in the Cold War NATO will need to keep communicating with Russia to avoid risking accidents with potentially devastating consequences.

“NATO has some responsibility to do more than just trying to keep Russia out,” said Adam Thomson, a former British ambassador to NATO and now director of the European Leadership Network think tank in London. “It’s about the management of an unavoidable strategic instability.”

*--Additional reporting by Jonathan Saul and Guy Faulconbridge in London*

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### **15. EU nations circle the wagons in new ‘Strategic Compass’**

Defense News Online, Mar. 21 (1753) | Sebastian Sprenger

WASHINGTON -- The defense ministers of European Union nations adopted the long-awaited “Strategic Compass” document on Monday, presenting a plan to beef up the bloc’s defenses in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Officials had hastened to rewrite the document since the war began in late February, replacing the diplomatic approach where a would-be adversary is unnamed with plain language painting Russia as an aggressor against its neighbor and as a threat to Europe.

“We aim to become a more assertive security and defense actor by enabling more robust, rapid and decisive action, including for the resilience of the Union and our mutual assistance and solidarity,” the document read.

It formalizes several initiatives aimed at breathing operational nimbleness into an institution built on lengthy decision-making processes — albeit all in due time. For example, member states want to hammer out by 2023 the “practical modalities” for forming mini-coalitions of the willing, consisting of subsets of members that would deploy to hot spots on behalf of the bloc and under EU Council oversight.

Officials have long eyed that mechanism, hiding in plain sight in Article 44 of the EU Treaty, as a justification for short-circuiting the unanimous consent principle during crises. But discussions so far have been largely academic, though French officials indicated they would move the topic along during Paris’ six-month turn at the helm of the Council of the European Union that began in January.

The document also stresses the European Union’s mutual-assistance clause, which obligates members to aid “by all means in their power” those members facing armed aggression. Per the Strategic Compass, EU nations will “continue to invest” in capabilities toward that end.

Also part of the Strategic Compass is the plan of creating a 5,000-strong “EU Rapid Deployment Capability” allowing the “swift deployment of a modular force ... in a non-permissive environment” by 2025. EU officials said they would develop “operational scenarios” to guide the formation’s future employment during 2022, and begin regular live-fire exercises in 2023 to prepare its forces.

German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht raised some eyebrows ahead of Monday’s ministerial meeting in Brussels by claiming Berlin is offering to provide the entire force of 5,000 for the inaugural year. But as German news site Der Spiegel reported, officers were surprised behind the scenes, and wondered how the Bundeswehr would deliver that amount of personnel plus heavy equipment.

The Defence Ministry eventually clarified that Berlin would contribute the “heart” of the envisioned formation, a battlegroup of roughly 1,500-2,000 forces.

The Strategic Compass also also highlights the bloc’s growing relationship with NATO and, above all else, the continent’s continued reliance on the United States.

“To uphold the international rules-based order, we will continue to strengthen our relations with partners and like-minded countries in the UN, NATO and G7,” the document read. “In this context, the United States remain the EU’s staunchest and most important strategic partner and are a global power contributing to peace, security, stability and democracy on our continent.”

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## **16. The Next Two Weeks Could Determine the Fate of Ukraine**

*Russian military expert Michael Kofman lays out why Putin’s invasion hasn’t succeeded yet — but why it still might*

Politico Online, Mar. 21 (1731) | Paul McLeary and David Brown

After the initial shock of Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, the biggest surprise of the war may be how badly the Russian army has performed.

What at first seemed like a certain rout by one of the world’s largest armies has turned into something between a slog and an embarrassment for Moscow.

What did experts get wrong — and what does it mean for the next phase of the war? Michael Kofman, one of the most prominent U.S. authorities on the Russian military, told POLITICO in a lengthy interview that he and other experts “generally overestimated the Russian military, which is good. It’s very good.” And, he adds, “we really underestimated the Ukrainian military.”

Over the past several weeks, Kofman has become a go-to source of fast-breaking analysis and a Twitter phenomenon — a former expert at the National Defense University, and currently the research program director

in the Russia Studies Program for the Virginia-based think tank CNA, with an unusually granular understanding of Russian equipment and tactics.

He has some cautions. One, it's too soon to count Putin out. Initial battle successes don't win a war, and in fact the most critical juncture of the war will arrive soon, in about two weeks, when a burned-out Russian military will need to mount a major resupply effort in order to keep going.

And two, he's careful to note that social media is giving us a distorted view of what's actually taking place on the ground, with Ukraine eager to tout any triumph, and Russia intentionally quiet.

In a conversation conducted by Zoom on Friday, he outlined what military analysts have learned about Russia from the conflict so far, why the war has been so surprising — and why time is likely on Putin's side.

“Wars of attrition come down to manpower and materiel and Russia has both,” he says. “I’m a lot less optimistic about Ukraine’s prospects in that regard.”

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

*POLITICO: What about the Russian performance in Ukraine over the past three weeks has surprised you?*

*Michael Kofman:* What initially surprised me about the invasion is that it started more as a strategic raid. The Russians clearly believed that in three days they could conduct a regime change and get Ukraine to surrender without fighting. Looking back at it, they did not seriously plan for the kind of military operation that would be required to invade the largest country in Europe and take on a country with a sizable conventional military like Ukraine.

The initial operation was clearly a failure — that was self-evident a few days in — because of how they tried to put it together. They didn't tell the troops, and didn't prepare psychologically or materially, and as a result it was a debacle at the outset. We didn't see an initial air campaign and we saw a very limited strike campaign. Since then, they've tried to put together a real military operation, the thrust of which is going for the capital as the center of gravity, trying to bypass major cities and take critical infrastructure, and try to encircle Ukrainian forces in the Donbas in the eastern part of Ukraine.

So I think their progress has been pretty sluggish and it came at high cost, but they have been making steady advances in some areas.

*POLITICO: For a war that is playing out on social media, there are major gaps in our knowledge of what the actual fighting on the ground looks like.*

*Kofman:* The first important thing to say is that we don't actually know much about Russian casualties, and we know far less about Ukrainian ones, so we really have almost no idea what's happening with the Ukrainian military. Here's the reality of this conflict right now as it's playing out on social media: This is like watching two boxers in a match. We only see one of them and all the footage is being edited and curated by their opponent. That's the perspective I see on this war on social media, and on the mainstream media outlets. It's unfortunately a limited outlook on what's happening, and so it's hard to assess the reality on the ground.

What is clear is that the Russian military doesn't stand a good chance of achieving its initial political aims, and that the Russian leadership has had to revise their war aims substantially towards a settlement since regime change is not an option. Now they're just trying to put themselves in the best possible position for that negotiation, and the Russian military probably only has a couple of weeks left in terms of combat effectiveness left inside Ukraine.

Frankly, the same is true for Ukrainian forces. I can't guess what their losses are, but they're not in any better shape. So one of two things is likely to happen over the next couple of weeks: We will either see a significant operational pause and some kind of ceasefire that will lead to a settlement, or that pause will introduce a rearming period where Russia will introduce a number of units that they're bringing up to the border right now. They have more forces, they have more materiel. Their losses are significant, but their rate of attrition as a share of the force is likely not as bad as Ukraine's. But we don't know. What matters is less the losses and more the losses as an actual share of the country's military capacity. So Ukraine may be doing well, but nonetheless they're still losing significant amounts of materiel and equipment.

*POLITICO:* *What are the possibilities in the near term?*

*Kofman:* The one thing I think we can tell right now is that it's not possible for the Russian military to take Kyiv. The best they can try is to encircle it in the coming weeks. It's not likely there'll be successful pushing west towards Odesa, they just don't have the forces for it.

The one front where they could achieve some success is in further compressing Ukrainian forces in the Donbas in the east, and they're trying to push two pincers to encircle them, which was pretty predictable at the outset.

And sure enough, here we are. We have two pincers coming toward Kyiv trying to circle the capital, and we have two pincer movements trying to circle the large percentage of the Ukrainian military in the east. That's probably where Ukrainian forces are in their most precarious position right now.

The Russian military probably has one more set of offensives left in it before they're really exhausted and become combat ineffective, and then you'll likely see a series of small, staggered attacks and counterattacks that will yield no significant changes in territory.

*POLITICO:* *When you say they've got maybe two weeks left, is that just with the 150,000-person invasion force without any reinforcements, or even with resupply and reinforcements?*

*Kofman:* I think they need to take a pause to reorganize. I suspect the reason we haven't seen them make substantial advances is because they've had setbacks and have taken a pause and they might try to make one more push to see how far they can get along some of these axes of advance. You can't predict the churn of battle, but I suspect that they have a couple more weeks left before they're going to have to make major shifts in this operation.

The Russians had already made significant adjustments by the fourth day of the war once it became clear that the regime change operation was a failure. The strategic raid on the Hostomel military airport near Kyiv that first day didn't work, and they got a bloody nose there. Now they had to settle in for a real war with a real military power in a very large country and slug it out.

You have essentially three different fronts playing out, and you see that the Russian military has really struggled to focus itself on what the hell it is trying to accomplish in the war. Is it the encirclement of the capital, or is it the encirclement of Ukrainian forces in the eastern part of Ukraine and taking Donbas? Is it the march to Odesa, which is the very opposite direction from Donbas? If I only have the forces for one, I really should pick.

As these operations play out, the question remains: What objective are they actually going for? Why are they not concentrating the force behind it to accomplish any one objective? To the outside observer [it's an open question] what is driving a military strategy that's diffusing Russian resources and not allowing them to achieve positive correlations of forces and sustained advances.

Somebody at the top — which is only one person in Russia — is setting political objectives that continue to be unachievable, and they've gone from regime change to attaining other political objectives, which are also not achievable with this force based on the performance they've had.

Maybe if they add more forces it would be achievable, or maybe if they performed much better it would be achievable. But as a military analyst looking at the current picture, they've really diffused their effort and that's problematic. So you have to try and figure out what is the theory of victory in Russian military operations and what position they are trying to put themselves in over the next couple of weeks if they want to achieve a better settlement, and it looks like they're still going for too many things at the same time.

*POLITICO:* *On the resupply matter, do you see many indications that troops and vehicles and other machinery of war are getting ready to deploy from Russia to relieve any of these units or is that just totally opaque to us?*

*Kofman:* They have been bringing units in from other parts of the country. We know they're on the way. We know that they have more units they can flow into this fight. The challenge they're going to have is that the units they're bringing in are probably not going to be as effective, because the forces they sent in at the beginning were the best troops Russia has. So these units will help fill the space and maybe consolidate some territory, but they're most likely not going to be as good as what they've already thrown into the fight and gotten chewed up.

If they choose, they can mobilize the country behind this war and press more people into service and pass special laws that give them access to greater manpower and start using reserve equipment they have in warehouses. And if it then gets into a war of attrition between Russia and Ukraine, it'll be a much bloodier war. It'll be dragged out. And that's where I'm a lot less sanguine about Ukraine's prospects, I'll be honest. Wars of attrition come down to manpower and materiel and Russia has both. I'm a lot less optimistic about Ukraine's prospects in that regard.

*POLITICO: So while Ukraine has committed everything to the fight, Russia still has troops and equipment in reserve. There could come a point here where quantity outweighs quality, and the Russians just keep coming. Do you think the sanctions are going to affect the Russian defense industrial base at all?*

*Kofman: BMPs [Russian armored personnel carriers] don't run on money. The sanctions are not going to affect the forces deployed forward right now. That's the reality of it. As long as Putin feels that he has public support for this war, which he does have outside of the cities, he can keep it going. He doesn't have great options otherwise, unless there's a deal that allows him to withdraw from Ukraine and claim victory. But the options for him are not great at this point.*

*POLITICO: Russia has used its best troops in the fight, including special forces, and they've run into trouble. The most famous case is the Russian airborne assault on the Hostomel military airport outside of Kyiv on the first night of the war, when the Russians took it, but were quickly outnumbered and driven off.*

*Kofman: It shows you how much in war and conflict can be contingent. Their airborne unit failed to hold on to the air base long enough, and the Ukrainians I think responded a lot faster than they expected. The Russians thought they were going to reinforce that unit, but they couldn't get more troops to reinforce them on time because they couldn't hold the airfield.*

*POLITICO: And then they were stuck.*

*Kofman: If they had held the airfield, they might have gotten reinforced because the whole point was to quickly build up airborne units outside of Kyiv and get them into the city. That's how they thought they were going to do it. And then within 72 hours get [Volodymyr] Zelensky to either flee or surrender. That was very clearly the concept of the operation. That's why they went for this air base at the opening of the war. This was a regime change operation.*

We don't know why exactly it failed, we have to be honest. I see a lot of criticism of the operation, but which part failed? Was it the ground reinforcements, was it the airborne reinforcements? Was it because the Ukrainians had much thicker air defenses around Kyiv than the Russians expected? Or is it because Ukrainian National Guard units reacted faster than the Russian military expected to retake the airport? I don't know. I'm being frank with you.

*POLITICO: And to go back to the eastern part of Ukraine where the Russian pincer movement is trying to encircle a large part of the Ukrainian army in Donbas, how close are the Russians to cutting off that force?*

*Kofman: Hard to tell, but they are making a steady rate of progress in those fights. I think they're probably going to take control of Mariupol, probably going to make some more progress towards encirclement of Sumy, but I don't see them taking any major cities beyond that.*

It's not a war about cities, anyway. The whole concept originally was clearly to avoid major cities. Go for key towns that are junctions and hubs and secure ground lines of communication and try to fight towards objectives that allow them to pick up rail links so that they can resupply by rail. That's why the campaign in the north is so challenging, because you have to truck everything from Belarus down south to Kyiv, and that's why the campaign in the south was a lot easier. Because once they took Mariupol and Kherson they can direct rail supplies into those cities and then use those supply depots for further operations.

*POLITICO: As this grinds on, what is the potential for this to turn into a long Ukrainian insurgency?*

*Kofman: Right now, Ukrainians are doing a pretty good job ambushing Russia supply columns, but it varies area by area. There are some areas where the Russians have a lot more actual control than others, so it's a very uneven picture of the battlefield.*

*POLITICO: Are there any indications that the Russians seem to be adjusting their tactics with respect to just that counterinsurgency aspect? Are they getting smarter about any of this?*

*Kofman: I think the Russian military got a lot better about that after the second week in how they run convoys and in general, but it's very hard to get around certain basic aspects of warfare. Urban settings dramatically favor the defender. If opponents choose to fight in smaller squad-sized units, and they're well armed, it's very difficult for a combined arms maneuver formation to enter the city. Most of their advantages in density and maneuver vanish right in the city and most of these fights become small fights. So it doesn't matter whether or not you have a battalion or regiment because these are all small-level fights and units can keep getting ambushed in these various pitched battles in the city. The downside for defenders fighting in urban terrain means the destruction of the city over time. There's no way to fight in a city without destroying parts of the city.*

*POLITICO: You talked about the two boxers and one side is putting out the information. Do you think this has created a false sense of how poorly the Russians are actually doing? Are people now at the point where they're underestimating the Russians because you see all these Ukrainian TikTok videos making them look bad?*

*Kofman: In general, yes. I think that it has painted a fair picture of the many problems the Russian military has had and the losses it has experienced, but it has also painted a caricature picture of what's really happening in the war, and how we should understand Russian military performance. And because the information environment*

we're operating in is not an objective information environment, we are consuming desired information and in practice feeding it to each other.

Russia has basically ceded the information environment because they tried to keep the war secret. And now they're trying to brand it, but they focus only on their own domestic audience because they do not care about contesting the information environment writ large since most of the world is united in condemning the Russian invasion. What would be the purpose of them trying to contest the information environment for a general global audience, and what would be their likelihood of success? I assess as close as nil to none. So I'm not surprised by their decision.

We must in some form recognize that we're an information environment that is very heavily dominated by one side that is doing really well with it. But that also gives us a very particular perspective on the war.

We can say that we generally overestimated the Russian military, which is good. It's much better than underestimating and being surprised. More importantly, we can say fairly that we really underestimated the Ukrainian military.

One, we didn't know that much about it. Two, it is a very young army. Three, we supplied this military with Western equipment and kit having little idea how it would work out. Would that aggregate their success, would they distribute and employ it effectively? There was no way to know the answers to those questions. So the honest answer is we grossly underestimated the Ukrainian military. That's probably the bigger takeaway.

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## **17. 'The only thing Putin understands is strength': U.S. aircraft carrier flexes muscle in the Med**

Politico Europe, Mar. 21 (2306) | Hannah Roberts

NORTHERN IONIAN SEA -- The flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman was covered with jet engine gas vapor as F-18 Super Hornets rocketed into the sky one after the other. Watching takeoffs and landings at close quarters "is one of the most dangerous things you will ever do," claimed my minder, an officer with 28 years of experience in the Navy.

In the sound and fury of the flight deck, this didn't feel like hyperbole: The experience was jarring. Despite ear-defenders, the growl of the throttle from an aircraft that travels at 1.8 times the speed of sound makes your chest cage rattle and your heart race. More than once we were yelled at with drill-sergeant intensity to "GET BEHIND THE LINE!" as aircraft constantly taxied, took off and landed around us. Welcome to the danger zone.

While the high tempo was business as usual for the crew of the USS Truman, the backdrop, both geographically and politically, was not: Accustomed to the Pacific Ocean and the seas of the Middle East, the USS Truman's strike group are now in the northern Ionian Sea, its fighter jets and radar planes patrolling NATO's eastern borders and looking east, to a Ukraine now under invasion from Russian armed forces.

Since the invasion almost a month ago, these jets have flown more than 75 patrol missions across NATO's eastern flank up to the Ukraine border, from the Truman. The so-called Enhanced Air Policing mission is part of NATO's Assurance Measures introduced in 2014, after Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, and is aimed at defending NATO airspace, preventing incursions by Russians.

The 20-story nuclear-powered Truman is the flagship of a strike group, a mobile fighting force of up to 10 destroyers and submarines, 8 aircraft squadrons and a missile cruiser that can move anywhere in the world's seas, launching missile or air strikes or merely providing visible proof of American resolve.

As a mobile U.S. airbase, the Truman will be on the front line if NATO decides to enforce a no-fly zone, or should the worst happen and NATO forces be drawn into a direct conflict. "The role of Truman, with other allies, is to deter Russians from further aggression and to be on constant standby for orders that might be given from our president or from other leaders around the world for the protection of Ukraine and the people of Ukraine," Secretary of the U.S. Navy Carlos Del Toro told POLITICO during a visit to the carrier.

Since the war on terror began 20 years ago, U.S. Navy carriers have spent most of their deployments in the Middle East. More recently, as tensions with China have increased, there has been a "pivot" in the U.S.'s focus toward the Pacific, to counter the perceived security threat presented by Chinese ambitions in the region. But with the invasion of Ukraine, the center of gravity has, for now at least, shifted to Eastern Europe, and the strike group is now stationed in the Mediterranean.

Because of Russian pressure, there are more U.S. warships in the Mediterranean than ever before, said Del Toro. "There are numerous Russian ships and subs in the Mediterranean today and that's why it's important for NATO to have an equal presence, to deter them," he said, adding: "The only thing Putin understands is strength."

The mission is about demonstrating not just to Russia but to the U.S.'s NATO allies that, despite the lack of willingness to engage militarily on behalf of Ukraine, it is a different matter when it comes to countries inside NATO. After the Donald Trump years, when NATO faced an existential crisis, Truman's presence in the Mediterranean, on a NATO mission, is also a physical manifestation of President Joe Biden's message to NATO allies that America is back.

For Lieutenant Adam Wawro, one of the F-18 pilots, the mission is technically similar to hundreds he has been on during his five years of training. But it has a symbolic value — sending a message to both the Russians and allies that NATO is real.

"We are there to show NATO's resolve, show we are there for them with more than just words, with actions. That we are going to be there." They are showing that NATO "actually exists, that it's more than just a number of ideas on paper," he added.

This return to multilateralism after the wilderness years is reflected in the approach taken by U.S. forces to the Ukrainian conflict, which has obliged NATO forces to cooperate more significantly than in the last 25 years. “We are working at a level with NATO allies that most of the folks on board have never seen,” said Lt. Commander Shawn Ekland, a spokesman for the carrier group. “Usually we would zorch [sic] through the Med to the Middle East then zorch [sic] back, It’s very unusual to hang around here.”

Last week the carrier converged with French carrier FS Charles de Gaulle and Italian carrier Cavour. “They were operating as a combined unit. That’s a big deal,” said Ekland.

Following training with the Romanians in March, pilots involved in the Enhanced Air Policing mission are able to refuel in the air from NATO partners, which doubles the time they are able to stay on mission and builds capacity for the eventuality of fighting together seamlessly.

Captain Patrick Hourigan, commander of the battle group’s airwing, said: “We meet in the sky, we know where to meet, how to talk to them, how much gas to expect. We do this often enough it becomes standard practice.”

What goes unsaid is that as much as this is a show of force for the benefit of Russia, and perhaps China, signaling that the U.S. is willing to back up sanctions with military positions and reassure European allies of American resolve post-Trump, the show is also a salutary reminder to the Europeans to ramp up their spending in their own backyard. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has pressed Europe to do more to police its own neighborhood. And to be fair, European resolve has stiffened. Mindful of the botched U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan last year and conscious of the risk of a Trump presidency 2.0, European leaders realize that they can no longer lean so heavily on Washington to defend democracy.

Those on board deflected questions about the wider political nuances of the mission, more concerned with the immediate urgency of the conflict. In their day-to-day missions, the Ukraine conflict has created “more motivation, a greater sense of purpose, that we are actually out here for a very serious reason,” said Wawro.

Having a birdseye view of the war has brought home the reality of the Russian threat, he said: “We are right there on the border, where it’s all happening. We can see the fronts. We can see a lot.” He added: “It’s pretty humbling.”

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## RUSSIA

### **18. Ukraine refuses to surrender Mariupol**

Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A1 | David L. Stern, Missy Ryan, Dan Rosenzweig-Ziff and Ellen Nakashima

MUKACHEVO, UKRAINE -- Russia's assault on Ukraine grew more destructive Monday, as civilians faced deadly obstacles in their attempts to flee the besieged city of Mariupol and a staggering flow of displaced Ukrainians strained neighboring countries.

Ukrainian and Russian forces battled in the streets of the strategic southern city, as Moscow attempted on the 26th day of its offensive to lay claim to an area that would cement its control of the Black Sea coast from the Russian-controlled Crimean Peninsula to the Russian border. The fate of Mariupol remained in doubt Monday, as Ukrainians refused to give up in the face of withering Russian attacks.

Human rights groups have documented what they say are brutal tactics by Russian forces in the city, depriving residents of water, food and medicine and forcing them to shelter in basements. Because cellphone communication has been cut off since early March, only incomplete reports of residents' ordeal have filtered to the outside world. Two Associated Press journalists who had been in Mariupol detailed in a story Monday how they witnessed horrific scenes of children dying and homes and businesses being shelled; the journalists were rushed out after they said authorities told them the Russians were trying to hunt them down.

The European Union's top foreign policy official called the Russian operation in Mariupol, which has included the bombing of medical facilities and sites marked as shelters for children, a "massive" war crime. "The city will be completely destroyed," Josep Borrell told reporters in Brussels.

As Mariupol residents continue to flee, a car carrying children came under fire, Oleksandr Starukh, governor of the nearby Zaporizhzhia region, said Monday. It was one of a series of incidents that he said left minors in serious condition. He said more than 20 buses were attempting to transit negotiated humanitarian corridors.

"Everything will have to be answered for. For every child. For every life," Starukh said in a message on Telegram.

Addressing Ukrainians in a video address on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelensky praised the bravery of his people and condemned Russian troops, who are struggling to advance across different fronts, as "slaves of propaganda."

"During this invasion, heroes have constantly declared themselves among millions of our people. Once ordinary Ukrainians, and now fighters. Men and women who stand up for our state," he said. "Stand up so that the enemy does not believe that this is a reality. But we will make them believe."

Zelensky, who has sought to both rally his people and to obtain greater foreign support, referenced an incident in which gunfire erupted during a protest of Russia's capture of the southern city of Kherson, blaming Russian forces for the gunfire against residents. Video of the incident - which was verified by The Washington Post - showed a chaotic scene in which gunfire and explosions were heard and clouds of smoke appeared amid a group of demonstrators in Svobody Square.

"Kherson, hold on! We will never forget these shots," Zelensky said.

In Kyiv, a massive explosion hit a shopping mall, killing at least eight people and providing further evidence of Russia's intent to capture the capital city. American officials said Russian forces are stalled about nine miles to the northwest and about 18 miles to the east of Kyiv.

A U.S. defense official told reporters that Russia is now locked in a "near-desperate" attempt to accelerate its progress in Ukraine, having so far managed to seize only smaller cities such as Kherson, Berdyansk and Melitopol, instead of prizes such as Kharkiv, Mariupol and Kyiv.

Facing logistical challenges and Ukrainian resistance, the official said, the Kremlin has resorted to using long-range shelling and missiles to bombard cities from a distance, making the war "much more dangerous for civilians."

After a spate of initial attempts to broker safe passage for fleeing residents failed amid fighting, thousands of Ukrainians have been able to leave via humanitarian corridors. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said in a Telegram message that 8,000 people had been evacuated via such routes Monday, mostly from Kyiv and Mariupol.

But fleeing - like staying - remains a potentially perilous prospect for millions of families across the country. The war has unleashed an enormous wave of refugees, prompting 10 million people to flee their homes within Ukraine or to countries across Europe and beyond, the United Nations said this week. The figure amounts to a quarter of Ukraine's prewar population.

More than 3 million people have crossed into neighboring countries, including more than 2 million to Poland alone, fueling concerns from Polish officials that local services and accommodations could soon be overwhelmed.

The constant flow has stretched the capacity of refugee centers and exhausted the ranks of Polish volunteers. Ukrainian refugees are lining up for hours to obtain the equivalent of a Social Security number so they can access Polish government services and find work.

Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski said 300,000 people had arrived in Warsaw in the past three weeks, around the same level that flowed into all of Europe each month during a refugee crisis in 2015. He said refugees needed to be distributed across the continent.

“We want to take everyone who needs help, but how many kids can we take into schools?” Trzaskowski said. “How can we do everything we can so the health system doesn’t break down in our city?”

In Russia, the government is holding more than 500 Ukrainian prisoners of war, the country’s human rights commissioner said Monday. Tatyana Moskalkova said the government was providing information about each captive to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

“These are Ukrainian prisoners of war ... that we are willing to exchange,” she said on the RT television channel.

The fighting continued as President Biden held talks about the war with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Britain. The White House said the men “discussed their serious concerns about Russia’s brutal tactics in Ukraine, including its attacks on civilians,” along with diplomatic initiatives aimed at securing a pause in the fighting. Biden is scheduled to travel to Europe later this week to talk with NATO and other leaders.

While discussions between Russian and Ukrainian officials have so far failed to yield a breakthrough, global efforts to broker a negotiated settlement continue. Turkey’s government suggested this week that the two countries were getting closer to reaching a possible agreement that would include Ukraine’s “demilitarization” and Kyiv remaining out of NATO.

Even as Western nations continue to provide military aid, including Stinger and Javelin missiles and other weapons, they have rejected calls to establish a NATO-enforced no-fly zone over Ukraine, a move that alliance leaders say would probably result in war with Russia, a nuclear power.

Andriy Yermak, the head of Ukraine’s presidential office, repeated Zelensky’s call for a no-fly zone and greater weaponry supplies on Monday, accusing some European countries of accepting a partial Russian occupation of Ukraine so they could continue buying energy from Russia.

“To freedom-loving people around the world we say: This is your war, too. Help us win it,” he wrote in a Washington Post opinion piece. He also wrote: “If we don’t get the equipment we need to succeed, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin won’t stop in Ukraine. He will go for NATO next.”

The war has triggered a sweeping global campaign of economic reprisal against Russia, sending the country’s economy into free-fall and isolating Putin as his government dismisses the prospect of compromising on its major objectives.

It has also had intense diplomatic repercussions as Russia grows more isolated. On Monday, Russia's Foreign Ministry said it had summoned Washington's ambassador in Moscow, John Sullivan, to protest Biden's description of Putin as a "war criminal."

"Such statements by the American president, unworthy of a statesman of such a high rank, put Russian-American relations on the verge of being severed," the ministry said in a statement.

Addressing Russia's complaint, State Department spokesman Ned Price said that it was "awfully rich to hear a country speak about inappropriate comments when that same country is engaged in mass slaughter." Price said the Biden administration would continue to communicate with Russia when "necessary," suggesting that Washington would not move first to sever ties with Russia.

The White House on Monday renewed its warning about potential cyber incursions from the Kremlin, citing intelligence that the Russian government is exploring options for potential attacks.

Anne Neuberger, deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technologies, said that there wasn't evidence of a specific attack, but that U.S. intelligence officials had detected "preparatory activity," such as scanning websites and looking for potential vulnerabilities.

Neuberger said the United States would respond to any actions taken by Russia. "We're not looking for a conflict with Russia," she said. "If Russia initiates a cyberattack against the United States, we will respond."

As the conflict continues, Ukrainians' support appears to be growing for continuing the fight, a new poll showed. The survey by Kyiv-based Info Sapiens found that 91 percent of Ukrainians now believe their country can repel Russia's assault, up from 56 percent before Putin's invasion.

*--Rosenzweig-Ziff reported from Warsaw. Ryan and Nakashima reported from Washington. Loveday Morris in Dnipro, Ukraine; Mary Ilyushina in Riga; Latvia; Ellen Francis in London; and Karoun Demirjian, John Hudson, Harry Stevens, Reis Thebault and Matt Viser in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **19. Air War Ramps Up in Russia-Ukraine Conflict as Russian PGMs Run Out**

Air Force Magazine Online, Mar. 21 (1859) | Abraham Mahshie

The air war is changing over Ukraine, with Russia picking up the pace of sorties but running low on precision-guided munitions, a senior defense official said March 21. Russia also has allegedly fired hypersonic weapons, a move possibly made to gain momentum after nearly a month of fighting and no major population centers under its control.

“They are beginning to face some inventory issues with precision-guided munitions,” a senior defense official told reporters on a telephone briefing, explaining the increased use by Russia of unguided bombs, or “dumb bombs.”

The official also said Russia is seeing increased fail rates of its PGMs.

“They’re just not operating. They’re failing. Either they’re failing to launch, or they’re failing to hit the target, or they’re failing to explode on contact,” the official added. “Why would you need a hypersonic missile fired from not that far away to hit a building?”

Pentagon officials have not confirmed Russian claims that it used hypersonic weapons March 19 and March 20 to hit an ammunition depot in the Carpathian Mountains of Southwestern Ukraine and a fuel depot in Kostiantynivka, in Donetsk oblast. The second strike was just beyond the contact line of territory that Russian-backed forces have controlled since 2014. Both strikes are believed to have been fired from aircraft operating from Russian airspace.

“It could be that they’re running low on precision-guided munitions and feel like they need to tap into that resource,” the official said. “It could be that they’re trying to send a message to the West, but also to Ukraine, and trying to gain some leverage at the negotiating table.”

### *Securing Air Defenses*

In a televised interview with CNN’s Fareed Zakaria on March 20, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was willing to sit down one on one at the negotiating table with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Earlier in the week, Zelensky asked the American Congress for help obtaining the S-300 missile defense systems possessed by numerous Eastern European countries.

DOD has repeatedly said it is working to facilitate a transfer that would help Ukraine to better protect its skies. While visiting Slovakia on March 17, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III secured a willingness to transfer an S-300, but the following day Bulgaria’s prime minister emphatically refused to transfer its S-300 systems, or any lethal defense assistance, to Ukraine.

“These are active consultations,” Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said in a March 21 press briefing, “not only with that nation but many others about how to provide Ukraine the kinds of defensive capabilities, to include long-range air defense, that we know that they’re comfortable using, they’re trained on, that they already have in their inventory and whether that can be bolstered,” he explained.

Once secured, an S-300 could be in place in Ukraine within a week. The Wall Street Journal reported that Ukraine already operates some Russian air defense systems, such as the S-300, but is in need of more “to blunt Russia’s aircraft and missile attacks.”

Austin plans to accompany President Joe Biden to a NATO leaders summit in Brussels on March 24, followed by meetings in Poland on March 25.

As DOD works to get Ukraine more air defense systems, the Pentagon has said it will not stand in the way of unilateral combat aircraft transfers. On March 8, the U.S. refused a deal to take possession of Polish MiG-29s for onward transfer to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russia is stepping up its sorties.

“In the last 24-48 hours, we have seen air activity from both sides increase,” the senior defense official said.

The Pentagon assesses that Russia flew more than 300 sorties, but DOD declined to quantify the increase on the Ukrainian side. Ukraine had been flying as few as five to 10 daily sorties into contested airspace covered in large part by Russian surface-to-air missile systems.

After suffering more than 1,100 missile strikes, and with no NATO appetite for imposing a no-fly zone, Ukraine has increased its call for air defenses.

Russia may be attempting to strike more from the air before such systems are in place.

Russian ground forces are stalled outside Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Mariupol, the Sea of Azov port city that would help Russia form a land bridge from the Donbas region to Crimea. On March 21, Ukraine dismissed a Russian proposal to surrender Mariupol.

Thus far, Russia has taken control of just three cities, all in the south near heavily fortified Crimea. They are Kherson, Berdiansk, and Melitopol.

Russia is suffering setbacks in other tactical areas, the senior defense official said, from communications and command-and-control to logistical, sustainment, and surface-to-air integration.

“They are taking casualties every day,” the defense official said. “They are losing aircraft. They are losing armor and vehicles there’s no doubt about that tanks, [armored personnel carriers] APCs, artillery units, helicopters, fixed wing jets.”

The Pentagon assesses that Russia still retains just under 90 percent of its combat power. Likewise, Ukraine retains more than 90 percent of its own combat power thanks to constant replenishment from Western partners.

DOD expects a \$300 million defense assistance package to run out by week’s end, but it is already sourcing an additional \$800 million defense assistance package, the White House announced March 16.

“What we’re seeing is a near desperate attempt by the Russians to gain some momentum and try to turn the course of this in their favor,” the official said. “Right now, it doesn’t appear like they have a lot of leverage to negotiate with.”

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## **20. Intentions of Russian Amphibious Warships in Black Sea Still Unclear**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 21 (1807) | Heather Mongilio

About a dozen Russian warships remain in the Black Sea, raising concerns that Moscow is still considering an amphibious assault on the Ukrainian city of Odesa.

It is unclear what Russia is planning for the ships, which include amphibious and surface combatants vessels, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Monday. The Pentagon noted the increased naval activity last week, USNI News previously reported.

“Is it the prelude to an assault on Odesa? Is it a diversionary tactic to sort of hold and fix Ukrainian troops in the south so that they can’t come to the relief of their comrades in Mariupol and Kyiv? It’s difficult to know,” Kirby said.

Ships could be positioned in such a way that Moscow could do an amphibious assault on Odesa, similar to the country’s tactics with Mariupol, which remains under Ukrainian control despite a Russian assault of the city.

It does not appear that Odesa is under imminent threat of an amphibious assault, a senior defense official told reporters Monday morning.

An amphibious assault on Odesa was possible, according to plans shared by the Belarusian president, but still has not happened 26 days into the Russian invasion on Ukraine, wrote Tayfun Ozberk for Naval News. Such an assault would be costly – in terms of lives – for the Russians, but it is not out of the realm of possibilities for Moscow, according to Naval News.

Assembling ships in the Black Sea could have another use, Ozberk suggested in his article. Moscow could be using the ships as a terror tactic.

“Russia creates the perception that there is a threat in this region by constantly performing amphibious demonstrations off Odesa, thus keeping Odesa on constant alert, which causes it to keep soldiers in this region,” Ozberk wrote. “This situation precludes troops waiting to defend the Odesa coastline from supporting forces fighting in other places.”

Russia is also likely using the ships to bombard Odesa, the senior defense official said. The defense official could not give a percentage of missiles coming from the Black Sea, as the Pentagon is no longer keeping count of how many missiles are coming from Belarus, Russia, the Black Sea and inside Ukraine.

Despite almost a month passing since Russia began its assault on Ukraine, Moscow has seen little progress, Kirby said, adding that the troops are “flummoxed” and “frustrated.” Much of the Russian movement, including at sea, is happening in “silos,” leading to some of the Russian struggles, he said.

While the Russians have taken the Ukrainian city of Kherson, the Ukrainians have launched an attack to reclaim the city. The Russians are in control of Berdyansk, which they captured on the way to Mariupol, but the troops have not managed to control port city Mariupol.

“When you look at what they’ve managed to do in 26 days, it’s not that impressive,” Kirby said.

It is likely that Russia aims to take Mariupol because controlling the port city would allow them to have a land bridge to Crimea and isolate the coast of Ukraine, the senior defense official said.

If Russia manages to isolate the eastern part of the country, it could prevent Ukrainian troops from helping to defend Kyiv and other population centers, the defense official said.

“So they are very much trying to fix the Ukrainians in the east and taking Mariupol would be a key part of that ability,” he said.

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## **21. ‘Winging It’: Russia Is Getting Its Generals Killed on the Front Lines**

*Russian generals have had to lead from the front because its amateur army can’t move otherwise*

ForeignPolicy.com, Mar. 21 (1756) | Jack Detsch

Russia has lost at least five generals fighting in Ukraine in less than a month, Western officials said Monday, as communications failures and a lack of discipline among hundreds of thousands of conscripted Russian troops have made it more difficult to communicate orders to the front lines.

The tally of Russian generals killed in the nearly monthlong conflict — most of them one- and two-star commanders, including at least one lieutenant general — is likely the highest casualty rate among general officers in the Russian military since World War II.

On Sunday, Mykhailo Podoliak, a top advisor to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said six Russian generals had been killed, calling the invading army “fully unprepared” for the fight in Ukraine. Western assessments of deaths among Russian commanders are slightly more conservative. One European diplomat familiar with Western intelligence assessments told Foreign Policy on Monday that at least five Russian generals

had been killed, owing mostly to failures in electronic communications equipment that left them vulnerable to targeted strikes and to their efforts to get a large force of nearly 200,000 troops many of them young conscripts to follow orders by leading from the front.

“They’re struggling on the front line to get their orders through,” said the European diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss recent battlefield intelligence. “They’re having to go to the front line to make things happen, which is putting them at much greater risk than you would normally see.”

The European diplomat said the Russian death toll among general officers is up to a fifth of the number of commanders deployed in Ukraine, which Western intelligence officials estimate at 20 officers, making the military less able to operate and more bogged down. “It’s all about a lack of preparedness among the military,” the diplomat said. “They are asking for things to happen, and they are not happening.”

While the war has featured almost no ship-to-ship combat, high-ranking naval officers appear to be getting killed in greater numbers. Over the weekend, a deputy Russian Black Sea Fleet commander, Andrey Paliy who was set to be promoted to a one-star admiral rank was shot dead by Ukrainian forces outside the besieged city of Mariupol.

Earlier on Monday, the pro-Kremlin tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda reported that 9,861 Russian soldiers had been killed in Ukraine in nearly a month of combat, with 16,153 injured, a possible leak or hack of official Russian Defense Ministry statistics. The paragraph reporting this was later purged from the story. Officially, the Russian Defense Ministry reported that 498 Russian troops had been killed in Ukraine as of March 2, less than a week into the war.

But officials said Russian commanders are also making tactical errors. After Maj. Gen. Vitaly Gerasimov, a one-star equivalent, was killed outside the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv in early March, Ukrainian intelligence officials said they picked up on radio chatter expressing frustration over a breakdown in secure Russian communications equipment. Gerasimov was believed to be the nephew of Valery Gerasimov, Russia’s top military officer.

The nearly monthlong invasion of Ukraine appears to mark the largest deployment of Russian forces since the fall of the Soviet Union more than 30 years ago. The Soviet Union’s nine-year war in Afghanistan during the 1980s peaked at 115,000 troops, while claims of Russian troop strength in two wars in Chechnya were well below 100,000. Russia deployed even smaller numbers of forces to Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, sometimes using nonuniformed troops to mask their movements.

The United States has not confirmed the deaths of any Russian commanders. But U.S. officials have cited in the same breath the size and complexity of the invasion of Ukraine, a country roughly the size of Texas, and the large Russian death toll, which has left morgues in neighboring Belarus overflowing with the dead.

“It makes sense that they would have senior leaders, even general officers, in the field for an invasion of this size,” a senior U.S. defense official told reporters on Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity to provide a candid assessment of the battlefield. “They haven’t done anything on [this] size and scale really ever.”

The senior U.S. defense official said Russia’s military also has a tradition of a more stringent top-down command structure than Western militaries, giving junior officers far less flexibility and involving high-ranking officers in the nitty-gritty of tactical decisions. “It’s apples to oranges in terms of how they organize themselves [and] how they lead,” the official added.

So far, Russia has announced the death of only one commander, Maj. Gen. Andrey Sukhovetsky, a veteran of the wars in Chechnya, Georgia, and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, who was killed in combat just four days after the invasion. Russian President Vladimir Putin has also reportedly fired the deputy chief of the Rosgvardia force, Russia’s rough equivalent of the U.S. National Guard, over charges of leaking information and wasting fuel.

“There’s direction coming from on high: You better get your ass out there and make progress or else,” said James Foggo, a retired four-star admiral who commanded the U.S. Navy’s 6th Fleet, responsible for Europe and Africa, and who now leads the Center for Maritime Strategy think tank at the Navy League of the United States. “Their military chain of command is a very threatening kind of environment. You either perform or you find yourself replaced or out of a job or even worse.”

U.S. and Western intelligence agencies have picked up on some degradation of Russian command and control ability, in line with logistics problems that Russian troops have encountered throughout the war, which could be causing Russian generals to die in larger numbers. Russia has also reportedly lost a large number of field-grade commanders beyond the fallen generals.

“It’s a bigger problem if you lose commanders of units because then it’s harder to have someone step in and take over,” said Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute who previously served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Just one U.S. general has been killed in a war zone since the Vietnam War: Army Maj. Gen. Harold Greene, who was killed in an insider attack when an Afghan soldier opened fire on a visiting delegation at a U.S. base in 2014. Another, Lt. Gen. Timothy Maude, was killed at the Pentagon during 9/11 when a hijacked airliner crashed into the building. But there have been close calls: Gen. Austin “Scott” Miller pulled his handgun during an insider attack that killed two Afghan security officials in Afghanistan’s Kandahar province in 2018, but he escaped unharmed.

The European diplomat who spoke to Foreign Policy said Russian generals at times had gone further out into the field to deal with disciplinary issues, such as Russian conscripts looting stores and houses for food. Current and former U.S. officials have said Russia’s lack of a professional body of noncommissioned officers—which enforce discipline in Western militaries—has led to some of the war crimes that have flashed across social media.

“That is the mark of an undisciplined and unprofessional army that is poorly led and poorly trained, and to make up for it, [they] push the generals into the field,” said Foggo, the retired U.S. admiral. “They’re out there, and they’re kind of winging it. This is breaking down into an undisciplined rabble.”

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## **22. Smaller Bombs Raise a Specter Of Atomic War**

*Military experts say a new generation of nuclear weapons has raised the risk that Mr. Putin might introduce less destructive atomic arms into the battlefields in and around Ukraine*

New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A1 | William J. Broad

In destructive power, the behemoths of the Cold War dwarfed the American atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Washington’s biggest test blast was 1,000 times as large. Moscow’s was 3,000 times. On both sides, the idea was to deter strikes with threats of vast retaliation -- with mutual assured destruction, or MAD. The psychological bar was so high that nuclear strikes came to be seen as unthinkable.

Today, both Russia and the United States have nuclear arms that are much less destructive -- their power just fractions of the Hiroshima bomb’s force, their use perhaps less frightening and more thinkable.

Concern about these smaller arms has soared as Vladimir V. Putin, in the Ukraine war, has warned of his nuclear might, has put his atomic forces on alert and has had his military carry out risky attacks on nuclear power plants. The fear is that if Mr. Putin feels cornered in the conflict, he might choose to detonate one of his lesser nuclear arms -- breaking the taboo set 76 years ago after Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Analysts note that Russian troops have long practiced the transition from conventional to nuclear war, especially as a way to gain the upper hand after battlefield losses. And the military, they add, wielding the world’s largest nuclear arsenal, has explored a variety of escalatory options that Mr. Putin might choose from.

“The chances are low but rising,” said Ulrich Kühn, a nuclear expert at the University of Hamburg and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “The war is not going well for the Russians,” he observed, “and the pressure from the West is increasing.”

Mr. Putin might fire a weapon at an uninhabited area instead of at troops, Dr. Kühn said. In a 2018 study, he laid out a crisis scenario in which Moscow detonated a bomb over a remote part of the North Sea as a way to signal deadlier strikes to come.

“It feels horrible to talk about these things,” Dr. Kühn said in an interview. “But we have to consider that this is becoming a possibility.”

Washington expects more atomic moves from Mr. Putin in the days ahead. Moscow is likely to “increasingly rely on its nuclear deterrent to signal the West and project strength” as the war and its consequences weaken Russia, Lt. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the House Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

President Biden is traveling to a NATO summit in Brussels this week to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The agenda is expected to include how the alliance will respond if Russia employs chemical, biological, cyber or nuclear weapons.

James R. Clapper Jr., a retired Air Force general who served as President Barack Obama’s director of national intelligence, said Moscow had lowered its bar for atomic use after the Cold War when the Russian army fell into disarray. Today, he added, Russia regards nuclear arms as utilitarian rather than unthinkable.

“They didn’t care,” Mr. Clapper said of Russian troops’ risking a radiation release earlier this month when they attacked the Zaporizhzhia nuclear reactor site -- the largest not only in Ukraine but in Europe. “They went ahead and fired on it. That’s indicative of the Russian laissez-faire attitude. They don’t make the distinctions that we do on nuclear weapons.”

Mr. Putin announced last month that he was putting Russian nuclear forces into “special combat readiness.” Pavel Podvig, a longtime researcher of Russia’s nuclear forces, said the alert had most likely primed the Russian command and control system for the possibility of receiving a nuclear order.

It’s unclear how Russia exerts control over its arsenal of less destructive arms. But some U.S. politicians and experts have denounced the smaller weapons on both sides as threatening to upend the global balance of nuclear terror.

For Russia, military analysts note, edgy displays of the less destructive arms have let Mr. Putin polish his reputation for deadly brinkmanship and expand the zone of intimidation he needs to fight a bloody conventional war.

“Putin is using nuclear deterrence to have his way in Ukraine,” said Nina Tannenwald, a political scientist at Brown University who recently profiled the less powerful armaments. “His nuclear weapons keep the West from intervening.”

A global race for the smaller arms is intensifying. Though such weapons are less destructive by Cold War standards, modern estimates show that the equivalent of half a Hiroshima bomb, if detonated in Midtown Manhattan, would kill or injure half a million people.

The case against these arms is that they undermine the nuclear taboo and make crisis situations even more dangerous. Their less destructive nature, critics say, can feed the illusion of atomic control when in fact their use

can suddenly flare into a full-blown nuclear war. A simulation devised by experts at Princeton University starts with Moscow firing a nuclear warning shot; NATO responds with a small strike, and the ensuing war yields more than 90 million casualties in its first few hours.

No arms control treaties regulate the lesser warheads, known sometimes as tactical or nonstrategic nuclear weapons, so the nuclear superpowers make and deploy as many as they want. Russia has perhaps 2,000, according to Hans M. Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, a private group in Washington. And the United States has roughly 100 in Europe, a number limited by domestic policy disputes and the political complexities of basing them among NATO allies, whose populations often resist and protest the weapons' presence.

Russia's atomic war doctrine came to be known as "escalate to de-escalate" -- meaning routed troops would fire a nuclear weapon to stun an aggressor into retreat or submission. Moscow repeatedly practiced the tactic in field exercises. In 1999, for instance, a large drill simulated a NATO attack on Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea. The exercise had Russian forces in disarray until Moscow fired nuclear arms at Poland and the United States.

Dr. Kühn of the University of Hamburg said the defensive training drills of the 1990s had turned toward offense in the 2000s as the Russian army regained some of its former strength.

Concurrent with its new offensive strategy, Russia embarked on a modernization of its nuclear forces, including its less destructive arms. As in the West, some of the warheads were given variable explosive yields that could be dialed up or down depending on the military situation.

A centerpiece of the new arsenal was the Iskander-M, first deployed in 2005. The mobile launcher can fire two missiles that travel roughly 300 miles. The missiles can carry conventional as well as nuclear warheads. Russian figures put the smallest nuclear blast from those missiles at roughly a third that of the Hiroshima bomb.

Before the Russian army invaded Ukraine, satellite images showed that Moscow had deployed Iskander missile batteries in Belarus and to its east in Russian territory. There's no public data on whether Russia has armed any of the Iskanders with nuclear warheads.

Nikolai Sokov, a former Russian diplomat who negotiated arms control treaties in Soviet times, said that nuclear warheads could also be placed on cruise missiles. The low-flying weapons, launched from planes, ships or the ground, hug the local terrain to avoid detection by enemy radar.

From inside Russian territory, he said, "they can reach all of Europe," including Britain.

Over the years, the United States and its NATO allies have sought to rival Russia's arsenal of lesser nuclear arms. It started decades ago as the United States began sending bombs for fighter jets to military bases in Belgium,

Germany, Italy, Turkey and the Netherlands. Dr. Kühn noted that the alliance, in contrast to Russia, does not conduct field drills practicing a transition from conventional to nuclear war.

In 2010, Mr. Obama, who had long advocated for a “nuclear-free world,” decided to refurbish and improve the NATO weapons, turning them into smart bombs with maneuverable fins that made their targeting highly precise. That, in turn, gave war planners the freedom to lower the weapons’ variable explosive force to as little as 2 percent of that of the Hiroshima bomb.

The reduced blast capability made breaking the nuclear taboo “more thinkable,” Gen. James E. Cartwright, a vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Mr. Obama, warned at the time. He nonetheless backed the program because the high degree of precision lowered the risk of collateral damage and civilian casualties. But after years of funding and manufacturing delays, the refurbished bomb, known as the B61 Model 12, is not expected to be deployed in Europe until next year, Mr. Kristensen said.

The steady Russian buildups and the slow American responses prompted the Trump administration to propose a new missile warhead in 2018. Its destructive force was seen as roughly half that of the Hiroshima bomb, according to Mr. Kristensen. It was to be deployed on the nation’s fleet of 14 ballistic missile submarines.

While some experts warned that the bomb, known as the W76 Model 2, could make it more tempting for a president to order a nuclear strike, the Trump administration argued that the weapon would lower the risk of war by ensuring that Russia would face the threat of proportional counterstrikes. It was deployed in late 2019.

“It’s all about psychology -- deadly psychology,” said Franklin C. Miller, a nuclear expert who backed the new warhead and, before leaving public office in 2005, held Pentagon and White House posts for three decades. “If your opponent thinks he has a battlefield edge, you try to convince him that he’s wrong.”

When he was a candidate for the presidency, Joseph R. Biden Jr. called the less powerful warhead a “bad idea” that would make presidents “more inclined” to use it. But Mr. Kristensen said the Biden administration seemed unlikely to remove the new warhead from the nation’s submarines.

It’s unclear how Mr. Biden would respond to the use of a nuclear weapon by Mr. Putin. Nuclear war plans are one of Washington’s most deeply held secrets. Experts say that the war-fighting plans in general go from warning shots to single strikes to multiple retaliations and that the hardest question is whether there are reliable ways to prevent a conflict from escalating.

Even Mr. Clapper, the former director of national intelligence, said he was unsure how he would advise Mr. Biden if Mr. Putin unleashed his nuclear arms.

“When do you stop?” he asked of nuclear retaliation. “You can’t just keep turning the other cheek. At some point we’d have to do something.”

A U.S. response to a small Russian blast, experts say, might be to fire one of the new submarine-launched warheads into the wilds of Siberia or at a military base inside Russia. Mr. Miller, the former government nuclear official and a former chairman of NATO's nuclear policy committee, said such a blast would be a way of signaling to Moscow that "this is serious, that things are getting out of hand."

Military strategists say a tit-for-tat rejoinder would throw the responsibility for further escalation back at Russia, making Moscow feel its ominous weight and ideally keeping the situation from spinning out of control despite the dangers in war of miscalculation and accident.

In a darker scenario, Mr. Putin might resort to using atomic arms if the war in Ukraine spilled into neighboring NATO states. All NATO members, including the United States, are obliged to defend one another -- potentially with salvos of nuclear warheads.

Dr. Tannenwald, the political scientist at Brown University, wondered if the old protections of nuclear deterrence, now rooted in opposing lines of less destructive arms, would succeed in keeping the peace.

"It sure doesn't feel that way in a crisis," she said.

--David E. Sanger contributed reporting from Washington

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### **23. DoD official: Russia's hypersonic missile boast 'a bit of a head-scratcher'**

*Russia's claim about the hypersonic missile has drawn scrutiny from arms observers in recent days, and the senior DoD official described the weapon's alleged deployment as confusing*

Politico Online, Mar. 21 (1908) | Quint Forgey

Russia may have launched a hypersonic missile over the weekend in an assault on a Ukrainian munitions depot, a senior Defense Department official said Monday, but Moscow's claim about the nature of the weapon is "a bit of a head-scratcher."

U.S. officials are "not able to refute" the Russian military's declaration Saturday that it used a Kinzhal hypersonic missile to strike an underground warehouse storing Ukrainian missiles and aviation ammunition, the official said. The launch would be the first use of the Kinzhal in combat.

But U.S. officials also "can't independently confirm" Russia's claim, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It's not entirely clear, so what we would assess is it's certainly possible."

President Joe Biden appeared to confirm Russia's use of hypersonic missiles when speaking Monday night at the Business Roundtable's CEO quarterly meeting.

“They’ve just launched a hypersonic missile because it’s the only thing that they can get through with absolute certainty,” Biden said.

Russia’s claim about the hypersonic missile has drawn scrutiny from arms observers in recent days, and the senior DoD official described the weapon’s alleged deployment as confusing given the circumstances of its use.

Hypersonic missiles fly faster than five times the speed of sound and are maneuverable, making them difficult to shoot down. All ballistic missiles can achieve hypersonic speeds, but the Russians claim the Kinzhal can also be guided during flight, changing course to avoid air defenses. It is not clear if this missile used that capability or if it operated as a traditional ballistic missile.

“It’s a bit of a head-scratcher, to be honest with you, because it’s not exactly clear why if it’s true why would you need a hypersonic missile fired from not that far away to hit a building?” the official said.

Russia’s use of a hypersonic missile could serve as a sign that its forces are “running low on precision-guided munitions and feel like they need to tap into that resource,” the official said.

It is also possible that Russia is “trying to send a message” to Ukraine and the West by using the weapon and “trying to gain some leverage at the negotiating table,” the official added. “But ... from a military perspective, if it was a hypersonic missile, there’s not a whole lot of practicality about it.”

More than three weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces are still “looking for a chance to break out” and achieve “some momentum” in the country, the official said. However, it is “very clear that the Ukrainians are showing no signs of stopping their resistance.”

As a result, Russian forces are engaged in a “near-desperate attempt” to make gains and “potentially get some leverage” when it comes time to negotiating an end to the fighting, the official said.

Russia’s combat power is operating at “just below 90 percent,” and Russian forces have fired 1,100 missiles in total since the start of the invasion, according to the official.

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## **24. Satellite jamming ‘normal’ by militaries during conflict, not peacetime – State Dept. official**

BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 21 (1215) | Theresa Hitchens

WASHINGTON -- The Russian military’s jamming of GPS signals and communications satellites in Ukraine is considered by the US government as essentially a routine wartime activity, according to a senior State Department official.

Judging from actual real world actions during recent conflicts around the globe, Washington and Moscow appear to be on the same page with this issue — a good thing for avoiding conflict between the two nuclear powers. But there may be a growing disconnect between the two sides on the question of satellite interference outside of direct conflict, with a senior Russian official earlier this month making the surprising claim that doing so is an act of war.

During a March 17 virtual conversation at the National Security Space Association, Eric Desautels, acting deputy assistant secretary for emerging security challenges and defense policy in State’s Arms Control, Verification and Compliance bureau, explained that the US military has its own jamming capabilities for use in conflict zones.

“For example, the United States has our own communications jammer known as the CCS system,” he said. “We think that jamming is probably a normal part of conflict.”

CCS is the Space Force’s Counter Communications System, a mobile communications satellite jammer built by L3Harris and first fielded in 2004. The system has been upgraded routinely over the last 20 years, with the latest upgrade, called Block 10.2, declared operational in March 2020.

In the current conflict, Russian forces actively have been jamming GPS signals in Ukraine as they attempt to advance. In addition, a senior Ukrainian cybersecurity official this week suggested that a Feb. 24 cyber attack on commercial communications provider Viasat, which provides Internet connectivity in Ukraine and Europe, was part of an organized Russian cyber campaign against his country’s forces.

Reuters quoted Victor Zhora as saying that the attack, which shut down thousands of satellite receivers across Europe, “a really huge loss in communications in the very beginning of war.” While Zhora said the attack has yet to be formally attributed to Moscow, “we believe that Russia is attacking not just with missiles and with bombs, but with cyber weapons.”

While jamming Ukraine’s systems will certainly not be welcome by Ukraine or its supporters, it appears that in the US view, those actions are just part of any basic military engagement.

Jamming and hacking satellite capabilities in peacetime, however, is an entirely different matter — and the subject of planned UN discussions seeking to create norms for military activities in space, he said.

When employed outside a theater of conflict, the US considers satellite interference to be “irresponsible” and potentially dangerous — strong disapproval, but a far cry from calling it an act of war.

“Jamming in peacetime that disrupts activities of civilians — for example, Russia’s jamming of GPS during the Trident Juncture exercise off of Norway that caused aircraft ... to be unable to use GPS — that is an irresponsible behavior,” Desautels said.

For that reason, he said, the US wants to raise the issue of jamming of GPS receivers, as well as of satellite command and control, during the upcoming meetings of the UN Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) On Reducing Space Threats. “If you lose control of your satellite, that makes it a hazard to other satellites,” he explained. “And so there’s a lot of work that can be done on all of these various cyber attack methods, jamming methods, that we look forward to having discussions on in the Open Ended Working Group.”

*Peacetime (or what passes for it): Just Say No*

Contrast Desautels’ remarks to those of Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia’s space agency Roscosmos, earlier this month, and a disconnect seems to appear.

Reuters reported on March 2 that Rogozin, who has a history of hyperbolic statements and over-the-top tweets, told Russia’s Interfax News Agency that “Offlining the satellites of any country is actually a *casus belli*, a cause for war.”

Up to now, there has been no indication that any country seriously considers satellite interference as a legal act of war that allows an armed response. Under international law, a *casus belli* is a justification that a nation is being threatened, and thus has a right to self-defense.

Instead, Russia, China, the US and Iran (and most likely others) have used GPS and/or satcom jamming for both political and military purposes in what is at least technically peacetime. (For a good primer on the extent of such activities, see Secure World Foundation’s annual Global Counterspace Capabilities report.) This suggests that nations see reversible satellite interference as acceptable under what is known as customary international law, or in essence, real-world practice.

Which is precisely why the US, and the United Kingdom that sponsored the effort to launch the OEWG, want it to be on the table during the upcoming discussions.

And as far as electronic warfare in conflict zones, Russian forces practice it routinely. The Russian military has frequently jammed GPS in Eastern Ukraine since the Crimean conflict in 2014, according to experts inside and outside the US government, as well as in Syria.

Desautels said that the OEWG is now set to begin May 9, although it remains unclear whether it will actually happen due to the ongoing war. As Russian aircraft are now banned from landing in either the US or Europe, he explained, Moscow may try to block the meeting from going forward by arguing that Russian diplomats from the Foreign Ministry will be unable to attend.

In fact, the May 9 date for the launch of the first OEWG session is the result of Russia’s attempts to derail the talks during a preparatory meeting last month; the original plan was for Feb. 14-18 in Geneva, Switzerland. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was initiated on Feb. 23.

Desautels stressed that the OEWG discussions are important to the United States as it seeks to promote more stability in military space relations — an effort the Pentagon is fully behind.

As first reported by Breaking Defense, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin last July issued a first-ever unclassified policy memo committing the US military to five overarching “tenets” to guide DoD space operations in peacetime. And one of those tenets states: “Avoid the creation of harmful interference.”

Meanwhile the National Security Council is leading an inter-agency effort to put more flesh on the bones laid out by Austin and years of declarations by US government officials. That work, Desautels said, is still ongoing and covers a number of complex issues, such as how to ensure that any agreements don’t prevent tests of missile defense systems.

Russia and China, on the other hand, have been less than supportive of the UN discussions, voting against the establishment of the group. That said, several Western diplomats have told Breaking Defense that Beijing has been less belligerent in the run up to the discussions (as well as parallel efforts taking place in Vienna to establish guidelines for best practices for space activities), and has shown willingness to seriously engage on the issues.

Desautels kept a hopeful tone in his remarks last week, but cautioned that the May meeting is the first in a two-year process that will run through 2023.

“This is going to be one of the first times where we really sit down with countries and start talking about these norms of responsible behavior,” he said. “So, the first meeting in May will most likely be focused very much on background information — what is the outer space environment; what are the security threats in the environment what is the existing legal regime in the environment — so that we can raise the level of education.”

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## **INDO-PACIFIC**

### **25. Russia sends more warships through Japanese strait, halts peace treaty talks after sanctions**

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 22 (0250) | Seth Robson and Hana Kusumoto

TOKYO -- In a move Japan’s prime minister called “totally unacceptable,” Russia has halted talks over a post-World War II peace treaty with Japan and ended visa-free entry for former residents of four Russian-controlled islands.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry announced the measures Monday while indicating it would also not proceed with joint economic activity on the disputed islands — an apparent response to sanctions imposed after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Japan and Russia never signed a peace treaty after WWII, and the status of four islands captured by the Soviets at the end of the war has been a sticking point for more than seven decades. Russia calls the islands north of Hokkaido the Southern Kurils and Japan refers to them as its Northern Territories.

“Russia’s actions are extremely unreasonable and totally unacceptable,” Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a Diet committee session Tuesday, according to Kyodo News. “We strongly protest.”

The halt to peace-treaty negotiations is a response to Japan’s unilateral and unfriendly restrictions over the situation in Ukraine, the Russian ministry said in a statement reported by Kyodo.

Japan has imposed about a dozen sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine but the effort to hold them to account is ongoing, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel told reporters Wednesday at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

Emanuel was there to see off a 38-ton shipment of nonlethal military supplies, including helmets and bulletproof vests, that Japan donated to Ukraine.

Japan has reported spotting numerous Russia warships on the move in international waters near its northern borders this month.

Most recently, four Russian amphibious ships, traveling in pairs, were spotted east-northeast of Japan’s main island of Honshu on March 15 and 16, Japan’s Joint Staff said in a news release last week.

The vessels included an Alligator IV-class tank landing ship, two Ropucha I-class tank landing ships and a Ropucha II-class tank landing ship, according to the release.

The ships, monitored by a Japanese surveillance plane and a destroyer, traveled west through Tsugaru strait — 12 miles wide at its narrowest point — to the Sea of Japan/East Sea, the release stated.

Photographs provided with the news release showed the ships loaded with military vehicles.

The vessels could be transporting troops and vehicles to Ukraine, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said during a news conference Thursday.

“We are closely observing movements by Russian forces with grave concern, including the situation in Ukraine,” he said.

The Russians have been looking for ways to respond to sanctions, James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University’s Japan campus, said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

The Russian flotillas spotted near Hokkaido earlier this month may have been a show of force, but the latest movements appear to be carrying equipment bound for Ukraine, Brown said.

“It indicates they are very much stretched as a result of the Ukraine invasion,” he said.

The most significant action Russia has taken in response to Japan’s sanctions is suspending visas for the disputed islands’ former residents, Brown said. They have not been able to visit since the coronavirus pandemic began two years ago.

Visiting ancestral graves on the islands is important for the former residents, Brown said.

“In normal times they have about 20 trips each year,” he said. “The average age of these former residents is 86. They will be thinking this is the end and they will never set foot back on those islands.”

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## **26. Australia Forms A Space Force As Tensions Rise**

*The expanded commitment to space defense reflects the reality of a new, extraterrestrial landscape for war*

New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A4 | Damien Cave

CANBERRA, Australia -- Two years after the United States inaugurated a military Space Force to mixed reviews, Australia has created its own Space Command to counter threats from China, Russia and other extraterrestrial powers.

The new force will expand Australia’s space capabilities and contribute to “a larger, collective effort among like-minded countries to ensure a safe, stable and secure space domain,” Peter Dutton, Australia’s defense minister, said on Tuesday.

In a speech at a conference with several American military officers in attendance, Mr. Dutton also announced that Australia and the United States had agreed to partner on “a broad range of satellite activities.”

It is not clear how sizable the command’s ranks will be. The announcement came just two months before a federal election in which Australia’s conservative governing coalition is trying to make national security a key plank of its pitch to voters.

At the same time, the expanded commitment to space defense reflects the reality of a new technological landscape for war, in which satellites are vital tools for navigation, surveillance and attacks from unmanned weapons.

The announcement also amounts to yet another sign of deepening Australian-American security ties. The two countries, allies since World War I, have been working more closely together in recent years as China's ambitions and military investment have become a greater concern.

In September, Australia announced a new defense agreement in which the United States and Britain will help it deploy nuclear-powered submarines, a major advance in Australian military strength. The partnership, known as AUKUS, also includes plans to collaborate on new military capabilities in artificial intelligence, quantum computing and other next-generation technologies.

The space partnership has not been branded as a part of that agreement, but the backdrop -- an increasingly contested, multipolar era -- remains the same.

"Space is a sector that China has invested in heavily as part of its broader military modernization and efforts for technological advancement," said Jennifer Jackett, a security researcher focused on technology at the Australian National University. "This reflects the fact that space is a critical domain for both military capability and civil applications."

Some security analysts said that Australia had recognized, with both Russia and China advancing their ability to damage or destroy satellites, that space vulnerabilities must be managed for Australia's own security and in the case of an attack on America's satellite network.

The relative power of the United States compared to China continues to be a concern, with the war in Ukraine leading some to worry that demands in Europe will draw American attention and resources away from Asia, or lead China to challenge the United States more directly.

"There is a growing concern that reliance on large U.S. systems could leave us quite vulnerable if they were to be targeted in a confrontation," said John Blaxland, a defense expert at the Australian National University. "There is a lot of emphasis on smaller -- and greater volume and greater frequency of launching satellites -- that are going to be able to give Australia that greater resilience, and redundancy."

The United States seems determined to prove that its commitment is unwavering. Several senior officials from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, based in Honolulu, will be in Australia this week, along with senior commanders from the American Space Force. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken visited Australia and Fiji last month.

When the Trump administration announced its intention to create a Space Force in 2018, the idea drew an uneven response, including inside the American military, with some questioning its necessity and cost.

But the Biden administration, after taking office last year, said it would not review the decision to create the force, and it has cemented itself as the sixth, and smallest, branch of the U.S. military.

Australia, for its part, is a small player in the global space industry, having created a national civilian space agency only in 2018.

Nonetheless, in his comments on Tuesday, Mr. Dutton emphasized that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had made space, highly technical military strength and traditional alliances all the more important.

"We must remain determined in what we can do to support liberty against the odious forces of tyranny," he said. "In the Indo-Pacific, Australia is contributing to collective efforts to maintain stability and deter aggression."

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## **27. U.S., Calling '17 Purge Genocide, Condemns Myanmar's Military**

*Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the official designation. More than 9,000 people were killed in the violence*

New York Times, Mar. 22 (0300), Pg. A6 | Lara Jakes

WASHINGTON -- Against the backdrop of a war in Ukraine and atrocities in Ethiopia, the United States on Monday formally accused Myanmar of committing genocide against its minority Rohingya population.

"The day will come when those responsible for these appalling acts will have to answer for them," Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, which is exhibiting evidence of decades of discrimination and abuse against Rohingya Muslims by Myanmar's military.

The violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State peaked in August 2017 with a campaign of mass rape, burnings and drownings against entire families that killed more than 9,000 people and forced nearly one million to flee the country.

It was the eighth time that the United States has issued a formal genocide declaration, committing to supporting international investigations to hold violators accountable and probably prompting additional sanctions or other penalties to isolate Myanmar's military-led government.

Messages left at the Myanmar Embassy in Washington on Monday were not immediately answered.

Officials who "bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities" will continue to face severe sanctions, Mr. Blinken said.

He did not mention any penalties against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel laureate who was Myanmar's de facto leader at the time of the 2017 massacres and had rejected accusations of genocide. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested in a February 2021 coup. Since then, Myanmar's military, known as the Tatmadaw, has violently cracked down on civilians across the country, killing at least 1,670 people and detaining more than 12,000.

The designation bolsters international charges of genocide that have been brought against the leaders who ordered the atrocities against the Rohingya, some of whom Mr. Blinken said remain in power in Myanmar.

Canada, France, Turkey and other American allies have already declared the 2017 rampage to be genocide. Gambia, acting on behalf of the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, filed legal action against Myanmar in 2019 at the International Court of Justice, accusing Myanmar of violating the United Nations' Genocide Convention.

Monday's declaration "adds another layer to the already quite damning accusations against Myanmar for atrocities committed against the Rohingya," said Oumar Ba, an assistant professor of government at Cornell University and an expert on the international criminal justice system.

Noting Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's possible culpability, Mr. Ba added, "We should, however, be careful not to attribute these crimes solely to the Myanmar's military junta."

Mr. Blinken said the Biden administration would continue to provide humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees, the majority of whom have fled to neighboring Bangladesh, and would send \$1 million to a U.N. fact-finding mission that is gathering evidence on Myanmar's worst cases of atrocities since 2011.

American investigators conducted their own inquiry into the violence, interviewing more than 1,000 refugees who reported widespread and systematic attacks. More than half of the Rohingya interviewed witnessed sexual assaults, and three-quarters said they saw killings at the hands of the military. One of every five Rohingya interviewed witnessed a mass casualty event, where more than 100 people were killed or injured, Mr. Blinken said, citing the report.

"The evidence also points to a clear intent behind these mass atrocities -- the intent to destroy Rohingya," Mr. Blinken said.

The State Department stopped short of declaring the Myanmar atrocities to be genocide when it released the findings in 2018, in part to maintain an alliance with the government and keep neighboring China off balance in the region. More than two years later, at the end of the Trump administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared the systemic abuse and detention of Muslim Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region of China to be an act of genocide.

The Biden administration has also resisted declaring atrocities in Ethiopia's northern Tigray province to be a genocide, although Mr. Blinken has warned of cases of ethnic cleansing against civilians there. And just last week, Mr. Blinken said he believed that war crimes had been committed by Russian forces in their invasion of Ukraine but said investigators still had not concluded that officially.

Still, Mr. Blinken mentioned both conflicts on Monday. Shortly after his speech, the State Department also announced that it had designated Sudan's Central Reserve Police as a human rights violator after accusations of rape, torture and other abuses against pro-democracy protesters surfaced starting late last year, including as recently as last week.

"Over recent weeks, as I've spoken with diplomats from around the world about Ukraine, I've also heard a constant refrain," Mr. Blinken said. "Many of them say: 'Yes, we stand with the people of Ukraine. But we must also stand with people suffering atrocities in other places.'"

At one point, he stopped reading from his speech, displayed on a teleprompter. "It's painful to even read these accounts," he said after detailing some of the abuses against the Rohingya. "I ask each and every one of you listening: Put yourself in their place. Imagine this was your own child."

Mr. Blinken's speech came nearly 89 years to the day after the opening of the Nazis' first concentration camp, in Dachau, Germany, where his stepfather, Samuel Pizar, was held until he was liberated by American troops near the end of World War II. Mr. Pizar's experiences helped shape Mr. Blinken's zeal for advocating human rights and democracy in foreign policy.

"That pain ripples outward, from the individual victims and survivors to loved ones, friends, to entire communities," he said. "We also must remember to see these individuals as more than victims, but rather as whole human beings."

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## MIDDLE EAST

### **28. Revolutionary Guard at Center of Talks**

*U.S. criticized for considering removing terrorism designation to revive Iran nuclear deal*

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A10 | Laurence Norman

The effort to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement hinges on perhaps the most politically sensitive issue in the negotiations: Whether to remove the U.S. terrorism designation for Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, the country's powerful security force, diplomats said.

The issue is galvanizing opposition to the nuclear pact in Washington and among Middle East allies such as Israel, where the government issued stinging public criticism of any attempt to remove the terrorism designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Senior U.S. officials say a failure to find a compromise with Iran on the issue quickly could cause a breakdown in negotiations that -- over almost a year -- have resolved nearly every other disagreement.

The U.S. has accused the Guard of killing hundreds of Americans, while its elite Quds Force has arranged weapons and support for proxy forces throughout the region and for pro-Iranian groups that fought in Syria. The Guard has long faced U.S. sanctions for its ballistic-missiles programs and alleged human-rights violations, and was placed on the counterterror sanctions list in 2017.

Those backing compromise argued that other sanctions on the Guard would still keep foreign companies away from dealing with Guard-linked Iranian firms, damping economic benefits of any nuclear deal for Iran. Opponents argue the foreign terror organization listing is a necessary, punitive deterrent.

In pressing for lifting the terror sanctions, U.S. officials have said the threat posed by the Guard and other terrorist-listed entities would be much worse if Iran gets nuclear weapons. Iran, which says its nuclear program is peaceful, is weeks away from having enough highly enriched uranium for a bomb, according to the U.N. atomic agency.

The divide over the Guard's terrorism designation comes at a critical moment in discussions about the steps Washington and Tehran will take to comply again with a deal that the U.S. withdrew from under former President Donald Trump, and that Iran has since breached with a massive expansion of its nuclear work. The deal lifted most international sanctions on Iran in exchange for tight but temporary restrictions on its nuclear program.

President Biden believes the U.S. should work to resolve the issue, U.S. officials said, given that Tehran's breakout time to amass enough nuclear fuel for a bomb was significantly reduced after the U.S. withdrew from the agreement.

The view among Mr. Biden and many of his top advisers is that reaching a deal with Iran now, and then improving upon the agreement later, is a better option than waiting, said these officials. The White House also views an agreement restraining Iran's nuclear program as key to Middle East stability, allowing the U.S. to focus on China and Russia. These U.S. officials argue that withdrawing from the 2015 pact didn't yield positive results.

"Not only has Iran's nuclear program advanced, but their behavior in the region and beyond has gotten more aggressive, including by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said last week. "So the notion that the actions of the past administration pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal has cut down on the actions or the escalatory behavior of the (IRGC) is inaccurate."

According to people involved in the talks, the American offer would remove the Guard from the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations if Iran commits to rein in its regional aggression and refrains from targeting Americans. If Iran doesn't abide by the pact, the listing could be reimposed.

Iran, which refuses to negotiate directly with Washington, hasn't responded, creating a stalemate that senior U.S. officials say could imperil a deal.

The Guard has complicated the talks by claiming responsibility for a missile attack this month from Iran on northern Iraq, which the force said targeted an Israeli compound but landed near a U.S. consulate under construction.

In a televised new-year's speech Monday, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on most important strategic issues, said Iran should continue pursuing the nuclear talks.

"Of course, I am not saying stop pursuing removal of the sanctions... The principle is to run the country in a way that the sanctions cannot hit the economy substantially," he said.

The issue of the Guard's terrorism designation has haunted the negotiations since they started last spring.

According to people close to the talks, the U.S. team dangled the possibility of lifting the Guard's terrorism designation in 2021 with the approval of some in Washington. At the time, there were strings attached. However, the U.S. team pulled back the offer over concerns from senior administration.

Now, Washington is behind the offer to lift the terror designation if Iran meets its conditions, recognizing that without that step, Tehran may walk away from a deal, say U.S. officials. They also say there is little room for negotiation on the conditions Iran must accept around the offer.

The Guard designation highlights the crosscurrents facing the Biden administration's efforts to revive the nuclear deal.

Iran has wanted the Biden administration to lift terrorism, human-rights and other sanctions on it that aren't related to its nuclear program. U.S. allies in the region, who are nervous about a deal that doesn't permanently constrain Iran's nuclear work, fear that if Washington lifts the terror sanctions on the Revolutionary Guard, it would embolden Iran-backed proxies, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

"We are very concerned about the United States' intention to give in to Iran's outrageous demand and remove the IRGC from the list of terrorist organizations," Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said.

The Guard designation was part of a series of moves by the Trump administration to list Iranian people and entities under terror sanctions. Advocates said the moves would make it difficult for the next administration to restore the nuclear pact. It was the first time Washington had designated an element of a foreign state a terrorist entity.

Critical to the argument over the Guard is the economic impact it would have. The counterterror sanctions heighten the potential criminal liability for companies and people that do business with the group, said Mark

Dubowitz, chief executive officer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, which opposed the 2015 nuclear deal.

*--Aresu Egbali, Vivian Salama and Alex Leary contributed to this article*

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## **29. Oil Thirst Is Forcing Biden to Pivot U.S. Back to Saudi Arabia**

Bloomberg News, Mar. 21 (1545) | Nick Wadhams, Annmarie Hordern and Matthew Martin

President Joe Biden has been reluctantly drawn into closer ties with Saudi Arabia's king-in-waiting, forced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine to rethink a standoffish approach as the U.S. struggles to curb soaring oil prices.

The problem is Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman isn't ready to play along.

The softening U.S. attitude, described by a dozen people familiar with the debate, follows months of efforts by some senior administration officials to convince a wary president that ignoring the de facto Saudi leader was hampering U.S. foreign policy goals. The need to isolate Moscow gave new impetus to that push. One official described Russia's aggression as a paradigm-shifting event that changes the way the U.S. looked at Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's economic powerhouse and for years has been a political heavyweight in the region's affairs and a dominant force in OPEC+ -- a powerful alliance between the oil-exporters' cartel and Russia. It's also one of the biggest buyers of American weapons.

The shift is in part an admission that Biden backed himself into a corner during his presidential campaign by calling Saudi Arabia a "pariah," a reflection of his revulsion over the 2018 murder of critic Jamal Khashoggi and a desire to retreat from his predecessor's cozier relations. Donald Trump deployed his son-in-law Jared Kushner to work directly with MBS -- as the prince is usually called -- often to the exclusion of his own top diplomat.

Conversations with people in Riyadh and Washington paint a picture of an administration that recognizes it must maintain a decades-old partnership that's guaranteed U.S. clout in the world's top energy-exporting region and yet also wants to punish Prince Mohammed, 36, over his human rights record.

### *The Call*

Three people familiar with the matter said the two sides were trying to arrange a call between Biden and the crown prince for the first time, but strains were now so deep that it would take time.

A spokesperson for the White House National Security Council said Monday it "is categorically false" that the White House made a formal request for a call with the crown prince, and denied that the Saudis have rebuffed the president.

NSC spokeswoman Emily Horne added: “The president spoke with King Salman on February 9th. In that call, they set forth an affirmative bilateral agenda from climate, to security, to energy cooperation. Since that important call, our teams have been engaged at every level. There have been no discussions of subsequent calls at the president’s level given this regular and ongoing engagement.”

A U.S. official who asked not to be identified said the Saudis agree with the protocol of the president speaking with his counterpart, the king. The official also said Biden has been open to conversations with Prince Mohammed, noting that if the crown prince had come to Rome in October during the G-20 gathering, Biden would have met with him.

### *A Serious Challenge*

Biden set himself up for a serious challenge after taking office in January 2021 by promising to reorient his foreign policy away from the Middle East and make human rights a greater priority. At the time, his spokeswoman said his counterpart was King Salman and phrased the shift as a “recalibration” in ties.

Yet the U.S. relies on Saudi Arabia for 7% of its oil imports, a number that won’t budge much unless it spurs more domestic output - something progressives in Biden’s party would resist. Saudi Arabia is also an important regional counterbalance to Iran, whose armed proxies launch near-daily attacks on U.S. allies across the Middle East. Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthis struck six sites in the kingdom as recently as Sunday, including some operated by state oil giant Aramco.

Biden’s cold shoulder has been particularly poorly received as he seeks to revive the 2015 nuclear accord that would hand the Islamic Republic an oil windfall without addressing such security concerns.

### *Saudi View*

Saudi Arabia said in a statement Monday it refused to be held responsible for any shortage of oil on global markets as long as its energy facilities face attack from Iranian-backed Houthis, urging the international community to do more to secure supplies.

Now, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine adds further complication. It has contributed to soaring gasoline prices, which the Biden administration is eager to bring down before voters head into midterm elections that could hand control of Congress to the Republicans.

But rebuilding ties won’t be easy. Biden’s decision to bypass Prince Mohammed and deal only with his aging father is seen in Riyadh as a personal insult -- one that won’t be forgiven overnight.

The country's leaders also resent the attention the U.S. has lavished on their tiny neighbor Qatar, and have griped that the U.S. only calls when it needs a favor.

This time, Saudi Arabia - along with Israel and the United Arab Emirates -- want the U.S. to address longer-term concerns over Iran's support for armed groups and offer lasting security guarantees before they rally behind Biden's effort to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin and relieve energy markets.

In a sign the message is filtering through, the U.S. condemned the latest attacks, with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan pledging the U.S. would "fully support our partners in the defense of their territory."

The U.S. had transferred a significant number of Patriot anti-missiles interceptors to Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, acting on urgent requests amid tensions in the relationship, according to an official familiar.

One U.S. official said they're having ongoing discussions on oil and the administration believes they're heading to good place on price pressure cooperation.

In a recent interview with the Atlantic, when asked if Biden misunderstands him, the crown prince responded "simply, I do not care," adding that it was "up to him to think about the interests of America." Of the idea of alienating Saudi Arabia, he replied, "go for it."

Administration officials are debating whether those remarks were just posturing or a genuine shift in outlook by Saudi Arabia, which has built deeper ties with Russia and China as the U.S. has sought to shift focus from the region. Even as those ties grow, most officials argue that the Saudis recognize Beijing is no substitute for Washington.

One person familiar with the administration's stance, who asked not to be named, described Prince Mohammed as pouting, a characterization indicative of U.S. attitude to a key ally at a time of international crisis.

"It's not going well and it's not likely to go well," Kori Schake, director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. "There's a strong tendency in American foreign policy to expect everybody else to drop what they're doing, and immediately turn their attention to helping us address whatever we're worried about."

The Saudi Foreign Ministry and government communications center didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on the kingdom's relationship with the U.S. or potential for a call with Biden.

### *The Holdouts*

People familiar with the matter said the biggest holdouts to softening the U.S. approach have been the president and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Antony Blinken, left, listens as U.S. President Joe Biden speaks on United States' assistance to Ukraine. Biden, according to people familiar, is concerned about blowback in Washington, including from congressional Democrats who've lambasted him as too soft, and from the Washington Post, the influential newspaper that published Khashoggi's columns.

Blinken frets that MBS is still doing things that warrant condemnation. The kingdom recently executed 81 people and civilian casualties have mounted in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been bombing the Houthis since they dislodged the internationally-recognized government in 2015.

Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth, describing in an interview his call with Blinken, said that the U.S. diplomat "acknowledged the limitations that the government faces of their countervailing values and interests."

Just as Biden may have run too hard away from the Saudis early in his tenure, now some in Washington worry he may overcompensate in the rush to align partners against Putin.

"It's all fine and good to argue that we need to work with bad actors against even worse actors," said Matt Duss, senior foreign policy adviser to Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders. "But we should remember that this was the same logic that led the U.S. to treat Vladimir Putin as a partner in the War on Terror."

*--With assistance from Ben Bartenstein and Jennifer Jacobs*

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## **AFRICA**

### **30. EU Freezes Some Mali Army Training Over Mercenary Concerns**

Associated Press, Mar. 21 (1629) | Lorne Cooke

BRUSSELS -- The European Union's top diplomat said Monday that he has ordered the suspension of combat training for soldiers in Mali until he receives guarantees from the government there that the trainees will not be working with Russian mercenaries.

Rebel Malian troops have launched two military coups in recent years. The junta has postponed elections meant to usher in civilian rule, and the EU is concerned that Mali's leaders are working with mercenaries from the Wagner Group, which is accused of rights abuses in Africa and the Middle East.

The 27-nation bloc has been training the Mali armed forces since 2013. It had planned to continue to do so despite the severe instability and political upheaval that has wracked the country since 2012.

“Clearly, our training mission cannot be implicated, in any way, in activities that could call into question the European Union’s reputation,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters after chairing a meeting of the bloc’s foreign ministers.

Borrell said he’s still waiting for guarantees from Mali’s junta, and until then he has ordered the commander in charge of the EU training “to adapt the activities of the mission to the circumstances they are facing.”

“We should maintain training activities that are not directly related to training Malian troops in military combat,” Borrell said, but he added that the mission would not yet be cancelled.

France announced last month that it all its troops would leave Mali by the summer amid tensions with the military junta, but Paris said it would maintain a military presence in neighboring West African nations.

French President Emmanuel Macron has accused Mali’s authorities of neglecting the fight against Islamic extremists.

More than 107 civilians have been killed in recent months in Mali in attacks by the army and jihadist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, Human Rights Watch said in a report last week.

Mali’s soldiers were responsible for at least 71 of the deaths recorded since December 2021, the international rights organization said. Mali’s army has contested some of the report, while adding that it is investigating a number of the attacks and allegations.

The army has been accused of abuses against civilians in southwest and central Mali as soldiers try to stem violence from jihadist fighters who have been staging attacks for nearly a decade.

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## **MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY**

### **31. DOD sets FY-28 target for demonstrating hypersonic defense system**

InsideDefense.com, Mar. 21 (1835) | Not Attributed

The Defense Department has set a fiscal year 2028 target for demonstrating a prototype hypersonic defense system to defeat long-range, ultrafast maneuvering glide vehicles during mid-flight -- more than 10 years after Congress directed the U.S. military to establish a program to plug an anticipated hole in U.S. air- and missile-defense capabilities.

The Pentagon's top weapons tester disclosed the 2028 objective in a report to Congress obtained by the Project on Government Oversight; the Missile Defense Agency had previously only said the goal of the Glide Phase Interceptor program was to demonstrate a capability by the end of this decade.

"Phase I will culminate in a prototype demonstration not later than FY-28," Director of Operational Test and Evaluation Nickolas Guertin wrote in his 2021 annual report of the GPI program.

Last November, MDA selected Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman to advance competing concept designs for a regional Glide Phase Interceptor, setting up a three-way contest for a new Aegis guided missile optimized to defeat a new class of ultra-fast maneuvering weapons and give the Navy a second layer of defense against hypersonic threats.

Nearly five years after MDA was directed by Congress to create a hypersonic defense program, the agency last fall announced the milestone development, awarding Lockheed Martin and Raytheon \$20 million contracts each and Northrop Grumman \$18.5 million to complete accelerated GPI concept designs.

This initial GPI capability development, according to the DOT&E report, includes "concept development, studies and analyses, and technical requirements generation."

GPI is intended to be a second layer of defense against hypersonic threats, building on the currently fielded Standard Missile-6 interceptor used for terminal defense. GPI would engage maneuvering glide vehicles during its "regional" phase -- a distance akin to midcourse engagement but inside the atmosphere against a non-ballistic target.

Because of their speed -- hypersonic weapons travel at least one mile per second -- their maneuverability and altitude, these ultra-fast systems promise military utility that includes the ability to penetrate even the most sophisticated air and missile defense systems.

Both Russia and China have fielded hypersonic glide vehicles, in 2019 and 2020 respectively, according to the Defense Department.

Congress added nearly \$40 million to the Pentagon's FY-22 budget request for hypersonic defense, appropriating \$287 million for the program that funds GPI.

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **32. There's Still Much More Sanctions Can Do**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A17 | Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA)

By starting the largest land war on the European continent since World War II, Russia, a nuclear power, has unleashed the greatest threat to global security in recent memory. Not only are the Ukrainian people's lives and livelihoods at stake, but so is the security of people around the world.

If Vladimir Putin does not conclude that his invasion was a disastrous mistake, the consequences for U.S. national security and the security of Europe, especially the Baltics and Poland, are grave. An insufficient Western response could be seen as a permission slip by other revisionist authoritarians, such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, for their own territorial ambitions.

The sanctions imposed by President Biden -- at Congress's urging -- have been economically damaging to Russia, but not crippling. The ban on American imports of oil minimally harms Mr. Putin, as Americans buy only 5% of Russia's crude oil. Since the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and Europe purposely allow Russia to continue exporting oil and gas, between \$5 billion and \$7 billion in hard currency funds Mr. Putin's war machine each week. Severing this revenue stream now, together with helping Ukraine's heroic defense, is the best chance the U.S. has to convince Mr. Putin that this war was a calamitous blunder that he should immediately abandon.

To cut off Mr. Putin's oil and gas sales globally, the administration and Congress should impose secondary sanctions on the entirety of Russia's financial sector. These penalties would effectively prohibit foreign banks anywhere in the world, under the threat of U.S. sanctions, from making payments to Russian banks, including for oil and gas. They would force the world to make a choice: Do business with the U.S. or do business with Russia. But you can't do both.

Europeans have begun to take modest steps toward ending their dependence on Russian energy. But some private companies in Europe can't cut off their purchases until sanctions are imposed. Orsted, a Danish power company, said it would like to reduce its intake of Russian energy but is contractually obligated to buy it until 2030. Only sanctions would allow the company to break its contract with Gazprom legally.

Russia could turn to China for exports to offset its declining trade with the rest of the world. But with secondary sanctions, China would be obligated, like every other country, to stop doing business with Russian banks. If the Chinese chose to violate these sanctions, they would then lose access to the U.S. financial system.

The Biden administration expressed concerns that secondary sanctions could hurt America's relationships with European allies. But there's a potential solution. As the Treasury Department is already doing with existing

sanctions, the U.S. can work with foreign governments to create so-called wind-down periods. These transitions will give European allies a say in how these secondary sanctions are implemented.

It would be temporarily costly for Europe to adapt to a world without Russian energy, but it is manageable. With warm spring weather arriving, European demand for Russian gas is about to drop precipitously. Economists and analysts predict that the higher prices Europeans will pay for non-Russian energy won't come close to being economically catastrophic for the eurozone. And Europeans can begin reducing their dependence on Russian gas by building new liquefied natural gas terminals, improving continental gas pipeline connectivity, and suspending the phase-out of nuclear power.

The U.S. must accelerate efforts to bolster its own energy independence. While President Biden claimed in a recent press conference that the current crisis "should motivate us to accelerate the transition to clean energy" and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, this can't -- and won't -- happen overnight. It would take decades to develop the technology needed to produce consistent and reliable green energy at such an enormous scale. The administration implicitly acknowledged this by going on bended knee to plead with Venezuela's dictator to produce more oil.

The administration should instead bolster America's energy independence by reversing its disastrous anti-fossil-fuel policies: restart the Keystone XL pipeline, expedite approvals of natural gas pipelines and LNG facilities approvals, and repeal its broad and punitive regulations and restrictions on U.S. oil and gas production.

There is an undeniable cost to energy consumers from cutting off Mr. Putin's oil and gas revenue. But the price of thwarting his assault on the Ukrainian people isn't as expensive as allowing him to reconstitute a Russian empire. Secondary sanctions will give Ukraine a fighting chance to win this war, and defeating Mr. Putin now will prevent the next one.

--Mr. Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican, is ranking member of the Senate Banking Committee

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### **33. Don't Expect China to Bring About Peace in Ukraine**

Bloomberg Opinion, Mar. 21 (0930) | Minxin Pei

Any hopes that U.S. President Joe Biden might persuade his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to help stop the war in Ukraine should probably be put aside. China wants to see an early end to the conflict. But it won't use its leverage to bring one about.

Biden and Xi appear to have talked past each other when they spoke on the phone last Friday. In its readout of the call, the White House maintained that Biden focused on Ukraine and warned of consequences for China if it provided Russia "material support." The Chinese summary, on the other hand, mentioned Ukraine only in passing

and highlighted Biden's commitment to the "one-China" policy and his pledge not to engage in a new cold war with China.

That's not because China, as some officials in Beijing apparently believe, gains from standing aloof while the U.S. and Russia exhaust themselves in a drawn-out European conflict. In fact, China is losing every day that the fighting continues. The only question is how much damage it will suffer and how fast.

China finds itself in this predicament in large measure because of the Sino-Russia joint statement on strategic partnership it signed on February 4. At the time, many in Beijing and elsewhere saw the agreement as a geopolitical masterstroke. Having Russia as a quasi-ally would be a net strategic gain for China. Moreover, tensions between Russia and the U.S. would presumably force Washington to divert resources and attention away from the Indo-Pacific, allowing China freer rein in the region.

Now, the poor performance of the Russian military on the battlefield and the unified response of the U.S. and its allies to the invasion have scrambled that calculus. Instead of a lightning victory, Putin risks a humiliating defeat or a quagmire as Western sanctions cripple the Russian economy.

The former would be China's worst nightmare. The strategic consequences of such an outcome are unthinkable for Beijing. Putin undoubtedly understands this, which may be one reason why he is eager to suck China into the conflict by requesting military aid.

A prolonged war would be only slightly less disastrous for China. A Russian quagmire might at least buy leaders in Beijing some time to rethink their strategy. But an exhausted Russia will also raise pressure on China to provide more assistance.

Openly supporting Putin now might turn the tide on the ground in Russia's favor, enough at least to persuade him to accept a ceasefire and negotiated settlement. But the risks of providing such help are almost certainly too high.

The fact is that China is working off a different timetable than Russia. Unlike Putin, Xi believes that the current international order, however unsatisfactory, still allows enough space for China to gain power and influence. If tensions with the U.S. can be managed well enough to avoid a premature collision, time is theoretically on China's side. Its stronger growth momentum relative to the U.S. should gradually tilt the balance of power in China's favor.

Backing Putin's war efforts could precipitate an immediate confrontation with the West, for which China is not prepared. However bad China's ties with the U.S., Europe and Japan, it still needs access to their markets: Those three partners accounted for 52% of China's total foreign trade in 2021, compared with 3.8% for Russia. China also depends heavily on advanced Western technology, particularly microchips, while its big companies and banks cannot yet afford to be cut off from the dollar.

At the same time, Xi surely feels he cannot abandon Putin. An attempt to pressure the Russian leader to compromise quickly might fail, which would be a huge loss of face for Beijing. Or it might succeed but antagonize Putin and even weaken him at home so much that his hold on power is threatened.

With no good options, China's only coping strategy for now is to do what it can to help Russia without crossing U.S. red lines.

This is not a cost-free position. China's support for Putin has badly tarnished its international image. It is deepening tensions with the U.S., feeding the narrative that a Sino-U.S. confrontation is inevitable and raising the risks of one breaking out before China is ready.

Even more worrying, China is losing ground in Europe. If major European countries had been ambivalent about taking sides in the Sino-U.S. rivalry, China's embrace of Putin has made such strategic neutrality impossible. In coming years, Brussels will almost certainly move closer to Washington.

What seemed a brilliant move a few short weeks ago increasingly looks like a terrible strategic decision. Instead of benefiting from Russia-U.S. tensions, China finds itself at the mercy of events and its long game in grave peril. Whoever wins in Ukraine, China has already suffered irreparable losses.

*--Minxin Pei is a professor of government at Claremont McKenna College*

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### **34. A Crisis in U.S.-Arab Relations**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22 (0200), Pg. A19 | Firas Maksad

When the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates decline phone calls from the president of the United States, rebuff his requests to help lower oil prices, and shy away from condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and when the U.A.E. hosts Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad in Abu Dhabi, there is no doubt that a major crisis in U.S.-Arab Gulf relations is under way.

This will be exacerbated in the weeks ahead if the U.S. nears an agreement with Iran over its nuclear program, lifting many sanctions in the process. How Washington handles this unfolding predicament will shape the region's future, and America's place in it, for decades.

To some in the West, the behavior of some of America's Arab Gulf partners typifies the sort of erratic decisions made by strongmen such as Russia's Vladimir Putin. But does that explain why most of America's other Middle Eastern allies -- Israel, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt -- also are expanding ties to Russia and China at America's expense? Are all these countries led by irrational strongmen?

No, America's Middle Eastern partners have rationally concluded that they need to diversify their foreign-policy options given Washington's reluctance to uphold its defense commitments. Dramatic scenes of the disorderly U.S. exit from Afghanistan confirmed that America is in retreat. For Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. in particular, the lack of a meaningful American response to Iran-sponsored drone attacks on airports and oil facilities in 2019 and 2022 was the straw that broke the camel's back.

After the last major attack this January, the U.A.E. didn't hear from U.S. senior administration officials, and when Gen. Frank McKenzie, America's top commander in charge of the region, paid a visit over three weeks later, Mohamed bin Zayed, the country's de facto leader, refused to meet with him. Concerns about America's commitment had morphed into feelings of abandonment and anger.

The Biden administration's behavior toward the Gulf Arab states contradicts its National Security Strategy, which emphasizes revitalizing America's alliances and partnerships. Team Biden has two mistaken assumptions: that the rise of China and return of Russia as great-power rivals necessitates a recalibration from the Middle East to Southeast Asia and now to Eastern Europe, and that achieving detente with Iran, beginning with a nuclear deal, would make the region more stable.

To U.S. officials, these assumptions are complementary and mutually reinforcing: An American retreat from the Middle East should make Iran less aggressive. In turn, a U.S.-Iran detente would allow Washington more time to focus on emerging threats elsewhere. On the surface this appears to be a win-win arrangement, since Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. and Israel in theory stand to benefit from an Iranian commitment to de-escalation.

But this strategy is built on faulty foundations. In reality, the Middle East is "the Wild West of great power competition" according to Gen. McKenzie. It sits at the crossroads of three continents and includes three of the world's most important maritime choke points, vital for global trade and commerce. It also accounts for about half of global oil reserves and more than a third of oil production.

The U.S. can't engage effectively in a great-power competition while relinquishing its dominant position in such a strategic part of the world. When the void left by the U.S. is being filled by Russian military encroachment in North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea corridor, and as China has displaced the U.S. as the lead trading partner for most of the Middle East, allies and partners will need to adjust accordingly.

There is also no guarantee that an American-Iranian detente would lead to a more stable Middle East. Once most Western sanctions are lifted, and American deterrence across the region wanes, Iran's appetite for expansionism will likely increase. This could feed further conflict, stiffen Saudi determination to match Iran by also becoming a threshold nuclear state, and suck the U.S. into future military entanglements.

Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. have deepened cooperation with both Russia and China out of necessity, not preference. Should the Biden administration renew its commitment to regional defense by publicly affirming a

strategic alliance, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi will revert to more-cooperative ties with Washington, including on oil prices, at the expense of Moscow and Beijing.

It isn't too late. The U.S. can signal its renewed commitment to the region by designating a special envoy assigned to restore trust and elevate the relationship, particularly since there hasn't been a U.S. ambassador in Riyadh or Abu Dhabi for years. The U.S. can also expand Arab Gulf air defenses by meeting requests for deploying more anti-missile defense systems, stepping up intelligence cooperation, and providing early warning against incoming attacks.

All these measures are purely defensive, and none are likely to draw the U.S. into new conflicts. To the contrary, they would deter unanticipated escalation and provide billions in revenue to the U.S. economy through new defense sales. More importantly, they would help assure that a strategic part of the world remains within America's orbit, that policies of key partners remain in sync with U.S. interests, and that phone calls from the president don't go unanswered.

*--Maksad is an adjunct professor at George Washington University's Elliott School for International Affairs and a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute*

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### **35. The West is underestimating Russia's brutality**

Washington Post, Mar. 22 (0115), Pg. A21 | Andriy Yermak

Ukraine's resistance against Russia's horrific invasion has exceeded every outside prediction. Many in the West did not understand Ukrainians' love for their freedom, for their democracy. For us, losing our country would be worse than death. And that's why we fight - because defeat is not an option.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered this message to a joint session of the U.S. Congress and to parliaments across Europe. He also pleaded for greater military assistance and the establishment of a no-fly zone for humanitarian - not military - purposes. Many countries have stepped up to provide critical military and humanitarian assistance. However, given Russian President Vladimir Putin's clear intention to ramp up the bloodshed, Ukraine still needs more.

While the United States, Poland and many other freedom-loving countries are standing firm with Ukraine, some states in Europe seem willing to accept a Ukraine partially occupied by Russian invaders - anything so they can keep buying Russian gas and oil and conduct business as usual.

But business as usual now means accepting Russians bombing maternity hospitals and theaters full of civilians taking shelter. These atrocities are part of the Russian siege on the city of Mariupol, which has left hundreds of thousands of residents without food, clean water, electricity and communications. More than 1,200 civilians have been murdered. Russia violated an agreement on a humanitarian corridor almost before it began. This is how it

wages wars. It did it in Grozny in 1999 and in Syria in 2015. Now, it is doing it in Ukraine. This is a scorched-earth campaign to wipe Ukraine - its people, its culture, its history - off the map.

Just as many erroneously predicted that Ukraine would fall within 72 hours, many failed to predict the mass atrocities the Russian troops would commit despite their long history of absolute disregard for life, and lust for blood and destruction. Only the establishment of a no-fly zone to protect humanitarian corridors will stop the carnage, just as the United States and its allies and partners did in Iraq in 1991, in Bosnia from 1993 to 1995, and in Libya in 2011. Despite these countries not belonging to NATO, the West intervened to stop the inhumane targeting of civilians and facilitate humanitarian assistance, which saved countless lives.

If the West won't do it now, then we plead for the proper weapons so we can do it ourselves. If not, the loss of people, infrastructure, businesses, and our historic landmarks and monuments will be on the West's collective conscience.

On March 11, President Biden stated that the United States "will not fight a war against Russia in Ukraine." But the truth is that Russia is waging war against the West already, not just Ukraine. Russians are fighting the values Ukraine shares with the West to make the West recognize Moscow's exclusive right to dictate to other nations how they should live. You may be reluctant to go to war, but the Russian aggressor has made the choice for you.

There is now a new world order. Those who stand with Ukraine and fight for common values will lead it, and the others will lose their political, economic and ideological influence. The United States, Poland and many other countries are forging this new paradigm, but the undisputed leader is President Zelenskyy. He has shown fortitude and resilience to NATO and the European Union, and has rallied the collective West around the need to protect democratic values.

But Ukrainian soldiers are staring down a Russian military that is just getting started. A Russian military that keeps erasing Ukrainian cities with indiscriminate cruise-missile and MLRS barrages. Ukrainians are willing to fight this war for the West as well as for ourselves - but we can't do it without the necessary military equipment.

We need the defensive lethal assistance President Zelenskyy has requested repeatedly: fighter jets, air and missile defense systems, drones, anti-armor weapons, guns, ammunition, protective equipment. If we don't get the equipment we need to succeed, Putin won't stop in Ukraine. He will go for NATO next.

Ukrainian soldiers, citizens and volunteers from around the world are valiantly holding back the Russian invaders, for now. The Ukrainian people have shown they can lead the struggle for democracy against tyranny. We just need more support. To freedom-loving people around the world we say: This is your war, too. Help us win it. If not, the harshest dictatorship since World War II will triumph over Europe.

The West cannot allow this to happen.

*--The writer is head of the presidential office of Ukraine*

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# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, March 31

## OVERVIEW

U.S. intelligence officials said advisers were shielding Russian President Vladimir Putin from adverse news, and Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby cautioned that Russian negotiators might be unable to arrive at an enduring agreement if President Putin wasn't "fully informed of how poorly he's doing," the *Washington Post* wrote. In testimony before the HASC, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander said the Biden administration is working to supply Slovakia with replacements for their S-300 missile systems, whose current stocks would be sent to Ukraine, according to *Defense News*. Also of note, Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth told the Future of Defense Summit that the Ukraine war has resulted in "probably the most dangerous security environment that I've been in in 25 years of working in national security," *The Hill* reported.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. U.S. says Putin being misled, as Ukraine refugee tally hits four million

*Washington Post*, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A1 | Michael Birnbaum, Ellen Francis, Adela Suliman and Paul Sonne

Russian President Vladimir Putin's advisers are shielding him from how badly the invasion of Ukraine is going, top U.S. officials said Wednesday, as the conflict raged on despite peace talks and the number of Ukrainians who have fled their country topped 4 million. "We have information that Putin felt misled by the Russian military, which has resulted in persistent tension between Putin and his military leadership," White House spokeswoman Kate Bedingfield told reporters. "We believe that Putin is being misinformed by his advisers about how badly the Russian military is performing and how the Russian economy is being crippled by sanctions because his senior advisers are too afraid to tell him the truth."

### 2. Will Slovakia send Ukraine S-300 air defenses? The Pentagon is working on it

*Defense News Online*, Mar. 30 (1326) | Joe Gould

A top Pentagon official told lawmakers Wednesday the Biden administration is working to accommodate NATO ally Slovakia's offer to send more S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Ukraine, following Russia's invasion. Slovakia has agreed to provide Ukraine with the Soviet-era system to help defend against Russian airstrikes, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander said at a House Armed Services Committee hearing the U.S. is working out Slovakia's request for some kind of backfill.

### 3. Army secretary says now is 'most dangerous security environment' in 25 years

*The Hill Online*, Mar. 30 (1610) | Julia Mueller

U.S. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said Wednesday that Russia's war on Ukraine and the risk of the conflict escalating make this moment the most dangerous in more than two decades. "That's why, you know, so much

emphasis is being placed on defending every inch of NATO territory and putting a very strong deterrent posture forward,” Wormuth said.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Putin is attacking ‘core of transatlantic security,’ US secretary of defense says**

*CNN.com, Mar. 30 (1330) | Ellie Kaufman*

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion involves not just attacking Ukraine, but also “attacking principles at the core of transatlantic security.” “Putin’s war of choice has taken a terrible toll on civilian casualties and forced millions of innocent Ukrainians to flee their country,” he said.

### **5. The list of military ‘items’ named for Confederacy is more than 750 long**

*Military Times Online, Mar. 30 (1318) | Meghann Myers*

A congressionally-mandated commission spent the past year traveling to military installations, meeting with interested groups and sifting through thousands of recommendations as part of an effort to rename posts, ships, buildings, streets and anything else the Defense Department has named in honor of the Confederacy.

### **6. Armed services didn’t implement dozens of measures to help stop sexual assault, GAO finds**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 30 (1150) | Chad Garland*

The military failed to keep up with the mushrooming number of measures that Congress has required the armed services to implement to address sexual assault, a government watchdog revealed. As of October 2021, the Defense Department had not fully implemented 18% of the nearly 200 unique requirements imposed in legislation since 2004, the Government Accountability Office found in a report published this week.

### **7. GAO: Cyber Command lacks metrics for assessing its weapons and platforms**

*FedScoop.com, Mar. 30 (1651) | Mark Pomerleau*

Despite some progress in maturing its architecture for guiding major purchases of platforms, U.S. Cyber Command still has not developed an outcome-based metric to support assessments of programs and staffing issues for acquisitions, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Wednesday.

### **8. Algorithmic Warfare: DoD Tackling Software Development Challenges**

*National Defense Magazine Online, Mar. 30 (2029) | Yasmin Tadjdeh*

The Pentagon is overhauling its acquisition of critical software as it increasingly relies on new systems for automation and decision making, officials say. The strategy will support Pentagon priorities such as the development of joint all-domain command and control and artificial intelligence platforms.

## **COVID-19**

**9. Navy Stops COVID-19 Vaccine Separations for 4,095 Sailors Who Requested Religious Exemptions**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 30 (2102) | Heather Mongilio*

The Navy has stopped separating sailors for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine on religious grounds after a federal judge granted class-action certification in the case of Navy SEALs suing Department of Defense officials over the vaccine mandate, defense officials told USNI News on Wednesday.

**EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

**10. Biden will use Defense Production Act to increase supply of critical minerals**

*Washington Post, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A15 | Steven Mufson and Paulina Villegas*

The White House might invoke the Defense Production Act as soon as this week to spur greater domestic output of raw materials for clean energy technology products and reduce U.S. dependence on foreign supply chains. President Biden could issue a presidential determination to encourage domestic production of critical minerals used for stationary large-capacity batteries and those used in electric vehicles, according to an official familiar with the plan who spoke on the condition of anonymity because it hasn't been formally announced.

**11. Biden's Nuke Review Omits 'No First Use', Kills Naval Cruise Missile**

*DefenseOne.com, Mar. 30 (1456) | Tara Copp*

President Joe Biden has walked back from his longtime preferred policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons, according to his administration's 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, which also seeks to shrink nuclear arsenals, starting with a new missile introduced under Donald Trump.

**12. U.S. Diplomat Pressured on Promises to Add Consulates**

*New York Times, Mar. 31 (0300), Pg. A6 | Lara Jakes and Aida Alami*

In talks this week with the top American diplomat, Arab leaders made clear they wanted a concrete sign of the Biden administration's support: the opening of U.S. consulates in both Jerusalem and the disputed territory of Western Sahara. But Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken studiously avoided any public commitment as to when those diplomatic missions might become a reality, if ever.

**13. New food insecurity stipend should help as many troops as possible, lawmakers argue**

*Military Times Online, Mar. 30 (1547) | Leo Shane III*

House leaders are pushing military leaders to make eligibility and enrollment in the Defense Department's new financial assistance program as generous as possible, saying that is needed to "address food and financial insecurity among servicemembers."

**14. 'The Navy owes the American public an apology,' Luria says during rebuke of Biden's budget proposal**

*Daily Press Online (Newport News, VA), Mar. 30 (1708) | Dave Ress*

Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Virginia Beach, was blunt: “In the face of current threats, we are gutting the Navy now to say we’re going to rebuild it in 10 or 20 years,” she said Wednesday. As vice chair of the House Armed Services Committee and a key player pulling together a bipartisan agreement last year to overrule an administration proposal to mothball seven cruisers, Luria’s reaction signaled an unfriendly Congressional reception for the fiscal 2023 spending plan.

## **EUROPE**

### **15. Ukrainian President Says Defense Is At a ‘Turning Point’**

*Associated Press, Mar. 31 (0139) | Nebi Qena and Yuras Karmanau*

The Ukrainian president said his country’s defense against the Russian invasion is at a “turning point” and again pressed the United States for more help, hours after the Kremlin’s forces reneged on a pledge to scale back some of their operations. Russian bombardment of areas around Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv and intensified attacks elsewhere in the country further undermined hopes for progress toward ending the brutal war. Talks between Ukraine and Russia were set to resume Friday by video, according to the head of the Ukrainian delegation, David Arakhamia.

### **16. Western Allies Cool To Plan for Ukraine Security Guarantee**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 31 (0200), Pg. A1 | Jared Malsin, Lindsay Wise and Bojan Pancevski*

Western officials are balking at Ukraine’s proposal for a NATO-style mutual-defense pledge that could draw their military forces into a war with Russia, even as they expressed some receptiveness to the idea of international security guarantees as part of a deal to end hostilities. President Biden has yet to comment on the proposal, and White House communications director Kate Bedingfield declined to say Wednesday whether the U.S. would be willing to serve as a security guarantor for Ukraine.

### **17. NATO Commander Increases Prediction to 550 F-35s in Europe by 2030**

*Air Force Magazine Online, Mar. 30 (1736) | Greg Hadley*

F-35s in Eastern Europe have been performing some “elegant” intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions as part of the NATO response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the head of U.S. European Command told lawmakers March 30—and he expects the fighter’s presence on the continent to expand dramatically by the end of the decade, exceeding earlier predictions.

### **18. Ukraine says Russia planting mines in Black Sea as shipping perils grow**

*Reuters, Mar. 30 (1022) | Jonathan Saul*

Ukraine accused Russia on Wednesday of planting mines in the Black Sea and said some of those munitions had to be defused off Turkey and Romania as risks to vital merchant shipping in the region grow. The Black Sea is a

major shipping route for grain, oil and oil products. Its waters are shared by Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Turkey as well as Ukraine and Russia.

**19. Baltic Presidents: 'Forward Defense' Needed to Deter Russia**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 30 (1357) | John Grady*

The presidents of the three Baltic nations agree the time of providing “tripwire” forces to NATO’s eastern front is over and must be replaced with a strengthened “forward defense” to deter future Russian aggression in Europe. Speaking at an online Atlantic Council forum Tuesday, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said his country continues to face a “serious threat” along the Suwalki Gap, the 80-kilometer stretch of territory between Kaliningrad, home to large Russian naval base on the Baltic, and Belarus, a key Kremlin ally in the invasion of Ukraine.

## **RUSSIA**

**20. Pentagon says Russia sends 1,000 fighters from military contractor to Donbas region**

*The Hill Online, Mar. 30 (1640) | Ellen Mitchell*

About 1,000 mercenaries from the shadowy Russian military contractor the Wagner Group are now in the Donbas region of Ukraine, pointing to a shift in Kremlin tactics in the war, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Wednesday.

**21. U.S. official says export curbs on Russia hit car production and tank building**

*Reuters, Mar. 30 (1752) | Karen Freifeld*

Global restrictions on exports to Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine have shut down a car maker, halted work on tanks and cut a Russian computer maker’s access to circuits used in communications equipment, a U.S. official said on Wednesday. Export controls were never expected to have immediate effects, she said, but noted the Ukrainian government reported that Russia’s two major tank plants halted work over a lack of foreign components. Baikal Electronics, a Russian semiconductor company and computer manufacturer, was cut off from integrated circuits to support its surveillance, servers, and other domestic communications equipment, she added.

**22. Russia sanctions should increase until full Ukraine withdrawal – UK**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 30 (1323) | Not Attributed*

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday said Western powers should tighten the economic noose around Russia until it withdraws all its soldiers from Ukraine. Johnson said also that the government in London was looking at “going up a gear” in its military aid to Ukraine.

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**23. U.S., South Korea seen resuming major military drills as North Korea tensions rise**

*Reuters, Mar. 31 (0258) | Not Attributed*

Joint South Korean and U.S. military drills set to kick off next month could for the first time in years include more weaponry and troops, and more aggressive messaging as tensions with North Korea rise. Neither the South Korean or U.S. militaries have confirmed what this year's annual drills may entail, but a recent series of unusual displays of military might in and around the Korean peninsula suggest a more muscular show could be in the works, analysts said.

**24. North Korea not telling the whole truth about latest ICBM test, South Korean official says**

*CNN.com, Mar. 31 (0216) | Brad Lendon and Gawon Bae*

North Korea's launch last week of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), reported to be its most formidable yet, may have been a less advanced weapon than previously believed, according to a South Korean military official. The official, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, said South Korean and US analysis of the March 24 launch of what North Korea claimed was a new Hwasong-17 ICBM, was in actual fact the older and slightly smaller Hwasong-15 -- an ICBM last tested by Pyongyang in 2017.

## **CHINA**

**25. China, Russia 'more determined' to boost ties, Beijing says**

*Reuters, Mar. 30 (0832) | Not Attributed*

Moscow and Beijing are "more determined" to develop bilateral ties and boost cooperation, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Wednesday following a meeting in eastern China with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, amid the Ukraine crisis. The two also condemned what they called illegal and counter-productive Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over its actions in Ukraine, the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

**26. China, Solomon Islands agree controversial security pact**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 31 (0243) | Not Attributed*

The Solomon Islands on Thursday said it had inked a wide-ranging security pact with Beijing, an agreement Western allies fear will pave the way for the first Chinese military foothold in the South Pacific. "Officials of Solomon Islands and the People's Republic of China have initialled elements of a bilateral Security Cooperation Framework between the two countries today," said a statement from the prime minister's office in Honiara.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

**27. Invasion deepens rift between U.S. and gulf nations**

*Washington Post, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A1 | Karen DeYoung and Missy Ryan*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has heightened existing strains in the Biden administration's relationships in the Middle East, even as it has brought new unity to NATO and transatlantic ties. Nowhere have the bonds been as frayed as with Persian Gulf partners Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Their reluctance to increase oil output as gas prices rise, along with what the Biden administration sees as a less-than-robust condemnation of Moscow, are among the most visible current reasons.

**28. Ukraine war has 'deadly' impact on Arab region – US top diplomat**

*Agence France-Presse, Mar. 30 (1657) | Not Attributed*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is having a "deadly" impact and threatening security in the Arab world, particularly through spiralling wheat prices, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Algiers Wednesday. Addressing journalists in Algiers, he said that while Russia's invasion of Ukraine seemed distant, it has already had "deadly consequences for citizens in the region". "It's having a direct impact on their lives right now, particularly with regard to rising food prices... especially wheat," he said.

**29. U.N., U.S. press for broader Yemen truce after unilateral moves**

*Reuters, Mar. 30 (1913) | Aziz El Yaakoubi*

United Nations and United States envoys on Wednesday welcomed unilateral truce moves by Yemen's warring sides as encouraging steps, while stressing the need for a more comprehensive ceasefire that would help alleviate a dire humanitarian crisis. The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Houthis had said it would temporarily halt military operations from Wednesday after the Iran-aligned group this week declared a three-day cessation of cross-border attacks and ground offensives in Yemen.

**30. US imposes new sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile program**

*CNN.com, Mar. 30 (1413) | Jeremy Herb*

The Biden administration on Wednesday enacted new sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile program in response to a missile attack on Erbil in Iraq earlier this month. The Treasury Department announced the new sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps unit responsible for research and development of ballistic missiles, as well as Iran's Parchin Chemical Industries and an Iranian intermediary who worked on procurement of parts for propelling missiles.

## **INSTALLATIONS**

**31. Plans for Hospital Closures as Part of Military Health System Reform Forging Ahead After Pause**

*Military.com, Mar. 30 (1142) | Patricia Kime*

The Defense Health Agency is moving ahead with plans to close some 50 hospitals and clinics following a pause that began at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The closures are part of the agency's broader effort under a Defense Department initiative to shift management of the military services' 51 hospitals and 424 health

clinics to the Defense Health Agency and focus the Army, Navy and Air Force's medical commands on providing health care primarily for military personnel.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **32. There's a Better Way to Sell American Weapons**

*Wall Street Journal Online, Mar. 30 (1828) | Grant Rumley and David Schenker*

Arms exports are a key source of revenue for Russia, typically second only to oil and gas exports, and the war in Ukraine has jeopardized that revenue stream. Russia's arms sales have slumped in recent years, and the combination of Western sanctions and Russia's poor performance in Ukraine won't help. The U.S. can use this opportunity to lure partners away from Russian arms and begin to box Russia out of strategic markets. But it must change its approach.

### **33. Russia Could Still Salvage Victory in Ukraine**

*Wall Street Journal, Mar. 31 (0200), Pg. A17 | Samir Puri*

Russia has shown that no matter how badly things go, it can find a way to impose its influence on Ukraine. In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea but the uprisings it inspired in Odessa and Kharkiv fizzled, while its separatist republics in Donetsk and Luhansk gained only incomplete footholds in these regions. Yet that was enough to destabilize Ukraine: Russia's proxies waged a limited war in the Donbas for eight years, giving Vladimir Putin his veneer-thin justification for invading this February. Mr. Putin may settle for less than he set out to achieve, recasting this botched invasion as the next chapter in regaining Russia's postimperial influence in Ukraine.

### **34. How to Meet the Threat of Hypersonic Missiles**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Mar. 30 (0800) | Editorial*

Headlines about Russia's use of "hypersonic" missiles in Ukraine have fueled fears that the U.S. is falling behind its rivals in developing such weapons. Although the U.S. needs a strategy to counter the push by Russia and China to deploy hypersonic arsenals, it should be cautious about splurging on new technologies the military doesn't actually need.

### **35. A Megaton of Waste**

*Slate.com (War Stories), Mar. 30 (1354) | Fred Kaplan*

President Joe Biden's defense budget for 2023 is gargantuan. It comes to \$813.3 billion, nearly \$60 billion higher than the budget he requested a year ago for 2022. Just a few weeks ago, Congress passed a bill adding \$25 billion to that earlier budget. Biden's new budget, which he submitted on Monday, accepts the congressional hike as a baseline and raises the pot by another \$32 billion. And yet congressional Republicans say that, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its threats to expand further, Biden's new budget is much too small, and they're set to throw in tens of billions of dollars more. Does this make any sense? The world may be more dangerous than it

seemed a few months, much less a few years, ago. But have its dangers grown so much in the past year that they warrant spending an extra \$60 billion—and so much in the past few weeks that they demand \$30 billion or \$40 billion more? (For anyone wondering, these increases go beyond what’s necessary for the military budget to keep up with inflation.) Finally, does Biden’s budget spend this extra money in a way that actually deals with the growing threats from Russia or anyplace else?

## TOP STORIES

### 1. U.S. says Putin being misled, as Ukraine refugee tally hits four million

Washington Post, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A1 | Michael Birnbaum, Ellen Francis, Adela Suliman and Paul Sonne

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s advisers are shielding him from how badly the invasion of Ukraine is going, top U.S. officials said Wednesday, as the conflict raged on despite peace talks and the number of Ukrainians who have fled their country topped 4 million.

Putin’s advisers may be afraid to deliver bad news to a leader who has been willing to take increasingly extreme measures against people who dissent within the Russian system, U.S. intelligence officials said. One worrisome consequence, Pentagon officials said, was that negotiations underway between Russia and Ukraine to end the nearly five-week-old invasion could be undermined by misinformed expectations and directives from the Russian side.

“We have information that Putin felt misled by the Russian military, which has resulted in persistent tension between Putin and his military leadership,” White House spokeswoman Kate Bedingfield told reporters. “We believe that Putin is being misinformed by his advisers about how badly the Russian military is performing and how the Russian economy is being crippled by sanctions because his senior advisers are too afraid to tell him the truth.”

Both the Ukrainian and Russian negotiators had generally positive things to say Wednesday about the most recent round of talks, which concluded a day earlier in Istanbul. But adding to the general sense that there are splits on the Russian side or, at a minimum, a lack of understanding about Putin’s desires, some top Russian officials gave contradictory statements.

Ukrainian officials said Russian bombing and shelling continued on Wednesday, although forces did appear to be withdrawing from around Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv, something the Russian side had signaled a day earlier. A spokesman for the Russian defense ministry said that its military was refocusing its operations on eastern Ukraine, away from the Ukrainian capital.

Top U.S. officials said that Putin’s alleged information problems are one of the weaknesses of the Russian system.

“One of the Achilles’ heels of autocracies is that we don’t have people in those systems who speak truth to power or have the ability to speak truth to power. And I think that is something that we’re seeing in Russia,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters during a visit to Algiers.

At the Pentagon on Wednesday, spokesman John Kirby called it “discomforting” that Putin “may not fully understand the degree to which his forces are failing” thus far in Ukraine.

“One outcome of that could be a less-than-faithful effort at negotiating some sort of settlement here,” Kirby said. “If he’s not fully informed of how poorly he’s doing, then how are his negotiators going to come up with an agreement that is enduring?”

The exodus of Ukrainians - nearly 10 percent of the country’s prewar population fleeing in five weeks - underscored the regional crisis that Europe is now facing. The U.N. refugee agency estimates that an additional 6.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced inside Ukraine, meaning about a quarter of the nation of 44 million people has been uprooted. An estimated 2 million of those who have fled the country are children.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi arrived in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, near the Polish border, and said he would look for ways “to increase our support to people affected and displaced by this senseless war.”

The flood of Ukrainians into other countries has started to overwhelm their ability to absorb them, officials warned. More than half of the refugees have fled to Poland, while others have gone to other neighboring countries such as Romania and Moldova. About 350,000 people have gone to Russia, according to the latest U.N. refugee figures.

The International Organization for Migration has said nearly 200,000 non-Ukrainians who were living in the country have also had to escape.

Ultimately, the refugees are likely to be spread across Europe, and some countries are bracing for the impact. Estonia, a country of 1.3 million people, may take in up to 100,000 Ukrainians by the end of April, for example, a step that would balloon the country’s population by nearly 8 percent. Proportionally, that would be as if the United States were to take in 25 million refugees in the same time frame.

The European Union has enacted unprecedented measures to allow Ukrainians “temporary protection” anywhere in the 27-country bloc for up to three years.

The apparent breakdown in communication inside the Kremlin adds to the challenges of Ukrainian and other European and American policymakers who are seeking to end the conflict. Leaders of both the Ukrainian and

Russian negotiation teams offered a mixed picture of the talks on Wednesday, saying they had made progress during talks in Istanbul on Tuesday but that there were still disagreements on key issues.

From the Ukrainian perspective, the Russian team “definitely moved the negotiations forward,” Ihor Zhovkva, deputy chief of staff to President Volodymyr Zelensky, told BBC Radio on Wednesday.

“This was the first time that, instead of giving its own ultimatums and red lines, the Russian side listened to Ukrainian positions,” Zhovkva said. He also said Ukraine is still seeking security guarantees in a legally binding treaty to end the war and stop future aggression.

“They took into consideration our proposals,” he said. “Hopefully, when they come back with their proposals, we will be moving forward to the conclusion of this international treaty.”

But Zhovkva insisted that Ukraine would not trade an “inch” of its eastern territory or ever consider it Russian land.

The head of the Russian delegation offered a similar, relatively positive assessment. “Yesterday, for the first time, the Ukrainian side provided . . . its readiness to fulfill a number of important conditions for building normal and, I hope, good neighborly relations with Russia in the future,” Vladimir Medinsky said in a televised statement.

Medinsky outlined some of Ukraine’s commitments, some of which Russia said it had demanded “for years,” including Ukraine’s promise not to join NATO, renunciation of nuclear weapons, a refusal to host foreign military bases and military contingents, and to conduct military exercises only with the consent of guarantor states, including Russia.

These sets of principles, Medinsky said, gave way to a “possible future agreement.”

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov poured cold water on hopes of a speedy resolution, saying that an agreement is not close. “So far, we cannot say anything very promising, any breakthroughs. There’s still a long, long way to go,” he told reporters.

Consultations continued Wednesday, with a lower-level team of Ukrainian officials flying to Tel Aviv to talk to Israeli policymakers. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has offered to be a mediator in the conflict.

President Biden spoke by phone to Zelensky, getting an update on negotiations and offering an additional \$500 million in aid on top of \$16.3 billion already promised for the country, according to a White House readout of the call.

Russia's promised drawdown around the key cities of Kyiv and Chernihiv did not halt hostilities near the cities on Wednesday. The governor of the Chernihiv region, Viacheslav Chaus, said that Russian forces "spent the whole night striking" the city.

But by Wednesday evening, the Ukrainian military said that it was indeed seeing a "partial withdrawal" of Russian forces around both cities. The British Defense Ministry said that the withdrawal may be connected to Russian units "suffering heavy losses" and returning to Belarus and Russia to "reorganize and resupply."

Russia meanwhile continued a high-stakes dance around energy supplies for Europe, for which it had been demanding payments in rubles starting Thursday. Europe currently pays for its natural gas in euros, and the switch in currencies would apparently enable Russia to sidestep sanctions that have frozen much of the country's hard currency reserves.

European leaders have refused to make the switch, entertaining the possibility that Russia will cut off energy shipments altogether. In a measure of European concerns, German policymakers on Wednesday activated the "early warning" phase of an emergency plan to ensure natural gas supplies in the event of a disruption, asking people to "reduce their consumption as much as possible."

In a sign that Russia isn't yet prepared to flip off the switch, Peskov said the Kremlin would postpone the March 31 deadline to switch to ruble payments as it continued discussions with European leaders. A Russian cutoff of natural gas and oil would be profoundly painful to Europe, potentially leading to energy rationing and some factories being asked to go offline temporarily. But it would also cut off one of the last and biggest remaining flows of cash to the Kremlin.

The disruption to global energy supplies can also be felt in the United States, amid rising prices at the gasoline pump and increased costs for the components and metals needed for battery technology. Acknowledging that challenge, Biden is expected to announce a massive release of the nation's strategic oil reserves Thursday, according to two people familiar with the matter. The White House's plan is expected to call for the release of 1 million barrels per day from the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve on an ongoing basis for several months, said the people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a matter not yet made public. The SPR currently holds roughly 570 million barrels of crude oil.

The White House also plans to invoke the Defense Production Act to secure materials necessary for clean energy with the aim to break dependence on foreign sources of oil and natural gas.

According to an official familiar with the plan, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because it hasn't been formally announced, Biden as soon as this week may sign a presidential determination to encourage domestic production of critical minerals for both stationary large-capacity batteries and those used in electric vehicles.

*--Francis and Suliman reported from London. John Hudson in Algiers; Robyn Dixon and Mary Ilyushina in Riga, Latvia; David L. Stern in Mukachevo, Ukraine; Shira Rubin in Tel Aviv; Isaac Stanley-Becker in Berlin; Rachel Pannett in Sydney; Eugene Scott, Paulina Villegas, Amy B Wang, Steven Mufson, Alex Horton, Tyler Pager, Jeff Stein and Maxine Joselow in Washington; and Jennifer Hassan in London contributed to this report*

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## **2. Will Slovakia send Ukraine S-300 air defenses? The Pentagon is working on it**

Defense News Online, Mar. 30 (1326) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- A top Pentagon official told lawmakers Wednesday the Biden administration is working to accommodate NATO ally Slovakia's offer to send more S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Ukraine, following Russia's invasion.

Slovakia has agreed to provide Ukraine with the Soviet-era system to help defend against Russian airstrikes, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander said at a House Armed Services Committee hearing the U.S. is working out Slovakia's request for some kind of backfill.

But two weeks after Slovakia's defense minister, Jaroslav Nad, made an impromptu offer to send the S-300 if Western allies provide a "proper replacement," Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., asked why the deal is not done. Wallander said the effort's "ongoing," with coordination afoot with a range of countries, and she asked to provide a fuller answer in the classified session to follow.

"We are working with Slovakia to identify the requirements for meeting their needs," she said. "We are working on this, and meanwhile we have focused on getting countries that hold Soviet legacy systems, including S-300 systems — that have spare parts, missiles, different parts of that S-300 — who are willing to send that to Ukraine."

The comments came weeks after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with his nation under attack by Russian aircraft and missiles, asked the U.S. Congress to create a no-fly zone over Ukraine or alternatively to supply S-300 and other air defense systems and warplanes.

Germany, whose defense minister visited U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon Wednesday, has committed to sending Patriot air-defense capabilities to Slovakia, which borders Ukraine in the east. Nad has said the Patriot, part of a new NATO battlegroup, would complement the S-300 and not replace it.

In a separate exchange, Wallander affirmed 100 Switchblade drones are part of a U.S. package being delivered to Ukraine. It's been previously reported the drones, made by AeroVironment, are part of a \$800 million aid tranche in the process of being sent this month, with a range of anti-armor weapons, firearms, body armor and ammunition. (Ukrainian forces already use Turkish Bayraktar TB2 armed drones.)

Asked if 100 of the Switchblades would be enough to destroy the Russian invading force's logistics convoys, or if more would be needed, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe, Gen. Tod Wolters, said, "I'm convinced that when we get them first set of Switchblades, there'll be an immediate request from the Ukrainians for more."

At a separate event on Wednesday, HASC's chairman, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., said he favors arming Ukraine with more drones as quickly as possible in order to take out the Russian artillery raining destruction on Ukrainian cities. He credited Ukrainian attacks on Russian supply convoys for thwarting Russia's efforts to take Kyiv.

"Drones have the ability to get out there and not be seen. They're survivable, they won't get shot down and they can deliver a punch. So those are the systems that we have to get to them," Smith said.

At the hearing, lawmakers asked about sending coastal defense cruise missiles to Ukraine or executing Poland's offer to send its Soviet-era MiG-29s, as well as the U.S. defense industrial base boosting production of the Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stinger anti-tank missiles the U.S. and allies are sending to Ukraine from their own stocks.

Wallander said the Pentagon's acquisition and sustainment office is studying industrial capacity as well as what new authorities and funding the Pentagon might need. Separately, she said her office leads the response to Ukraine's requests for military aid, in cooperation with the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Joint Staff and diplomatic community.

Washington recently approved a \$13.6 billion package to address the Russia-Ukraine crisis, much of it to cover the costs of sending troops and weapons to Eastern Europe. The Biden administration has sent Ukraine a total of \$2 billion in security assistance, including direct transfers of U.S. equipment.

A bipartisan group of senators on Tuesday requested specifics from the Biden administration on the defense aid the U.S. has provided to Ukraine since Russia's invasion. The letter, led by Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., asked White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan for a list of lethal and nonlethal aid provided to date and the status of deliveries.

Russia has warned against any shipments of advanced air defenses to Ukraine and threatened it may target Western arms supplies.

Smith asked Wolters if the U.S. needs to balance the risk of Russia spreading the war outside of Ukraine in response to stepped up aid from the U.S. and its western allies.

"My first answer is: constantly," Wolters said. "The conditions change second by second, day by day, week by week."

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### **3. Army secretary says now is ‘most dangerous security environment’ in 25 years**

The Hill Online, Mar. 30 (1610) | Julia Mueller

U.S. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said Wednesday that Russia’s war on Ukraine and the risk of the conflict escalating make this moment the most dangerous in more than two decades.

“This is probably the most dangerous security environment that I’ve been in in 25 years of working in national security,” Wormuth said at The Hill’s Future of Defense Summit.

“So there’s no shortage of things to keep you awake at night,” she added.

Steve Clemons, The Hill’s editor-at-large and the event’s moderator, asked Wormuth about remarks she made earlier this month that the Russia-Ukraine crisis will “get worse before it gets better, as it looks like the Russians are going to turn to some potentially brutal tactics.”

Clemons also cited fears that the conflict could spill over into Poland or another NATO ally in the region, which could spark a collective response by the security alliance.

“I certainly think we have to prepare and plan for those kinds of possibilities,” Wormuth said, adding the Army has long been planning for operations in a nuclear, chemical or biological warfare landscape, “as terrible as it is to contemplate that.”

“That’s why, you know, so much emphasis is being placed on defending every inch of NATO territory and putting a very strong deterrent posture forward,” Wormuth said.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, another speaker at Wednesday’s event, underscored U.S. dedication to Article 5, the NATO agreement that an attack against one member will prompt a response by all.

“We want to make crystal clear that our commitment to Article 5 and to defending every inch of NATO territory is iron-clad,” Hicks said.

Wednesday’s event was sponsored by Raytheon Missiles & Defense.

Officials and lawmakers including Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) have raised the possibility that a cyberattack on critical infrastructure could also trigger Article 5, though it’s unclear what a NATO response to cyber aggression would look like.

In February, all 30 members of NATO agreed to activate its response force for the first time since its founding. The troops are now on standby.

The Biden administration has also deployed troops to Eastern Europe in a show of heightened alert and solidarity with Ukraine and regional allies.

“We’ve got 40,000 Army troops alone in Europe to make very clear to President Putin that there are lines that can’t be crossed,” Wormuth said.

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## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Putin is attacking ‘core of transatlantic security,’ US secretary of defense says**

CNN.com, Mar. 30 (1330) | Ellie Kaufman

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion involves not just attacking Ukraine, but also “attacking principles at the core of transatlantic security.”

Austin called the war in Ukraine “Putin’s war of choice” during opening remarks at the Pentagon on Wednesday ahead of a meeting with German Minister of Defence Christine Lambrecht.

“Putin’s war of choice has taken a terrible toll on civilian casualties and forced millions of innocent Ukrainians to flee their country,” he said.

Austin thanked Germany for working with the US to deploy forces “to and through Germany in recent months,” as part of the US’s increased security presence in Europe. He also said he applauds Germany’s decision to spend 2% of their “economic output on defense.”

“Together, we send a clear message, and that message is any challenge to our security will meet a firm and united response. And our commitment to NATO’s collective defense is ironclad,” Austin said.

Lambrecht said the relationship between the US and Germany is “good” and “permanent” in her opening remarks.

“We met in very troubling times, and what is important for me is that the transatlantic relationship, especially the relationship between Germany and the United States, is meant to last and is sustainable, so we were able to show that we were able to unite NATO, that we were able to unite Europe against President Putin in the form of the sanctions that we decided on together, and especially through the support that we have shown our allies in the alliance,” Lambrecht said via a translator.

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## **5. The list of military ‘items’ named for Confederacy is more than 750 long**

Military Times Online, Mar. 30 (1318) | Meghann Myers

A congressionally-mandated commission spent the past year traveling to military installations, meeting with interested groups and sifting through thousands of recommendations as part of an effort to rename posts, ships, buildings, streets and anything else the Defense Department has named in honor of the Confederacy.

All told, the commission is looking at 757 things, according to a database posted Wednesday.

“We will update the inventory list in collaboration with the Department of Defense, including its sub-agencies and the military branches, as we continue to identify assets within our area of consideration,” retired Adm. Michelle Howard, chair of the Naming Commission, said in a press release. “This work is vital to understand the scope and estimated cost of renaming or removing Confederate-named assets, and will enable us to provide the most accurate report possible to Congress.”

The list’s debut follows a March 17 announcement that the commission would recommend nine Army posts for renaming. They include: Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Rucker, Alabama; Fort Polk, Louisiana; Fort Benning and Fort Gordon in Georgia; and Fort A.P. Hill, Fort Lee and Fort Pickett in Virginia.

Along with Virginia’s Fort Pickett’s name, according to the list, there are about three dozen roads, quarters and a fire station there that are named after Confederates. At Alabama’s Fort Rucker, there are more than 50 signs that may need to be replaced.

At Fort Benning, Georgia, there are four Ranger memorials that would have to come down because they commemorate Confederate soldiers.

The cruiser Chancellorsville, named for a Confederate victory, is on the list, as is the oceanographic survey ship Maury, named after a Confederate navy officer.

Ten streets, pieces of artwork and memorials also will be up for renaming or removal at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York — Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee’s alma mater. At the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, the superintendent’s house, named for Confederate admiral Franklin Buchanan, would get a rebrand, as would the street it’s on and nearby Maury Hall, named for Matthew Fontaine Maury, who headed water defenses for the Confederate Navy.

Some of the proposed changes cover installations as far flung as Germany and Japan, including three Yokohama-based Army landing craft named after Confederate battle victories: Mechanicsville, Malvern Hill and Harpers Ferry.

The commission's final recommendations to Congress, which will include pricing estimates to change signage and other materials, is due Oct. 1.

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## **6. Armed services didn't implement dozens of measures to help stop sexual assault, GAO finds**

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 30 (1150) | Chad Garland

The military failed to keep up with the mushrooming number of measures that Congress has required the armed services to implement to address sexual assault, a government watchdog revealed.

As of October 2021, the Defense Department had not fully implemented 18% of the nearly 200 unique requirements imposed in legislation since 2004, the Government Accountability Office found in a report published this week.

The Homeland Security Department had not fully implemented six of 36, or about 16% of those affecting the Coast Guard, the report said.

The departments' lack of full implementation of dozens of requirements could have stymied efforts to combat what Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has called "persistent and corrosive problems" of sexual assault and harassment.

Both DOD and Homeland Security concurred with the report's 23 recommendations, which largely call on the agencies to fully implement the unmet parts of the requirements that are still active.

In separate responses, the departments said they are addressing several of the requirements.

Many of the unmet requirements involve oversight, evaluation and reporting on military efforts to prevent sexual assault, investigate crimes and protect or advocate for victims.

DOD has long faced criticism for its handling of sexual assault and harassment issues, including from the public, service members and lawmakers.

Late last year, Austin approved a series of actions recommended by an independent review commission, ordering the military departments to implement the plan swiftly and deliberately.

Months later, Congress removed prosecution of sexual assault and related crimes from the military chain.

But the latest GAO audit, ordered by Congress two years ago, looked at earlier measures intended to combat the problem. Those measures were enacted in annual defense authorization bills from 2004 to 2019.

In all, some 249 measures were passed into law, of which 181 remained in effect at the end of the 15-year period.

The greatest share of these affected the Pentagon or the military branches. While DOD satisfied most of them, “several issues limit oversight” of prevention and response programs, the GAO found.

Noncompliance with all the requirements could have left DOD, Congress and the public without the data needed to ensure adherence to efforts to support victims and prevent sexual assault, or to direct resources where they were most needed, the report suggested.

For example, investigators found that from 2005 to 2021, DOD often omitted information about retaliation complaints and investigations of those complaints.

The Army and the Air Force failed to implement measures related to annual organizational climate surveys imposed in 2014. And the Army did not ensure that commanders complied with the requirement to conduct them, auditors reported.

The following year, Congress required that the appraisals of commanding officers’ performance consider elements of command climates concerning sexual assault issues. But the GAO found that the Marine Corps and the Air Force both failed to implement those measures.

Some of the issues the GAO found date back nearly 20 years to requirements that have since expired without being fulfilled. Others involve repeated failures to satisfy Congress’ specifications.

The independent review commission that Austin established found that training was “outdated and out-of-touch,” a deficiency that might have come to light sooner had assessments been reported annually, as Congress required several years earlier, the GAO said.

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## **7. GAO: Cyber Command lacks metrics for assessing its weapons and platforms**

FedScoop.com, Mar. 30 (1651) | Mark Pomerleau

Despite some progress in maturing its architecture for guiding major purchases of platforms, U.S. Cyber Command still has not developed an outcome-based metric to support assessments of programs and staffing issues for acquisitions, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Wednesday.

The Senate mandated study, titled “Defense Acquisitions: Cyber Command Needs to Develop Metrics to Assess Warfighting Capabilities,” is the second such GAO assessment of Cybercom’s Joint Cyber Warfighting Architecture (JCWA), which was created in 2019 to help guide its acquisition priorities and programs.

The architecture includes four main programs: the Persistent Cyber Training Environment for conducting training and mission rehearsal, Unified Platform – considered the centerpiece where data is ingested, analyzed and shared – Joint Cyber Command and Control to command cyber forces and the larger cyber environment, and the Joint Common Access Platform for executing offensive operations.

Cyber Command has made progress in addressing concerns GAO raised in its original November 2020 report, such as creating new offices to provide a better governance structure. But inexperience and confusion have led to a lack of metrics and outcome-based approach in conducting so-called value assessments on the architecture and its programs, according to the watchdog.

These value assessments are formal and recurring assessments of an acquisition program’s effect on mission outcomes and whether those outcomes are worth the investment.

While such assessments were beginning to be scheduled in September 2021, GAO noted they weren’t done in a timely manner.

The assessments for some programs weren’t scheduled because officials misunderstood their role in leading them, believing they weren’t responsible for requesting them, according to the report.

Furthermore, Cybercom did not develop outcome-based metrics to assess whether JCWA programs are achieving their desired operational outcomes. Failure to develop such outcome-based metrics to inform a second round of value assessments will lead to greater risk of not understanding how new capabilities benefit the cyber mission, GAO said.

In spring 2021, command officials told GAO they had established a team to develop metrics, however, they could not provide a time frame for identifying them.

Reasons for the slow progress include inexperience with the Software Acquisition Pathway – which is being used for a majority of JCWA programs – the nature of the cyber mission continually changing, and the challenge of measuring new tactics or training on mission outcomes, according to the study.

The Pentagon concurred with GAO’s recommendation to develop outcome-based metrics to support future value assessments for JCWA programs.

The GAO report comes on the heels of the Pentagon’s chief weapons testers’ annual report charging that the command and JCWA lack a test and evaluation strategy as well as the proper authority and resources to manage new tools.

#### *Workforce issues*

GAO stated that Cybercom is continuing to assess workforce needs as it matures JCWA governance, and is working to get the right contract offices and officials in place to execute oversight on these programs.

Command officials that spoke with GAO stated that offices involved in executing JCWA and other responsibilities do not have sufficient personnel.

It will take time to fill positions, according to Cybercom officials, because they have to justify and validate that the command has a need before beginning to address workforce issues in fiscal 2025, GAO said, adding that the command has a workforce study underway that will likely be completed later in fiscal 2022.

“According to Cyber Command officials, understaffing is creating an all-hands-on-deck atmosphere, with individuals attempting to address emergent issues regardless of their office’s role, rather than a more coordinated approach,” GAO found. “JCWA program officials said this atmosphere creates confusion because they are in contact with multiple Cyber Command officials, but unsure which official has the authority to advise or make decisions for their programs.”

#### *Progress made*

Because the military services are procuring systems on behalf of Cybercom, there are inherent interoperability challenges associated with getting each system on the same page and integrated, according to GAO.

The command created the JCWA Capabilities Management Office to synchronize actions across platforms and identify gaps, the JCWA Integration Office to coordinate integration across programs and delivery while developing capabilities aligned with command priorities, and a JCWA concept of operations to define how it envisions employing and integrating the various capabilities in an operational context to better articulate how to put the disparate capabilities together and employ them.

GAO said the concept of operations serves as the core reference document for leaders to understand how JCWA can support operational planning and decision making and sets goals for interoperability between the programs. This document is intended to evolve as the cyber domain changes with the current document projecting five to 10 years into the future.

GAO found that Cyber Command plans to continue revising internal JCWA roles and responsibilities with action taken to address the intent of recommendations in the previous report.

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## **8. Algorithmic Warfare: DoD Tackling Software Development Challenges**

National Defense Magazine Online, Mar. 30 (2029) | Yasmin Tadjdeh

The Pentagon is overhauling its acquisition of critical software as it increasingly relies on new systems for automation and decision making, officials say.

“Delivering a more lethal force requires the ability to evolve faster and be more adaptable than our adversaries,” said Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks in a February memo. “The department’s adaptability increasingly relies on software, and the ability to securely and rapidly deliver resilient software capability is a competitive advantage that will define future conflicts.”

In the memo, Hicks signed off on a new modernization strategy aimed at accelerating software delivery schedules.

“Transforming software delivery times from years to minutes will require significant change to our processes, policies, workforce and technology,” she said.

The strategy will support Pentagon priorities such as the development of joint all-domain command and control and artificial intelligence platforms.

“The approach is practical — unify efforts across DoD and partner with industry-leading software institutions to produce a portfolio of best-in-class software capabilities enabled by DoD processes,” according to the document. “These capabilities must augment and integrate with other infrastructure components to include zero-trust architectures, electromagnetic spectrum capabilities and a growing inventory of connected military devices.”

Implementation will be led by a software modernization senior steering group, according to Hicks. The group has been instructed to deliver an implementation plan within 180 days of the release of the memo.

Software delivery is “not a one-and-done activity” and approaching the development of the technology in that way is harmful, the strategy said. Instead, the document lays out a modernization framework that includes a minimum set of technical enablers and processes that must be addressed.

The framework “serves as a common lexicon and organizing construct for discussing and coordinating software modernization activities,” the strategy said. “It is not intended to be all-inclusive or final but instead serves as a guardrail to focus implementation.”

Danielle Metz, the Defense Department’s deputy chief information officer for information enterprise, said the Pentagon is considering how it can transform business processes to ensure agility is baked into every step of software procurement, including contracting, acquisition, testing, evaluation and delivery.

The offices of the chief information officer, undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, and undersecretary of defense for research and engineering are teaming together — in partnership with the combatant commands and other defense agencies — to remove impediments and roadblocks to the Pentagon’s current processes to streamline, improve, update and revolutionize software acquisition, Metz said during a recent roundtable with reporters.

The department wants to “democratize the exceptionalism” that has been seen in pockets throughout the military including the Air Force’s Cloud One program office and the Navy’s Black Pearl software factory through the establishment of a department-wide software factory ecosystem, Metz said.

“We want to be able to make sure that we inculcate that into the DNA of the department,” she said.

Jason Weiss, the Pentagon’s chief software officer, said the Pentagon currently has 29 software factories across the services.

“We’re starting to see some serious groundswell of traction around that,” he said. “We’re seeing lots of lessons learned start to percolate to the top and a lot of collaboration taking place. ... We are going to be looking at and listening to those software factories to determine what policy changes [we need] to prioritize.”

However, the ecosystem won’t create burdensome requirements or bureaucratic red tape for existing software factories, Weiss said.

“I see us as reinforcing and providing more momentum and encouragement for the software factories as opposed to them having to change the way that they are executing today,” he said.

As the Pentagon looks to scale technology from the various factories, officials hope they can create efficiencies and cost savings. For example, one core capability to target could include source code management, according to Weiss.

“Do we need every single software factory to go out there and procure and manage and operate their own source code repository?” Weiss asked. That’s an example “of where we can actually start to see economies of scale in terms of both operational capacity and cost reductions for the department across these software factories.”

If the Pentagon can achieve that, that will allow the ecosystem to continue to grow while allowing the factories to operate with higher degrees of scale and precision without having to start from scratch at every point, he said.

The new strategy is a subset of the Defense Department’s Digital Modernization Strategy and replaces the Pentagon’s cloud strategy that was released in 2018.

“Given software’s role and pervasiveness across all aspects of mission capabilities and supporting infrastructure, implementation success of this strategy will rely heavily on our partnerships across the department,” Weiss said.

Beyond acquiring new technologies, the guidelines reinforce the need to attract and retain workforce talent, Weiss noted. The Pentagon must hire the right individuals to fill leadership positions and individuals need to engage in “upskilling” efforts.

“No one can be left behind in this journey” including military service members and civil servants, he said. “In this era of competition and the race for digital dominance, we simply cannot settle for incremental change anymore. The department must come together to deliver software better and operate as a 21st century force.”

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## **COVID-19**

### **9. Navy Stops COVID-19 Vaccine Separations for 4,095 Sailors Who Requested Religious Exemptions**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 30 (2102) | Heather Mongilio

The Navy has stopped separating sailors for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine on religious grounds after a federal judge granted class-action certification in the case of Navy SEALs suing Department of Defense officials over the vaccine mandate, defense officials told USNI News on Wednesday.

Judge Reed O’Connor Monday granted the class action in the case of 26 Navy SEALs and other members of the special warfare community who are suing Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and other Department of Defense officials to prevent being separated over the refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19 due to their religious beliefs. O’Connor also granted the preliminary injunction for the class action, extending the Navy’s inability to separate any sailors who were denied religious exemptions to the vaccine mandate.

This now means 4,095 sailors, who submitted religious exemption requests and are part of the class, cannot be separated under the preliminary injunction. Sailors who did not submit religious exemptions can still be separated, according to service memo, released Wednesday evening and obtained by USNI News.

Sailors in the class who were told they would be separated within 10 days will now stay on, according to the NAVADMIN. Similarly, those who put in voluntary resignation or transfer to Fleet Reserve requests can withdraw or amend them.

What is not clear is if the class action will be applied to the 652 sailors already separated by the Navy. The Navy has not said how many of those separated had submitted a religious exemption request and were denied.

The Navy received 3,320 requests for religious exemptions from active-duty sailors and 864 from reservists, according to the Navy's March 23 COVID-19 update, the most recent available. It has not said how many were adjudicated, but that is not yet approved one.

The sea service has approved nine religious waivers for members of the Individual Ready Reserve, on the condition that they be fully vaccinated if they are called up to the reserves or active duty, USNI News previously reported.

The 4,095 members of the class action would include both active-duty and reserve sailors, based on the Navy's numbers. As of Feb. 3, 2022, the Navy had denied 3,728 religious requests with 285 still being adjudicated, according to the class action order.

Of those who received denials, 1,222 sailors appealed, with 81 of those cases resulting in final denials, according to the court order.

While the preliminary injunction prevents the separation of the 4,095 sailors, it does not prevent the Navy from reassigning them, due to a Supreme Court ruling Friday.

One interpretation of the ruling would suggest that the Navy can move sailors to non-deployable positions based on their vaccination status, said military defense attorney Phil Cave.

However, another one suggests vaccination status should be one, not the only, factor in assignment decisions, said Mike Berry, director of military affairs and senior counsel at First Liberty, the attorneys representing the SEALs.

The Navy is likely going to interpret it so that it can reassign based on vaccination status, Berry said.

"And thus far, in this litigation and with the vaccine mandate, the Navy has continued to act as if it's above the law," Berry said. "So that wouldn't surprise me. But at the end of the day, they need to follow, they need to abide by the rulings of the court."

The Navy will consider vaccination status in assignments, according to the memo, although it did not specify if it will be the only factor.

"Navy service members who are not vaccinated, regardless of exemption status, may be temporarily or permanently reassigned based on mission requirements [in accordance with] previous guidance," according to the NAVADMIN.

In granting the class action and the subsequent preliminary injunction, O'Connor wrote that the Navy failed to show a compelling interest for requiring vaccination, and the reasoning did not outweigh the burden placed on those who had religious objections to the shot.

"Without relief, each servicemember faces the threat of discharge and the consequences that accompany it," O'Connor wrote. "Even though their personal circumstances may factually differ in small ways, the threat is the same – get the job or lose your job."

A compelling interest is necessary because of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which says that the government must show a compelling interest and that they are using the least restrictive means possible when issuing mandates or laws that may infringe on religious rights.

Attorneys for the Department of Defense have argued in this case, as well as a similar one in Florida involving a naval commanding officer, that the compelling interest is the health of the Navy and the ability to complete its mission with vaccination as the least restrictive means.

While the class applies to the sailors who have submitted religious exemptions, they will have the option to opt out of the class action, Berry said.

That could be what happens in the case of the commanding officer of a Norfolk-based guided missile destroyer who is currently involved in his own litigation against the Navy and Department of Defense officials over the vaccine mandate.

The destroyer commander will likely not be allowed to be part of the class action and his own suit, which means he might need to opt out if he would rather pursue his own case, Berry said.

Mat Staver, the chairperson of Liberty Counsel, the religious ministry representing the naval commander, did not return a call for comment. He previously told USNI News that he was also seeking class action in his case, although it would be for the entirety of the military, unlike the Navy SEALs case, which is limited to the Navy.

The Navy commander's preliminary injunction has been appealed to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, USNI News previously reported, with other aspects of the case making their way through the Middle District of Florida.

It is unclear how the Supreme Court opinion allowing reassignment will affect the destroyer commander, although Cave said a narrow reading of it could allow the Navy to remove him as commanding officer of the ship.

For now, the Navy SEALs case returns to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, where attorneys will argue if the Navy can dismiss sailors over COVID-19 vaccine refusal.

The government can also appeal the class certification.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **10. Biden will use Defense Production Act to increase supply of critical minerals**

Washington Post, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A15 | Steven Mufson and Paulina Villegas

The White House might invoke the Defense Production Act as soon as this week to spur greater domestic output of raw materials for clean energy technology products and reduce U.S. dependence on foreign supply chains.

President Biden could issue a presidential determination to encourage domestic production of critical minerals used for stationary large-capacity batteries and those used in electric vehicles, according to an official familiar with the plan who spoke on the condition of anonymity because it hasn't been formally announced.

The determination would cover minerals such as lithium, nickel, graphite, cobalt and manganese, allowing their producers to get assistance under the Defense Production Act's Title III fund.

But the official said the presidential determination would not include loans or direct purchases of those minerals, financial tools common under Title III. Instead, the government would fund feasibility studies and productivity modernizations. The official also said that the determination would uphold "environmental, labor and Tribal engagement standards."

Many executives of renewable energy and electric vehicle companies fear that shortages of these minerals could slow the development of their products, but many environmentalists oppose unsightly projects and fear their long-term damaging effects.

"Extraction can do more harm than good," said Bobby McEnaney, senior lands analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "It's essential that these measures not be exploited in ways that run roughshod over the commonsense safeguards we all depend on to protect our families, communities and all they support."

McEnaney acknowledged that "shifting to electric vehicles is a key part of breaking our dependence on oil, confronting the climate crisis, ending our support for belligerent petro-states like Russia and helping our European allies do the same."

But he said "what's important now is that supplies of these strategic minerals be secured in ways that are reliable, durable and sustainable. Rather than just digging up or importing more, we should start with improved recovery and waste reduction throughout supply chains."

The mining industry welcomed the president's expected comments.

“While the expected order itself may be limited in scope, the signal it sends to the markets and the world is clear,” said Rich Nolan, president and chief executive of the National Mining Association. “The minerals supply chain that will drive the electrification of our transportation sector and the energy transition is not only at risk from a perilous and growing import dependence, but the approaching minerals demand wave is set to strain every sector of the economy and requires an urgency in action from government and industry never before seen.”

Nolan said new mines and mineral processing plants are needed. “What we need is policy to ensure we can produce them and build the secure, reliable supply chains we know we must have,” he said.

The Defense Production Act gives the president authority to “create, expand or preserve” manufacturing capabilities for the industrial resources, technologies and materials needed to meet national security requirements, according to the Defense Department.

Both Biden and President Donald Trump invoked the DPA to help with the pandemic response and encourage pharmaceutical companies to focus their efforts.

Biden has also been concerned about the weakness of the U.S. supply chain and China’s strong position globally, especially when it comes to solar panels. South Korean companies are leaders in the electric-vehicle battery market.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has only highlighted the heavy reliance of European countries on Russian oil and gas suppliers, triggering a severe energy crisis. European Union members collectively rely on Russia for roughly 40 percent of their natural gas supplies and more than a quarter of their oil. Overall, Russian oil last year accounted for about 3 percent of consumption in the United States, which has blocked all imports from Russia.

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## **11. Biden’s Nuke Review Omits ‘No First Use’, Kills Naval Cruise Missile**

*The president, who pledged during the campaign to use nuclear weapons only in response to a similar attack, declined to set that as U.S. policy*

DefenseOne.com, Mar. 30 (1456) | Tara Copp

President Joe Biden has walked back from his longtime preferred policy of “no first use” of nuclear weapons, according to his administration’s 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, which also seeks to shrink nuclear arsenals, starting with a new missile introduced under Donald Trump.

His long-awaited policy review says the United States “would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners,” according to a three-paragraph summary released by the Pentagon Tuesday.

During his campaign, candidate Biden said he continued to support the idea of a “no first use” policy: that the United States would launch a nuclear weapon only in response to a nuclear attack. But this support never became official policy for the United States, which has for decades maintained a policy of “flexible deterrence.”

“The Nuclear Posture Review language does not apply exclusively to nuclear attack but extends to extreme circumstances that would require the United States to defend allies and partners,” assistant defense secretary for international security affairs Celeste Wallander told the House Armed Services Committee Wednesday.

The summary said the administration will pursue “strategic stability, seek to avoid costly arms races, and facilitate risk reduction and arms control arrangements where possible.”

“The NPR underscores our commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons and reestablishing our leadership in arms control,” it said.

It added that the full unclassified version of the NPR and also of the 2022 Missile Defense Review would be “forthcoming.”

In a background briefing with reporters before the release of the proposed 2023 budget, a senior defense official confirmed that the Navy’s nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, SLCM-N, had been defunded as a result of the 2022 posture review and “direction from the President to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our defense strategy.”

SLCM-N was announced by the Trump administration in its own 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. It was intended to provide the Navy a nuclear cruise missile, about a decade after the last of its nuclear Tomahawk cruise missiles were retired in 2013.

At the time of its retirement, the Federation of American Scientists wrote that the Navy was “finally out of the non-strategic nuclear weapons business.” The Tomahawk nuclear cruise missile “had little military value but huge political consequences when they sailed into ports of allied countries whose governments were forced to ignore violation of their own non-nuclear policies.”

*--Marcus Weisgerber contributed to this report*

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## 12. U.S. Diplomat Pressured on Promises to Add Consulates

*Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, on travels through the Middle East and North Africa over the past week, was urged by Arab leaders to make good on past promises*

New York Times, Mar. 31 (0300), Pg. A6 | Lara Jakes and Aida Alami

RABAT, Morocco -- In talks this week with the top American diplomat, Arab leaders made clear they wanted a concrete sign of the Biden administration's support: the opening of U.S. consulates in both Jerusalem and the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

But Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken studiously avoided any public commitment as to when those diplomatic missions might become a reality, if ever.

The fate of the consulates already promised by the United States -- one to serve Palestinians in Jerusalem and the other in Western Sahara -- has hung over the Biden administration since its earliest days. Both would require President Biden to decide whether to stick with dramatic foreign policy shifts brought about by the Trump administration, or reverse them and face a diplomatic and political backlash from longtime allies.

Neither were mentioned in the Biden administration's \$1 billion spending plan for construction, maintenance and security at embassies and diplomatic compounds around the world in 2023 -- casting doubt that they would be open before the end of next year. That made Mr. Blinken's silence on the subject all the more notable when it surfaced after meetings in the West Bank city of Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, and in Rabat, Morocco's capital.

"Moroccan and U.S. relations are strong -- ongoing, and moving forward in the right direction," Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita of Morocco said on Tuesday when asked at a news conference with Mr. Blinken whether he was concerned about the stalled U.S. consulate in Dakhla, a city in Western Sahara.

Morocco claims sovereignty over the territory, which the United Nations and other states have long viewed as under dispute.

The Trump administration, in its waning days, formally recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara and agreed to open a U.S. consulate there in late 2020 as an incentive for Morocco to normalize relations with Israel.

On Tuesday, Mr. Bourita suggested that the U.S. administration's inaction so far on the consulate was merely a matter of timing.

Two days earlier, with Mr. Blinken sitting uncomfortably at his side, Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, raised the issue of reopening a U.S. consulate in Jerusalem as part of what he described as "the implementation of what the administration of President Biden believes in."

Mr. Biden had promised during his 2020 presidential campaign to reverse President Donald J. Trump's decision in 2018 to close the consulate in Jerusalem, where it for decades had handled visas and other documents Palestinians needed to immigrate to the United States.

Its closing amounted to a diplomatic downgrading of U.S. ties to the Palestinians and followed the Trump administration's 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital -- moving the U.S. embassy there, seeking to curry political favor with evangelicals and pro-Israel American Jewish voters ahead of the presidential election.

Israel opposes reopening the consulate in Jerusalem, a position that Foreign Minister Yair Lapid underscored in a news conference on Sunday with Mr. Blinken.

"We have no problem, of course, and it's not even our place to say anything if the United States wants to open an office to deal with the day-to-day problems, or consular problems, of Palestinians," Mr. Lapid said in answer to a question about Israel's opposition. "We just don't think Jerusalem is the right place for this, because Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and Israel alone."

Palestinians view East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state, and most of the world considers it occupied territory. Mr. Trump's decision to recognize Israel's sovereignty over all of the city reversed nearly seven decades of American foreign policy and was roundly criticized by some of the United States' strongest allies.

Mr. Blinken did not address the issue in the three public venues in which the fate of either the consulate in Jerusalem or the one planned for Western Sahara was raised, and was not directly asked about them. He spoke at length in Ramallah and Rabat about financial assistance, coronavirus vaccines, job training, education support and other benefits the United States was giving to each government.

U.S. officials have largely sidestepped questions about the consulates in recent days by saying there was nothing to announce at this time, as Brian McKeon, the deputy secretary of state for management at the State Department told reporters on Monday when asked if there was money in the 2023 spending plan to open them.

While the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians has gone cold, the Biden administration is trying to de-escalate tensions between Morocco and the Polisario Front, a separatist movement in the Western Sahara.

The two sides have clashed for years over the territory, and Mr. Trump's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty inflamed the Polisario and its main ally, neighboring Algeria. While some countries consider Western Sahara as independent, others support U.N. efforts for a negotiated solution.

This month, Spain endorsed a Moroccan plan to govern Western Sahara but give local officials there some level of autonomy. Algeria responded by recalling its ambassador to Spain.

The shift was notable because Spain and Morocco had feuded over the fate of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony that was later occupied by Moroccan forces, leading to a 16-year war with the Polisario movement. A 1991 cease-fire brokered by the United Nations was ruptured in late 2020, but the hostilities have cooled in recent weeks.

At the Tuesday news conference with the Moroccan foreign minister, Mr. Blinken also called the Moroccan plan “serious, credible, and realistic,” echoing Spain’s endorsement. But Mr. Blinken also appeared to hedge, calling the plan “one potential approach to meet the aspirations of the people of Western Sahara.”

At the same time, the Biden administration seems determined to slow-walk the consulate opening in Western Sahara and appear to remain neutral in the dispute.

Picking sides could also risk geopolitical fallout for another conflict -- the Russian invasion of Ukraine -- and Mr. Blinken has been trying hard this week to enlist Middle Eastern and North African nations in hampering Moscow, whether by military or economic means.

Algeria has offered to send gas to European markets that have been dependent on Russian energy, and Mr. Blinken must walk a fine line to support that offer without becoming snarled in Algeria’s feud with Morocco.

American officials have been warily watching to see whether Algeria will shut off its gas exports to Europe via a pipeline that goes straight to Spain as a result of the new dispute over Western Sahara -- an issue that Mr. Blinken was expected to raise on Wednesday during a brief visit to Algeria.

But he must also take care to not alienate Morocco, an ally with which the United States has close counterterrorism cooperation.

“The Biden administration’s last concern is to implement Trump’s empty promises,” said Sion Assidon, a prominent leftist figure and human rights activist in Morocco who often advocates for the Palestinian cause.

*--Lara Jakes reported from Rabat, Morocco and Aida Alami from Paris*

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### **13. New food insecurity stipend should help as many troops as possible, lawmakers argue**

Military Times Online, Mar. 30 (1547) | Leo Shane III

House leaders are pushing military leaders to make eligibility and enrollment in the Defense Department’s new financial assistance program as generous as possible, saying that is needed to “address food and financial insecurity among servicemembers.”

In a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the group urged military leaders to move quickly on implementing the new Basic Needs Allowance and to automatically grant the financial help to all eligible families unless they specifically opt out of the program.

They also pushed for the department to exclude housing stipends in their calculations for program eligibility in order to benefit “as many service members as possible.”

On Monday, military leaders unveiled their budget plans for fiscal 2023, including the new Basic Needs Allowance authorized by Congress last year. Comptroller Michael McCord hailed the program as a way to help “the most vulnerable portion of our force to address economic insecurity,” but he offered few specifics on how the new benefit will be distributed.

Under guidelines approved by Congress last year, the new financial aid is targeted at military families whose household incomes are less than 130% of the federal poverty guidelines.

For a family of three, that equates to about \$30,000 this year. For a family of four, it’s about \$36,000.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that about 10,000 service members — mostly junior enlisted troops — would qualify for the new benefit, receiving an average monthly payout of about \$400.

However, the exact total depends on how DoD officials construct program rules and regulations.

Military planners in coming months are expected to decide which military benefits and compensation should be included in troops’ income totals. Things like combat pay, re-enlistment bonuses, food stipends and housing benefits could all be added to military basic pay to push troops’ total income into a higher level, making them ineligible for the new benefit.

The lawmakers who wrote to Austin this week — a group that includes House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, D-Wash.; the committee’s personnel chairwoman, Jackie Speier, D-Calif.; and House Agriculture Committee Chairman David Scott, D-Ga. — urged officials “to exempt as much of the [housing stipends] as possible” in their rules.

The group also pushed for military planners to certify eligibility for the allowance once a year in order to simplify the application process for families and commanders, and to make the program an “opt-out” benefit rather than one troops have to apply for, in an effort to get the money to as many individuals as possible.

“We look forward to working with the department to ensure that no one who serves our country has to worry about putting food on their table,” the group wrote.

Service officials are expected to release additional details about the new Basic Needs Allowance in the coming months. The fiscal 2023 budget isn't expected to be finalized until this fall, and the new benefit wouldn't begin to be distributed until sometime in calendar 2023 at the earliest.

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**14. 'The Navy owes the American public an apology,' Luria says during rebuke of Biden's budget proposal**  
Daily Press Online (Newport News, VA), Mar. 30 (1708) | Dave Ress

It took some deep breaths for one former sailor in Congress to set aside some salty words and politely say what she thought of President Biden's proposed Navy budget.

Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Virginia Beach, was blunt: "In the face of current threats, we are gutting the Navy now to say we're going to rebuild it in 10 or 20 years," she said Wednesday.

As vice chair of the House Armed Services Committee and a key player pulling together a bipartisan agreement last year to overrule an administration proposal to mothball seven cruisers, Luria's reaction signaled an unfriendly Congressional reception for the fiscal 2023 spending plan.

The administration budget proposal calls for decommissioning 24 ships, a move the Navy says will save \$3.6 billion. On the mothball list are the remaining nine Freedom-class littoral combat ships, the oldest of which has been in service for just a decade, as well as five cruisers, four landing ship docks — a type like the recently-deployed Little Creek based USS Gunston Hall — as well as two Los Angeles-class submarines and four support vessels.

Most of those ships are still well within their promised service life.

"The Navy owes the American public an apology," Luria said. "For two decades, they've been building failed classes of ships ... they like the highest tech, biggest and newest thing."

The Freedom-class ships, which have had major problems with their complicated drive trains, are just one example, she said.

Decommissioning so many ships, with a call to fund only nine new vessels — including one, Luria said, that's already been authorized — will put the fleet even farther from the goal of a 355-ship Navy, she said.

Luria, who served in the Navy from 1997 to 2017, said the two Virginia-class submarines and two new destroyers the administration proposal calls for aren't enough. She said the Navy needs to be building three of both a year.

She said the Navy also has its eye on the wrong kind of ships in the future — emphasizing the new and shiny instead of the flexible and easy to build.

That's the call to postpone funding the new Light Amphibious Warship from 2023 to 2025, followed by a pause for several years before the next in the class comes on. That kind of stop and go work is a major problem, both for new ship construction and ship repair, she has repeatedly said.

And the ship fits exactly with the latest Marine Corps and Navy amphibious strategy emphasis on small, dispersed unit operations, she said.

Luria said she's already hearing from Republican members of the House committee who share her concerns, and said she expects the committee will be even tougher on the fiscal 2023 proposal than it was with the just enacted 2022 spending plan.

Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Westmoreland, ranking member of the House seapower subcommittee, has said the budget proposal doesn't reflect the needs for ships, aircraft, vehicles and equipment that the military really needs.

"I am particularly disappointed that even as we aim to grow our naval and projection forces, this budget continues the divest to invest strategy that will shrink our fleet once again," he said.

While president can propose a budget, it is up to Congress to appropriate the money. The agreement the House and Senate just reached for fiscal 2022 boosted spending by nearly \$22.4 billion over Biden's proposed budget, including \$4 billion more for shipbuilding than the Biden Administration requested.

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## **EUROPE**

### **15. Ukrainian President Says Defense Is At a 'Turning Point'**

Associated Press, Mar. 31 (0139) | Nebi Qena and Yuras Karmanau

KYIV, Ukraine -- The Ukrainian president said his country's defense against the Russian invasion is at a "turning point" and again pressed the United States for more help, hours after the Kremlin's forces reneged on a pledge to scale back some of their operations.

Russian bombardment of areas around Kyiv and the northern city of Chernihiv and intensified attacks elsewhere in the country further undermined hopes for progress toward ending the brutal war. Talks between Ukraine and Russia were set to resume Friday by video, according to the head of the Ukrainian delegation, David Arakhamia.

A delegation of Ukrainian lawmakers visited Washington on Wednesday to push for more U.S. assistance, saying their nation needs more military equipment, more financial help and tougher sanctions against Russia.

“We need to kick Russian soldiers off our land, and for that we need all, all possible weapons,” Ukrainian parliament member Anastasia Radina said at a news conference at the Ukrainian Embassy.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made the case directly to U.S. President Joe Biden.

“If we really are fighting for freedom and in defense of democracy together, then we have a right to demand help in this difficult turning point. Tanks, aircraft, artillery systems. Freedom should be armed no worse than tyranny,” Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address to the nation, which he delivered standing in the dark outside the dimly lit presidential offices in Kyiv. He thanked the U.S. for an additional \$500 million in aid that was announced Wednesday.

There seemed little faith that Russia and Ukraine will resolve the conflict soon, particularly after the Russian military’s about-face and its most recent attacks.

Russia said Tuesday that it would de-escalate operations near Kyiv and Chernihiv to “increase mutual trust and create conditions for further negotiations.” Zelenskyy and the West were skeptical. Soon after, Ukrainian officials reported that Russian shelling was hitting homes, stores, libraries and other civilian sites in or near those areas.

Russian troops also stepped up their attacks on the Donbas region in the east and around the city of Izyum, which lies on a key route to the Donbas, after redeploying units from other areas, the Ukrainian side said.

Olexander Lomako, secretary of the Chernihiv city council, said the Russian announcement turned out to be “a complete lie.”

“At night they didn’t decrease, but vice versa increased the intensity of military action,” Lomako said.

A top British intelligence official said Thursday that demoralized Russian soldiers in Ukraine were refusing to carry out orders and sabotaging their own equipment and had accidentally shot down their own aircraft.

In a speech in the Australian capital Canberra, Jeremy Fleming, who heads the GCHQ electronic spy agency, said President Vladimir Putin had apparently “massively misjudged” the invasion, he said. Although Putin’s advisers appeared to be too afraid to tell the truth, the “extent of these misjudgments must be crystal clear to the regime,” he said.

U.S. intelligence officials have given similar assessments that Putin is being misinformed by his advisers about the poor performance of his military in Ukraine because they are too afraid to tell him the truth.

Five weeks into the invasion that has left thousands dead on both sides, the number of Ukrainians fleeing the country topped a staggering 4 million, half of them children, according to the United Nations.

“I do not know if we can still believe the Russians,” Nikolay Nazarov, a refugee from Ukraine, said as he pushed his father’s wheelchair at a border crossing into Poland. “I think more escalation will occur in eastern Ukraine. That is why we cannot go back to Kharkiv.”

Zelenskyy said the continuing negotiations with Russia were only “words without specifics.” He said Ukraine was preparing for concentrated new strikes on the Donbas.

Zelenskyy also said he had recalled Ukraine’s ambassadors to Georgia and Morocco, suggesting they had not done enough to persuade those countries to support Ukraine and punish Russia for the invasion.

“With all due respect, if there won’t be weapons, won’t be sanctions, won’t be restrictions for Russian business, then please look for other work,” he said.

During talks Tuesday in Istanbul, the faint outlines of a possible peace agreement seemed to emerge when the Ukrainian delegation offered a framework under which the country would declare itself neutral — dropping its bid to join NATO, as Moscow has long demanded — in return for security guarantees from a group of other nations.

Top Russian officials responded positively, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov saying Wednesday that Ukraine’s willingness to accept neutrality and look outside NATO for security represents “significant progress,” according to Russian news agencies.

But those statements were followed by attacks.

Oleksandr Pavliuk, head of the Kyiv region military administration, said Russian shells targeted residential areas and civilian infrastructure in the Bucha, Brovary and Vyshhorod regions around the capital.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said the military also targeted fuel depots in two towns in central Ukraine with air-launched long-range cruise missiles. Russian forces hit a Ukrainian special forces headquarters in the southern Mykolaiv region, he said, and two ammunition depots in the Donetsk region, in the Donbas.

In southern Ukraine, a Russian missile destroyed a fuel depot in Dnipro, the country’s fourth-largest city, regional officials said.

The U.S. said Russia had begun to reposition less than 20% of its troops that had been arrayed around Kyiv. Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said troops from there and some other zones began moving mostly to the north, and some went into neighboring Belarus. Kirby said it appeared Russia planned to resupply them and send them back into Ukraine, but it is not clear where.

The Ukrainian military said some Russian airborne units were believed to have withdrawn into Belarus.

In northern Ukraine, Russian forces took no offensive actions Wednesday, focusing on reconnaissance and logistics, the general staff said in a statement. But Russia is expected to increase attacks soon to protect its own troops as they are repositioned, it said.

The Russians also are expected to try to blockade Chernihiv.

Top Russian military officials say their main goal now is the “liberation” of the Donbas, the predominantly Russian-speaking industrial heartland where Moscow-backed separatists have been battling Ukrainian forces since 2014.

Some analysts have suggested that the focus on the Donbas and the pledge to de-escalate may merely be an effort to put a positive spin on reality: Moscow’s ground forces have been thwarted and have taken heavy losses in their bid to seize the capital and other cities.

In other developments:

- The U.N. is looking into allegations some residents of the besieged and shattered southern city of Mariupol were forcibly taken to areas controlled by Russian forces or to Russia itself.
- Germany said Russia had reassured it European companies won’t have to pay for Russian gas in rubles, a prospect that raised fears Russia could cut off supplies. Also, Poland said it would end Russian oil imports by the year’s end.

*--Karmanau reported from Lviv, Ukraine. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report*

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## **16. Western Allies Cool To Plan for Ukraine Security Guarantee**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 31 (0200), Pg. A1 | Jared Malsin, Lindsay Wise and Bojan Pancevski

Western officials are balking at Ukraine’s proposal for a NATO-style mutual-defense pledge that could draw their military forces into a war with Russia, even as they expressed some receptiveness to the idea of international security guarantees as part of a deal to end hostilities.

At peace talks in Istanbul on Tuesday, Ukrainian negotiators handed Russia a detailed proposal of a neutral status for Ukraine with its security guaranteed by the U.S., U.K., France, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Poland and Israel. The Ukrainian proposal would ask countries to respond to a violation of its sovereignty the way members of North Atlantic Treaty Organization would act under Article 5, the alliance’s mutual-defense promise.

“That’s what we call Ukrainian NATO,” said Ukrainian negotiator David Arakhamia, the majority leader in the country’s parliament, in an interview in Istanbul. “So we get neutrality but our idea is to get fortified neutrality status.”

President Biden has yet to comment on the proposal, and White House communications director Kate Bedingfield declined to say Wednesday whether the U.S. would be willing to serve as a security guarantor for Ukraine.

“We are in constant discussion with Ukrainians about ways that we can help ensure that they are sovereign and secure,” she said. “But there is nothing specific about security guarantees that I can speak to at this time.”

A number of Western leaders have expressed support for some form of security guarantees for Ukraine, yet none have articulated what those would look like. Their reluctance to embrace a key plank of Ukraine’s blueprint -- the notion of a NATO collective defense mechanism -- shows how far apart all sides remain in finding a negotiated end to the war.

U.S. lawmakers also appeared skeptical of the proposal. Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the chamber’s No. 2 Democrat and co-chairman of Ukraine Caucus, said he thought the proposal was a “little premature,” adding that he doesn’t trust Russia.

Jim Risch of Idaho, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said such a proposal might be possible, but would be a long way off. “You know, we already did that,” said Mr. Risch, referring to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, when Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees. “How’s that working?”

U.K. Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab also expressed skepticism over a proposal to provide a security guarantee to a non-NATO member. “We’ll consider anything [Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelensky says he needs very carefully,” Mr. Raab said Wednesday on BBC radio. “But we’re not going to, I think, replicate unilaterally the NATO commitments that apply to NATO members.”

Other countries named as possible guarantors of Ukraine’s security expressed interest in the idea, but avoided committing to the proposal.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany told Mr. Zelensky that Berlin was “broadly willing” to act as a security guarantor for Ukraine as part of a peace deal, a spokesman said Wednesday. It is however too early to discuss such commitments, government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said.

A senior German government official later clarified that the discussion was in an early stage, and it included a proposal for a group of countries including Russia to guarantee Ukraine’s security as part of a peace agreement under which Kyiv would declare independence of any military alliances, including NATO.

France is open to supporting a form of neutrality for Ukraine with its security guaranteed by several countries, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The person cautioned, however, that France is unwilling to sign up for a security guarantee that includes a mechanism similar to NATO's Article 5. Much will also depend on the details of Ukraine's neutrality, including the status of its national army, the person said.

Russia likely wouldn't agree to any arrangement that requires France and other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to guarantee Ukraine's security, the person said.

Moscow's support would be required for any agreement to end the war, and it is unclear that the Kremlin would accept Kyiv's proposal. "No one said that the sides have made headway," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said of the talks in Istanbul, declining to discuss specific proposals. "We can't point to anything particularly promising."

The Ukrainian government, however, seems set on a proposal that would provide strong security guarantees from Western countries.

"The activation mechanism is even stronger than NATO. In NATO if something happens you have to do the consultations first," said Mr. Arakhamia, the Ukrainian negotiator. "There is no mention of how long it might take. Considering how fast things are going on, we put 72 hours max. So within 72 hours, all the guarantors have to figure out what's going on, if it's aggression or special operation or war, they have to provide military assistance or armies."

Crimea and Donbas -- two Ukrainian regions Russia occupies -- wouldn't be a part of the guarantees, said Mr. Arakhamia. Those territories would be excluded until their status is settled in separate negotiations, he said.

Ukrainian officials proposed on Tuesday that the status of Donbas would be negotiated by the presidents of Ukraine and Russia, while Crimea would be subject to a 15-year period of negotiations on a separate track.

Ukraine first proposed Turkey, a NATO member, as a guarantor of its security on March 17. Turkey has good relations with Ukraine and has been playing a mediating role in the Russia-Ukraine crisis, hosting two rounds of peace talks.

The Turkish government hasn't endorsed or opposed the proposal but has offered broad support for the peace negotiations.

While Turkey has strongly condemned the Russian invasion, it has also chosen not to impose sanctions on Russia, opting to preserve its relationship with Moscow in order to act as a mediator.

Mr. Arakhamia said Israel, a non-NATO member, could also be a party to the proposed security guarantees.

“At this point, Israel is not in the position to provide a security guarantee to Ukraine,” a senior Israeli official said. “We will be willing to assist in reaching an agreement through trust-building measures and other efforts.”

*--Noemie Bisserbe, Dov Lieber, William Mauldin contributed to this article*

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## **17. NATO Commander Increases Prediction to 550 F-35s in Europe by 2030**

Air Force Magazine Online, Mar. 30 (1736) | Greg Hadley

F-35s in Eastern Europe have been performing some “elegant” intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions as part of the NATO response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the head of U.S. European Command told lawmakers March 30 and he expects the fighter’s presence on the continent to expand dramatically by the end of the decade, exceeding earlier predictions.

Air Force Gen. Tod D. Wolters, who also serves as NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, added to members of the House Armed Services Committee that getting more F-35s delivered to Europe, either as part of the U.S. Air Force or for other nations, is “critical.”

“They’ll deliver a tremendous improvement in our strategic ability, in indications and warnings, command and control, and mission command, as already demonstrated by U.S. F-35s that are contributing in the assure and deter mission at this time,” Wolters said.

In mid-February, just before the start of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the U.S. deployed F-35s from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, to enhance NATO’s defense posture. Those jets were later sent to Romania and Poland to bolster the eastern flank, arriving on Feb. 24.

At the time, U.S. Air Forces in Europe said six of the fifth-generation fighters were being deployed. More than a month later, Wolters told Congress that four are still being used in the region, to great effect.

“The U.S. F-35As, the four that we have right now, are in use, and they’ve been very effective doing some elegant ISR activities. And it just reveals to us how much greater capability we’re going to have once we get our full fleet on board,” Wolters said.

USAF has deployed more F-15s and F-16s to Eastern Europe during this crisis, but the performance of the F-35s is being closely watched by many—Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.), chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has said their success could go a long way in building his confidence in the program.

Wolters declined more discussion on the importance of the F-35's capabilities in Europe to a classified setting on March 30, but it appears more and more likely that the fighter will play a key role in the continent's future defense.

In June 2021, Wolters predicted during an Atlantic Council discussion that by 2030, there could be 450 F-35s in Europe. Since then, Finland and Germany have said they will buy the fighter as well, joining the U.S., Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the U.K., and Switzerland as European nations and partners who have either started fielding the F-35 or have plans to do so.

The response to Russian aggression has helped to drive that demand, and Wolters told the HASC that he was upping his prediction.

“The disposition of the NATO nations with respect to the F-35 is dramatically growing,” Wolters said. “And our hope is, we have 100 on the continent right now, and we anticipate in 2030, growing to 550, and that's a good fleet.”

### *MiG-29s Raised Again*

While Wolters touted the capabilities that the F-35 has been able to offer during the recent crisis, he sounded less optimistic when it came to an issue that several representatives raised—the transfer of Soviet MiG-29s from Poland to Ukraine, using the U.S. as an intermediary.

The idea, put forward by Poland several weeks ago, was quickly shot down by the Pentagon, which said it didn't consider the proposal “tenable.”

Since then, however, a bipartisan group of lawmakers has pushed for the transfer, which Ukraine has asked for.

The issue was raised once more by both Republicans and Democrats on the congressional panel, and Wolters reiterated that his best military advice has been for the U.S. not to send any jets to Ukraine.

“It goes back to the military mission effectiveness weighed against strategic miscalculation, to make sure you take into account the protection of the citizens of Ukraine, as well as the citizens on the periphery. So all those variables have to come into play,” Wolters said.

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### **18. Ukraine says Russia planting mines in Black Sea as shipping perils grow**

Reuters, Mar. 30 (1022) | Jonathan Saul

LONDON -- Ukraine accused Russia on Wednesday of planting mines in the Black Sea and said some of those munitions had to be defused off Turkey and Romania as risks to vital merchant shipping in the region grow.

The Black Sea is a major shipping route for grain, oil and oil products. Its waters are shared by Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Turkey as well as Ukraine and Russia.

Russia's military took control of waterways when it invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, in what Moscow calls a "special operation".

In recent days Turkish and Romanian military diving teams have been involved in defusing stray mines around their waters.

Ukraine's foreign ministry said Russia was using naval mines as "uncontrolled drifting ammunition".

"It was these drifting mines that were found March 26-28, 2022 off the coasts of Turkey and Romania," it said in a statement.

The ministry said "the deliberate use by Russia of drifting sea mines turns them into a de facto weapon of indiscriminate action, which threatens, first of all, civil navigation and human life at sea in the whole waters not only of the Black and Azov Seas, but also of the Kerch and Black Sea Straits".

Russian officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

## ACCUSATIONS

Earlier this month Russia's main intelligence agency accused Ukraine of laying mines to protect ports and said several hundred of the explosives had broken from cables and drifted away. Kyiv dismissed that account as disinformation.

A Ukrainian foreign ministry official told Reuters separately that the sea mines were of the "R-421-75" type, which were neither registered with or used by Ukraine's navy currently.

The official said mines of this type - some 372 units - had been previously stored at Ukraine's 174th armament base in Sevastopol and were seized by Russia's military during its annexation of Crimea in 2014 - a move not recognised internationally.

"Russia, using sea mines seized in 2014, deliberately provokes and discredits Ukraine to international partners," Ukraine's foreign ministry added separately.

London's marine insurance market has widened the area of waters it considers high risk in the region and insurance costs have soared.

Five merchant vessels have been hit by projectiles - with one of them sunk - off Ukraine's coast with two seafarers killed, shipping officials say.

"Vessels navigating in the Black Sea should maintain lookouts for mines and pay careful attention to local navigation warnings," ship insurer London P&I Club said in an advisory note on Tuesday.

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### **19. Baltic Presidents: 'Forward Defense' Needed to Deter Russia**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 30 (1357) | John Grady

The presidents of the three Baltic nations agree the time of providing "tripwire" forces to NATO's eastern front is over and must be replaced with a strengthened "forward defense" to deter future Russian aggression in Europe.

Speaking at an online Atlantic Council forum Tuesday, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said his country continues to face a "serious threat" along the Suwalki Gap, the 80-kilometer stretch of territory between Kaliningrad, home to large Russian naval base on the Baltic, and Belarus, a key Kremlin ally in the invasion of Ukraine.

It has only been 11 years since the last Russian soldier left Lithuania while still stationing forces nearby, Nausėda said. Kremlin attacks on neighboring states like Moldova, Georgia and in Ukraine's Crimea and eastern provinces have not stopped but accelerated with the unprovoked attack on Kyiv last month.

Nausėda, along with Alar Karis, president of Estonia, and Egils Levits, president of Latvia, applauded the alliance's decision last week to step up military assistance to Ukraine and send more alliance battle groups to member nations from the Baltic to the Black Sea at the same time.

The movement of more forces eastward sends "a very strong signal to Moscow we're ready to defend the territory of NATO," Levits said. The additional battle groups brings to more than 9,000 NATO soldiers to Latvia. These forces have come primarily from the United States, United Kingdom and Germany.

All three wanted a permanent beefed-up presence for eastern Europe on the NATO agenda for June's meeting in Madrid. Having a long history of Russian occupation following World War II, the three were admitted in 2004 to the alliance.

Karis said, "there was no alternative" then to joining for mutual security, and "no alternative now."

Madrid will be "where concrete decisions will be made" on permanent forward stationing is made, Levits added.

Nausėda said increased NATO presence to the Baltic states also means moving in advanced systems and other equipment, especially air and missile defense weapons to the Baltic states as well as more air and ground forces.

For Lithuania's part, it has already increased its spending on security and has begun improving infrastructure to better facilitate the movement of NATO forces and equipment to his nation and stationing there.

With the Russian invasion stalemated in Ukraine, the possibility of Moscow using chemical or biological weapons or tactical nuclear weapons to get its way "would change the situation completely" of NATO's response, Levits said.

Nauseda added, "in recent weeks, Russia has crossed so many red lines" by invading Ukraine, "NATO should be very decisive in its response" if weapons of mass destruction were employed. Without spelling out an exact alliance response, Nauseda said military options should be on the table in that case.

Karis said the Kremlin's use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine could drive long-time alliance partners Finland and Sweden to seek NATO membership.

On imposing a "no-fly zone" over all or parts of Ukraine, the presidents said that decision would have to rest with nations capable of carrying out such a mission. Options like a no-fly zone "must be credible," Nauseda said, and should be aimed at not provoking a Russian escalation.

He suggested no-fly zones around nuclear plants and facilities as a possibility.

As to how the conflict will end, Karis said it cannot end at any price. "I would be very cautious" about negotiations with the Kremlin now, he said.

Levits added, "the territory of Ukraine [must be] restored," its security stable and the "the Russians should go back."

The Lithuanian president saw the American and European Union sanctions working in not only hitting Russian oligarchs but reaching its middle class. The pressure, he said, is being felt in Moscow's financial sector and its exporting of strategic materials and energy, its prime source of foreign revenue. He wanted the United States and Europe to look at means to close any loopholes that Moscow is using to get around the sanctions, "namely China."

The three said their nations are moving rapidly to reduce their energy dependence on Russian supplies. To fill the gap, the three presidents are looking to the United States for liquified natural gas shipments to meet their future needs.

But "the worse thing that can happen is a frozen conflict" in Ukraine, Karis said, where refugees are left homeless for years.

“We are seeing millions and millions of refugees” fleeing to Moldova, Poland and other eastern European nations, he said. “They have to be integrated” into the societies where they have sought refuge. He added the impact on those nations will be felt in their school and medical systems and the need to provide humanitarian assistance.

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## **RUSSIA**

### **20. Pentagon says Russia sends 1,000 fighters from military contractor to Donbas region**

The Hill Online, Mar. 30 (1640) | Ellen Mitchell

About 1,000 mercenaries from the shadowy Russian military contractor the Wagner Group are now in the Donbas region of Ukraine, pointing to a shift in Kremlin tactics in the war, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Wednesday.

In the past few days, U.S. intelligence has seen Russia become “much more active” in the Donbas region, including more airstrikes in the area.

“We think that the Wagner group now has about 1,000 people dedicated to the Donbas,” Kirby told reporters.

Wagner contractors have fought in the Donbas area over the past eight years since Russia aided a separatist movement in the region in 2014.

“This is an area where the Wagner group is experienced, so it’s not a surprise that they would try to try to look at using private military contractors there,” Kirby explained.

“We think it’s a reflection of the very tough fighting that continues to go on there, in the Donbas, and Mr. Putin’s desire to reinforce his efforts there.

In addition, over the last 24 hours, the U.S. has seen a little less than 20 percent of the troops Russia had arrayed against Kyiv begin to reposition elsewhere in the country and in Belarus.

“It’s our assessment that their intention is to reposition these units so that they can refit them for future operations,” Kirby said.

U.S. officials last week revealed that Russia had appeared to shift its plans for an invasion of the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv to an offensive focused in the Donbas. The move comes after the Kremlin has struggled to take the city and other major metropolitan areas since it invaded on Feb. 24 and was met with fierce Ukrainian forces armed with Western-provided weapons.

“It could actually be that they are reassessing now their strategic goals because they clearly are not moving on Kyiv anymore,” a senior U.S. defense official told reporters on Monday. “We’re not exactly sure what’s behind this reprioritization.”

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## **21. U.S. official says export curbs on Russia hit car production and tank building**

Reuters, Mar. 30 (1752) | Karen Freifeld

Global restrictions on exports to Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine have shut down a car maker, halted work on tanks and cut a Russian computer maker’s access to circuits used in communications equipment, a U.S. official said on Wednesday.

“Thirty-three countries have joined together with one export controls strategy,” said Thea Kendler, assistant secretary for export administration at the Commerce Department.

“Necessity brought together this unprecedented collaboration on export controls and other measures that are having a meaningful impact on Putin’s war.”

While only about 5% of Russia’s imports came from the United States, Kendler said, adding the European Union and other coalition countries accounts for roughly 50 percent of Russia’s imports.

Export controls were never expected to have immediate effects, she said, but noted the Ukrainian government reported that Russia’s two major tank plants halted work over a lack of foreign components. Baikal Electronics, a Russian semiconductor company and computer manufacturer, was cut off from integrated circuits to support its surveillance, servers, and other domestic communications equipment, she added.

Taiwan’s TSMC, the world’s largest contract chipmaker, exited the Russian market, cutting off the Moscow Center of SPARC Technologies access to Elbrus chips, which are widely used in Russian intelligence and military systems, she said. Lada halted auto production as export controls deprived it of needed parts and supplies, she added.

Renault, which controls the company that produces the Lada, said it would suspend operations at its plant in Moscow while it assesses options on its majority stake in Avtovaz AVAZI\_p.MM, the country’s No. 1 carmaker.

Renault did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Nor did TSMC, Baikal Electronics, the Moscow Center of SPARC Technologies, and Russian tank maker UralVagonZavod could not immediately be reached for comment.

Kendler said she and other U.S. Treasury Department and Commerce officials traveled to London, Brussels, Paris and Berlin to bring the coalition together, and that extensive talks also are going on with Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

“I expect to be able to announce additional like-minded export controls countries soon,” she said.

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## **22. Russia sanctions should increase until full Ukraine withdrawal – UK**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 30 (1323) | Not Attributed

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday said Western powers should tighten the economic noose around Russia until it withdraws all its soldiers from Ukraine.

At a hearing in parliament, Johnson told lawmakers that to lift G7 sanctions simply in return for a Russian ceasefire in Ukraine would go “straight into (Vladimir) Putin’s playbook”.

“My view is we should intensify sanctions with a rolling programme until every single one of his troops is out of Ukraine,” he said.

Johnson said also that the government in London was looking at “going up a gear” in its military aid to Ukraine.

He said that could include the provision of armoured personnel carriers to help Ukrainian forces break out of the besieged city of Mariupol.

Following peace talks this week in Turkey between Ukraine and Russia, reports suggested the UK, France and the United States could sign up to guarantee Ukraine’s security in return for a Russian pullout.

Johnson ruled out giving Ukraine the equivalent of NATO’s Article Five, which says an attack on one member is an attack on all.

But Ukraine could benefit from a different security concept “based on the idea of deterrence by denial”, he said.

Ukraine would be armed so much with Western aid, and “the quills of the porcupine have become so stiffened, that it is ever-after indigestible to Putin”.

“That is the path we are on,” he told the lawmakers, while also defending the pace of the UK visa programme to bring over Ukrainians fleeing the fighting.

The prime minister meanwhile said he understood US President Joe Biden’s frustration when he said last week that Putin could not stay in power.

But Johnson stressed that regime change in Moscow is “not the objective of the UK government”.

“We are simply setting out to help protect the people of Ukraine and protect them from absolutely barbaric and unreasonable violence.”

The government said separately that sanctioned Russian oligarchs and their businesses would now be banned from using Britain’s aviation and maritime industries and engineers.

It immediately used the new powers laid in parliament against the billionaire oil tycoon Eugene Shvidler and Oleg Tinkov, the founder of Tinkoff bank.

Both were slapped with asset freezes and travel bans last week.

The latest announcement comes after the UK authorities on Tuesday detained a Russian-owned \$50-million superyacht, the Phi, docked at London’s Canary Wharf.

The 58.5-metre (192-foot) vessel, which was in London for a refit, is registered to a company based in the Caribbean nation of St Kitts and Nevis and sails under a Maltese flag.

But the National Crime Agency anti-kleptocracy unit said its ultimate owner was an unnamed Russian businessman.

At least two oligarch-linked private jets have previously been impounded in the UK.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Today’s legislation adds new routes at our disposal to deprive oligarchs’ access to their luxury toys.

“Our economic and transport sanctions are working to suffocate those most complicit in Putin’s regime ensuring that no one on UK soil can support Putin’s inhuman assault in Ukraine.”

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said the new legislation has also extended finance, trade and shipping sanctions imposed on Crimea to Russian-seized Ukrainian territory in Donetsk and Luhansk.

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## INDO-PACIFIC

### **23. U.S., South Korea seen resuming major military drills as North Korea tensions rise**

Reuters, Mar. 31 (0258) | Not Attributed

SEOUL -- Joint South Korean and U.S. military drills set to kick off next month could for the first time in years include more weaponry and troops, and more aggressive messaging as tensions with North Korea rise.

Neither the South Korean or U.S. militaries have confirmed what this year's annual drills may entail, but a recent series of unusual displays of military might in and around the Korean peninsula suggest a more muscular show could be in the works, analysts said.

North Korea conducted a full intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test for the first time since 2017 last week, and South Korean officials have reported new construction at the North's only known nuclear test site, which was shuttered in 2018.

Monitors in the United States also reported this week "unusual" activity by a North Korean ballistic missile submarine at its base, suggesting repairs, modifications, or preparations for a new missile launch.

South Korea conducted rare missile drills and an unprecedented F-35A fighter jet display in explicit response to North Korea's latest ICBM test, warning Pyongyang it has the willingness and capability to respond and "punish" the North if necessary.

This follows the U.S. military saying it was stepping up its military efforts in the Yellow Sea, and conducted an aircraft carrier drill in a demonstration of force against North Korea.

In a report on North Korea's ICBM launch provided to lawmakers this week and obtained by Reuters, South Korea's ministry of defence said deterring future actions by North Korea requires not only displays of the South's military power, but also "timely manifestation" of strong capabilities and posture at the South Korea-U.S. alliance level.

It is a stark contrast with recent years when the two allies played down their military exercises, holding computer-based training, scaling down field exercises, avoiding major weapons and not publicising some of the drills, at least partly as they sought to placate Pyongyang and restart stalled denuclearisation talks.

Col. Lee Peters, a spokesman for U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), said its policy is not to comment on planned or executed combined exercises, but said training is something all militaries conduct to maintain readiness, proficiency, credibility and trust.

“Any decision regarding combined training will be made by the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” he said, using the initials for South Korea’s official name.

South Korea’s ministry of defence said the drills have yet to be finalised.

It denied local media reports there had been discussions about holding trilateral exercises with the United States and Japan, according to Yonhap news agency.

The exercises will likely return to a more normal pre-COVID tempo amid eased pandemic restrictions and diminished political benefit to cancelling or limiting the drills given the diplomatic deadlock with North Korea, said Daniel Pinkston, a Seoul-based lecturer for Alabama’s Troy University.

“The North Korea threat continues to increase while ROK and USFK military readiness arguably has declined because of insufficient training,” he said.

A coalition of U.S. and South Korean peace activists have called for the upcoming drills to be scrapped.

“Suspending these costly and highly provocative military exercises will be a crucial step toward restarting genuine diplomacy with North Korea,” the groups said in a statement they plan to send to U.S. and South Korean leaders.

Yonhap reported South Korea and the United States are “leaving all possibilities open” for responding to a possible resumption of nuclear testing by the North.

They have also discussed resuming “Blue Lightning” exercises involving strategic bombers, including some that are nuclear capable, which have been on hold for about five years, Yonhap reported.

President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol, who takes office in May, has vowed to “normalise” joint drills and to boost South Korea’s military deterrent against the North, but has said the April drills will be decided by the current administration in consultation with the United States.

*--Reporting by Josh Smith and Hyonhee Shin*

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## **24. North Korea not telling the whole truth about latest ICBM test, South Korean official says**

CNN.com, Mar. 31 (0216) | Brad Lendon and Gawon Bae

North Korea’s launch last week of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), reported to be its most formidable yet, may have been a less advanced weapon than previously believed, according to a South Korean military official.

The official, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, said South Korean and US analysis of the March 24 launch of what North Korea claimed was a new Hwasong-17 ICBM, was in actual fact the older and slightly smaller Hwasong-15 -- an ICBM last tested by Pyongyang in 2017.

Several missile experts have since reached a similar conclusion, but they caution the significance of last week's successful ICBM launch -- North Korea's first in more than four years -- should not be discounted, pointing out the test still demonstrated a weapon with the theoretical ability to hit all of the continental United States.

The ICBM fired by North Korea last Thursday flew to an altitude of 6,000 kilometers (3,728 miles) and to a distance of 1,080 kilometers (671 miles) with a flight time of 71 minutes before splashing down in waters off Japan's western coast last Thursday, according to Japan's Defense Ministry.

Japan's Vice Defense Minister Makoto Oniki told reporters shortly afterward that the missile's altitude would suggest it is a "new type of ICBM."

Japanese officials were sticking to that assessment this week, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno saying on Monday that Tokyo judged the missile to be a new type based on flight altitude and other information.

But the South Korean official and missile experts said further close analysis of images in North Korean state media of last week's launch gave two potential clues relating to Pyongyang's alleged subterfuge.

The South Korean official said assessments by Seoul and Washington showed the ICBM launched last week only had two engine nozzles, like Hwasong-15, whereas Hwasong-17 has four.

And video released last Friday by state-run Korean Central Television (KCTV) purporting to show Kim Jong Un guiding the launch reveal the North Korean leader's shadow appearing westward, meaning it was filmed in the morning, but the launch took place in the afternoon, the official said.

Also, it was cloudy in the launch area last Thursday, but the weather in the KCTV video appears to be sunny, the official said.

*Analysts say US must still be wary*

Several missile experts have also begun to cast doubt on North Korea's claim to have launched a Hwasong-17.

Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, said the KCTV video appears to have been made during a failed launch on March 16, in which a North Korean missile exploded soon after liftoff around an altitude of 20 kilometers (12.5 miles).

“North Korea released a video after the March 24 test. We measured the shadows in it, however, and it is clear from the altitude and angle of the sun that the video is from the test on the morning of March 16,” Lewis said.

“The video is of the (previous) test that failed. That strongly suggests the other test was something different that they don’t want us to see.”

Ankit Panda, a nuclear policy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Pyongyang may have altered the Hwasong-15 -- first tested nearly five years ago -- to make it look like a more powerful missile.

“They claimed that it’s the Hwasong-17, which is the new, very large ICBM they inaugurated at a parade in October 2020, but it looks like what they actually did was they put a very light or perhaps no payload on a Hwasong-15, which is the ICBM they first tested in November 2017. And they used that to stage a demonstration,” Panda said.

Panda said Pyongyang’s apparently inflated claim was aimed at a domestic audience rather than internationally.

“The only thing going well in North Korea right now is the missile program, so perhaps Kim Jong Un plans to use this demonstration to indicate to his own people that they are suffering, the food shortages, the economic difficulties, the lockdown over Covid, that all of this has been worth it, because their national defense capabilities are still advancing,” he said.

On Tuesday, South Korean lawmaker Ha Tae-keung told reporters that, according to a military briefing, debris rained down over the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, following the failed March 16 test.

Ha’s office confirmed the lawmaker’s remarks to CNN on Thursday, adding North Korea may have been prompted to announce the March 24 Hwasong-15 launch as a Hwasong-17 to temper negative opinions in Pyongyang, where citizens witnessed the March 16 failure. North Korea has not acknowledged reports of a failed March 16 test.

Lewis, the nuclear weapons expert, said regardless of which missile was fired last Thursday, the test showed a powerful offensive capability that US defense officials have to be wary of.

“The missile fired on March 24 would have had a range of about 12,000 kilometers (7,500 miles), which is certainly within the capability of a Hwasong-15, which can deliver a nuclear weapon anywhere in the United States,” Lewis said.

And Matsuno, the Japanese official, said Monday that North Korea’s missile program remains a serious threat to the security of Japan, the region and the world.

*--CNN’s Yoonjung Seo and Junko Ogura contributed to this report*

## CHINA

### **25. China, Russia ‘more determined’ to boost ties, Beijing says**

Reuters, Mar. 30 (0832) | Not Attributed

BEIJING -- Moscow and Beijing are “more determined” to develop bilateral ties and boost cooperation, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Wednesday following a meeting in eastern China with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, amid the Ukraine crisis.

The two also condemned what they called illegal and counter-productive Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over its actions in Ukraine, the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

Wang and Lavrov spoke in the eastern Chinese province of Anhui, where China is hosting two days of multilateral meetings on Afghanistan.

“Both sides are more determined to develop bilateral ties, and are more confident in promoting cooperation in various fields,” Wang said.

“China is willing to work with Russia to take China-Russian ties to a higher level in a new era under the guidance of the consensus reached by the heads of state,” he said.

### ‘INTERNATIONAL TURBULENCE’

The meeting comes a little over a month after Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, in what it calls a “special operation”, triggering unprecedented Western economic sanctions.

Russia is looking to China for support and partnerships as it becomes ever more isolated from global financial systems and supply chains.

China has refused to condemn Russia’s actions in Ukraine or to call it an invasion. It reiterated support on Wednesday for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine.

Russia’s foreign ministry said Lavrov had informed Wang about the progress of military operations in Ukraine and the state of Moscow’s negotiations with Kyiv.

“The sides noted the counterproductive nature of the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and its satellites,” the ministry said in a statement.

The two ministers agreed that Russia and China would continue to strengthen their strategic partnership and to speak on global affairs “with a united voice”, it added.

China’s foreign ministry quoted Wang as saying that bilateral relations had “withstood the test of international turbulence”.

Lavrov said on Monday that Russia’s relations with China were at their strongest level ever.

On the eve of last month’s Winter Olympics in Beijing, China and Russia declared a “no-limits” strategic partnership.

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## **26. China, Solomon Islands agree controversial security pact**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 31 (0243) | Not Attributed

The Solomon Islands on Thursday said it had inked a wide-ranging security pact with Beijing, an agreement Western allies fear will pave the way for the first Chinese military foothold in the South Pacific.

“Officials of Solomon Islands and the People’s Republic of China have initialled elements of a bilateral Security Cooperation Framework between the two countries today,” said a statement from the prime minister’s office in Honiara.

It is now awaiting signature by foreign ministers of the two countries.

A draft version of the agreement, leaked last week, detailed measures to allow Chinese security and naval deployments to the crisis-hit Pacific island nation.

It included a proposal that “China may, according to its own needs and with the consent of the Solomon Islands, make ship visits to, carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands”.

It would also allow armed Chinese police to deploy at the Solomon Islands’ request, to maintain “social order”.

The “forces of China” would also be allowed to protect “the safety of Chinese personnel” and “major projects in the Solomon Islands”.

Without the written consent of the other party, neither would be allowed to disclose the missions publicly.

The leaking of the draft sent political shock waves across the region.

The United States and Australia have long been concerned about the potential for China to build a naval base in the South Pacific, allowing its navy to project power far beyond its borders.

Any Chinese military presence would likely force Canberra and Washington to change their military posture in the region.

Australia's Chief of Joint Operations Lieutenant General Greg Bilton said Thursday that the China-Solomon Islands pact would "change the calculus" of his country's operations in the Pacific.

The Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare dismissed critics of the deal in a fiery speech Tuesday, saying there was "no intention whatsoever... to ask China to build a military base in the Solomon Islands".

He added that it was "very insulting... to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs" by other nations.

Word that the pact had been initialled came just hours after the president of the Federated States of Micronesia made public an impassioned plea to Sogavare to reconsider signing the deal.

President David Panuelo voiced "grave security concerns about this proposed agreement" in a March 30 letter to the leader, citing rising tensions between China and the United States.

"My fear is that we -- the Pacific Islands -- would be at the epicentre of a future confrontation between these major powers," Panuelo wrote.

In his letter to Sogavare, Panuelo asked the Solomons leader to consider the long-term consequences "for the entire Pacific region, if not the entire world" of signing the security pact.

There are also fears the deal could fuel domestic strife inside the Solomons.

The nation of 800,000 has been wracked by political and social unrest, and many of its people live in poverty.

In November, protesters tried to storm the parliament and went on a deadly three-day rampage, torching much of Honiara's Chinatown.

More than 200 peacekeepers from Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand were deployed to restore calm, and Sogavare avoided being deposed.

The unrest was sparked by opposition to Sogavare's rule and fuelled by unemployment and inter-island rivalries.

But anti-China sentiment also played a role.

Leaders on the most populous island of Malaita fiercely oppose Sogavare's decision to recognise Beijing and break ties with Taiwan in 2019.

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## MIDDLE EAST

### **27. Invasion deepens rift between U.S. and gulf nations**

Washington Post, Mar. 31 (0115), Pg. A1 | Karen DeYoung and Missy Ryan

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has heightened existing strains in the Biden administration's relationships in the Middle East, even as it has brought new unity to NATO and transatlantic ties.

Nowhere have the bonds been as frayed as with Persian Gulf partners Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Their reluctance to increase oil output as gas prices rise, along with what the Biden administration sees as a less-than-robust condemnation of Moscow, are among the most visible current reasons.

But in both cases, the sources of estrangement go far deeper. Gulf officials describe a mix of complaints that have caused them to doubt U.S. security guarantees, including what they consider the administration's failure to respond vigorously enough to ongoing missile attacks on their countries by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, and its eagerness to sign a new nuclear deal with Tehran that does not address Iranian aggression in the region.

Equally important is what they see as a lack of respect from a long-standing ally. "It goes beyond policy," said Jeffrey Feltman, who served for years as a top U.S. diplomat in the region and as U.N. undersecretary for political affairs. "It goes to the personal."

President Biden, who described Saudi Arabia as a "pariah" state during his campaign, has not yet met or even had a conversation with the de facto Saudi leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Bin Salman's Emirati counterpart, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, was said to be livid when weeks passed without a high-level U.S. visit or immediately positive response to requests for more air defense supplies after the first of a series of Houthi missile attacks hit the UAE on Jan. 17, according to people familiar with the matter who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomacy.

In an effort to get the relationship back on track, Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday met with the Emirati crown prince in Morocco. Blinken was effusive as they shook hands for the cameras, saying he was "grateful for the time today, and actually I'm grateful for the time every day, because the partnership between our countries truly matters to the United States." The UAE, he said, was "a leader in the region, increasingly a leader in the world."

Bin Zayed was terse. It was an “important opportunity,” he said. “I’m sure we have a lot to talk about, especially between our bilateral relationship.”

Speaking to reporters Wednesday, Blinken said he had “made very clear to him . . . that the United States is a true partner to the UAE,” but provided few details. He said they did not focus on energy supply.

The administration, according to people familiar with the divide, has little patience with their complaints, and sees the resentments as business as usual in the region. With many crises to address, and pressure from within the Democratic Party and beyond to take a tougher line against the gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, Biden has had little room to maneuver. U.S., Saudi and Emirati officials declined to comment.

A meeting, or even a phone call, with bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince - identified by the CIA as having ordered the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi - would be problematic for Biden’s already tenuous relations with many in Congress, where the crown prince is regularly denounced. Biden was willing to meet him at last year’s Group of 20 conference in Rome or at the climate summit in Scotland, but bin Salman did not attend. The White House would not have objected, people familiar with events said, if the crown prince had participated during a February call between his father, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, and Biden.

For the Emiratis, the reasons for estrangement are more diffuse, including U.S. delays in the sale of F-35 fighter jets, and the Iran negotiations. But those irritants pale beside what the Emiratis consider a tepid U.S. response to Houthi attacks when the first missiles rained down from Yemen on fuel tankers in Abu Dhabi, killing three civilians.

Relatively common against Saudi Arabia, the rare strike against the Emiratis - whose direct involvement in the Saudi-led war against the Houthis ended several years ago - was the beginning of weeks of similar attacks, all but the first intercepted by U.S.-provided missiles from Patriot and THAAD air defense systems. In response, the UAE appealed to the United States for more interceptors, more intelligence on Houthi movements, and the U.S. re-designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization, a measure that would open those dealing with them to criminal penalties.

Donald Trump had imposed the designation the day before leaving office, a move that led to criticism from humanitarian groups that the action was an impediment to aid shipments for civilians. In response, Biden lifted the measure.

The recent attacks heightened the Emiratis’ sense of vulnerability over the pending Iran nuclear deal, and they found the U.S. response lacking, according to the people familiar with exchanges between the two.

Compounding their ire were reports that the administration is considering lifting its designation of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, as part of the nuclear negotiations. An IRGC delegation showed up at a defense show last week in Doha, Qatar - a regional rival for U.S. affections. Qatar

insisted it had invited only Iran's defense ministry, and didn't know the IRGC was coming. The State Department released a statement saying it was "deeply disappointed and troubled" by the appearance.

But the Arab states and others in the region share a concern about U.S. priorities regarding Tehran, said James Jeffrey, a former U.S. ambassador who served as the Trump administration's envoy to defeat the Islamic State. Calling on the administration to take steps that would prove to gulf allies that Biden is willing to embrace more than harsh rhetoric about Iran, Jeffrey described the action as "a football game where your team never scores any points and keeps on losing the ball, but the coach keeps yelling" that the team can win.

In response to the UAE appeals for more weapons, U.S. officials - juggling demands for Patriots and other interceptors from Saudi Arabia and European allies on NATO's eastern flank - note that UAE stockpiles are far from depleted. The Emiratis already have more advanced U.S.-made weaponry than many American partners, including the THAAD system, which was first used in combat in response to the Houthi attacks.

The administration, which had cut off all but defensive assistance to the Saudis in the Yemen war, said it had no access to the high-altitude surveillance of the Houthis the Emiratis wanted, something the UAE didn't believe, several people familiar with the situation said. The Houthis are undoubtedly a terrorist organization, but the administration considers re-designation complicated, not necessarily because of the lobbying of humanitarian groups but because U.S. and international banks would refuse to facilitate aid and transport to Yemen for fear of criminal charges.

But none of these disputes appeared to mean as much to the UAE - or to more exasperate the Americans - as the failure to publicly show up in the Emirati hour of need. While both sides agree that there were many high-level telephone calls; a U.S. statement denouncing the Houthis; and visits in February by Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., then head of the U.S. Central Command, and Brett McGurk, the senior Middle East official on the National Security Council, it was not seen as enough by a country that has participated with U.S. forces in conflicts from Kosovo to Afghanistan.

When Biden finally called bin Zayed recently, he was told that the time was not right, and promises from both sides to reschedule have so far come to naught.

Bilal Saab, a former Pentagon official who is director of the defense and security program of the Middle East Institute, said that gulf nations didn't seem to fully grasp the slow workings of U.S. bureaucracy. "Even with our closest NATO allies, we can't instantly send our senior emissaries and deploy military equipment to support them," he said. "It may just be that the gulf states' expectations of the United States are too high, which is causing much of this disappointment."

In recent weeks, the breach has worsened. A week after Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan met with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in Dubai last month, and joined his call for the world to stop isolating Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the UAE hosted Assad for a visit.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia declined U.S. appeals to increase their oil output to make up for market shortfalls during the Ukraine crisis, and the Emiratis abstained in a U.S.-backed U.N. Security Council vote condemning Russia.

Explaining the U.N. vote, the UAE's representative said the outcome - failure because of a Russian veto - was a foregone conclusion. Others familiar with the situation said that the abstention was a trade-off for Russia not to veto an upcoming resolution sanctioning the Houthis. But while the Emiratis later voted in favor of a U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning the Russians in Ukraine, the lack of support was noticed.

Speaking Tuesday at the annual World Government Summit in Dubai, oil ministers from both countries said they had no regrets about restraining production. Their focus, they said, is on the "sustainability" of world energy supplies, and they said they tried never to mix politics and oil.

"I've been at this for the last 35 years, and I know how we manage to compartmentalize our political issues to what is for the common good for all of us," Saudi Minister Suhail bin Mohamed al Mazrouei said.

*--John Hudson in Rabat, Morocco, contributed to this report*

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## **28. Ukraine war has 'deadly' impact on Arab region – US top diplomat**

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 30 (1657) | Not Attributed

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is having a "deadly" impact and threatening security in the Arab world, particularly through spiralling wheat prices, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Algiers Wednesday.

He was speaking on the final leg of a trip that began with an unprecedented summit in an Israeli kibbutz, attended by Blinken and the foreign ministers of Egypt, the Jewish state and three Arab countries that normalised ties with it in 2020.

Addressing journalists in Algiers, he said that while Russia's invasion of Ukraine seemed distant, it has already had "deadly consequences for citizens in the region".

"It's having a direct impact on their lives right now, particularly with regard to rising food prices... especially wheat," he said.

This poses "grave threats to security" in Arab countries, he added.

North African nations are heavily dependent on wheat imports and Blinken earlier said they were facing "disaster" over the massive shock the war dealt to already tight supplies.

Both Russia and Ukraine are major wheat producers, and Moscow also exports vast amounts of oil and gas.

Blinken said there was “a clear aggressor and a clear victim” in the Ukraine conflict.

“It’s important to stand with the victim and to stand for the principles that have also been violated,” he said.

Blinken met Algeria’s President Abdelmadjid Tebboune after holding talks with Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra.

It was his first visit as top US diplomat to the North African country, a Moscow ally and a major gas producer that has faced calls to boost exports to Europe after prices soared.

But Blinken made no mention of that subject during a press conference after his meetings on Wednesday.

The top US diplomat had flown in on Wednesday morning from Algeria’s arch-rival Morocco, which in 2020 normalised ties with Israel under a deal that sparked renewed tensions between Algiers and Rabat over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Relations between Washington and Algiers had also soured as a result of Morocco’s normalisation deal, brokered under then-president Donald Trump.

As a quid pro quo for normalisation, the Trump administration recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, a phosphate-rich desert territory where Algeria has long backed the Polisario independence movement.

In Rabat on Tuesday, Blinken had voiced support for a Moroccan autonomy plan for the Western Sahara, which he described as “serious, credible and realistic”.

In Algiers on Wednesday, he refrained from mentioning the Moroccan plan, instead voicing Washington’s support for United Nations mediation.

“We’re very focused on diplomacy and on advancing a resolution through diplomacy,” he said, insisting that there had been “no changes” in Washington’s position.

Officials in Algeria, a longtime supporter of the Palestinian cause, have voiced concerns over Morocco’s normalisation with Israel, particularly over the possibility their rival could access advanced Israeli military technology.

Bahrain and the UAE were the other countries to establish formal ties with Israel in the last months of the Trump administration.

Blinken said on Wednesday that he hoped that the “real practical benefits” to normalisation would encourage other Arab nations to follow suit.

But he re-emphasised that the normalisation process was “not a substitute for dealing with the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians” and reaching a two-state solution.

The Palestinians have described the 2020 deals, which broke with decades of Arab consensus that Israel should not be recognised in the absence of a peace deal creating a Palestinian state, as a stab in the back.

Israel was keen to cast its summit, attended by the foreign ministers of Morocco, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, as an alliance of powers against its arch-foe Iran.

Israel is fighting a regional shadow war against Iran and accuses it of seeking a nuclear bomb, something Tehran denies.

The summit in Israel came after the UAE has come under cross-border missile and drone attack from Yemen’s Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

Blinken said Wednesday that during talks the day before with the UAE’s de facto ruler Mohammed bin Zayed he expressed Washington’s strong support.

“One of the things I made very clear to him is the value that we attach to that partnership,” he said.

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## **29. U.N., U.S. press for broader Yemen truce after unilateral moves**

Reuters, Mar. 30 (1913) | Aziz El Yaakoubi

RIYADH -- United Nations and United States envoys on Wednesday welcomed unilateral truce moves by Yemen’s warring sides as encouraging steps, while stressing the need for a more comprehensive ceasefire that would help alleviate a dire humanitarian crisis.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen’s Houthis had said it would temporarily halt military operations from Wednesday after the Iran-aligned group this week declared a three-day cessation of cross-border attacks and ground offensives in Yemen.

As part of efforts to end the seven-year-old war that has killed tens of thousands and pushed millions into hunger, the initiatives followed a U.N. call for a truce during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan that starts this week.

U.N. special envoy Hans Grundberg and U.S. special envoy Tim Lenderking, speaking at a gathering of allied Yemeni factions in Riyadh on Wednesday, said the unilateral announcements were a step in the right direction.

The two envoys have been pressing Riyadh to ease coalition sea and air restrictions on areas held by the Houthis, who ousted the Saudi-backed government from the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014, prompting the coalition to intervene months later.

They have also urged the Houthis to end an offensive in energy-producing Marib, the internationally recognised government's last stronghold in North Yemen.

"Yemen needs a truce. I am engaging with the parties with a sense of urgency to reach this truce by the beginning of Ramadan. The truce will ease the fuel crisis and facilitate the freedom of movement," Grundberg told the gathering.

Lenderking said the U.N. proposal could serve as a first step towards a comprehensive ceasefire and a "new, more inclusive political process".

Two sources familiar with the matter had said the proposal was for a temporary truce in exchange for allowing fuel ships to dock at Houthi-held Hodeidah port and a small number of commercial flights to operate from Sanaa airport.

A senior U.S. State Department official said there were "real opportunities" for progress because there was "buy in" within Yemen and from countries in the region.

"We've seen positive statements from the Houthis that they would be willing to engage," the official said.

A permanent ceasefire has proved elusive as both sides resisted compromise. The Houthis want the coalition to lift its blockade ahead of any truce talks while the alliance, which controls Yemen's seas and air space, wants a simultaneous deal.

Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam told Reuters the group has for over a month been discussing a "humanitarian truce" with Grundberg and hoped "those efforts will succeed".

"On Riyadh's dialogue, we are not concerned about it nor its outcomes," he said, referring to the week-long Yemeni talks that the Houthis shunned for not being held in a "neutral" country.

Riyadh has struggled to exit the conflict that is largely seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Houthis say they are fighting a corrupt system and foreign aggression.

*--Additional Reporting by Humeyra Pamuk; Writing by Ghaida Ghantous*

### **30. US imposes new sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile program**

CNN.com, Mar. 30 (1413) | Jeremy Herb

The Biden administration on Wednesday enacted new sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile program in response to a missile attack on Erbil in Iraq earlier this month.

The Treasury Department announced the new sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps unit responsible for research and development of ballistic missiles, as well as Iran's Parchin Chemical Industries and an Iranian intermediary who worked on procurement of parts for propelling missiles.

"Iran's ballistic missile-related activities continue to destabilize the Middle East region, and the United States will continue to use every tool at our disposal to disrupt them," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement on Wednesday.

The new sanctions come as the US is still trying to reach an agreement with Iran to reenter the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. While US officials had said a deal seemed close earlier this month, there have been signs in recent days that it may not be imminent.

US special envoy for Iran Robert Malley told CNN's Becky Anderson in Doha on Sunday that a nuclear deal "is not around the corner and is not inevitable" due to outstanding issues, including Tehran's demands related to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Also on Sunday, Blinken said during a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that the US would counter hostile actions from Iran regardless of what happens with the nuclear agreement. "Deal or no deal, we will continue to work together and with other partners to counter Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region," Blinken said.

The Treasury Department said Wednesday's sanctions were being enacted following the March 13 missile attack on Erbil. The missiles landed near the US consulate building in Erbil that's under construction, though the State Department said they did not hit any US facilities.

The Treasury statement also cited the "Iranian enabled Houthi missile attack against a Saudi Aramco facility on March 25 as well as other missile attacks by Iranian proxies against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," saying all of the attacks "are a reminder that Iran's development and proliferation of ballistic missiles continues to pose a serious threat to international security."

"While the United States continues to seek Iran's return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, we will not hesitate to target those who support Iran's ballistic missile program," Treasury Undersecretary

for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said in a statement. “We will also work with other partners in the region to hold Iran accountable for its actions, including gross violations of the sovereignty of its neighbors.”

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## **INSTALLATIONS**

### **31. Plans for Hospital Closures as Part of Military Health System Reform Forging Ahead After Pause** Military.com, Mar. 30 (1142) | Patricia Kime

The Defense Health Agency is moving ahead with plans to close some 50 hospitals and clinics following a pause that began at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The closures are part of the agency’s broader effort under a Defense Department initiative to shift management of the military services’ 51 hospitals and 424 health clinics to the Defense Health Agency and focus the Army, Navy and Air Force’s medical commands on providing health care primarily for military personnel.

The plan calls for trimming roughly 12,800 military health billets and moving many non-military beneficiaries to private-sector health care -- a change that would let DoD downsize or close some health facilities, assuming Congress doesn’t step in.

Reforms were placed on hold on April 2, 2020, when the military shifted resources to address the pandemic, both within the Department of Defense and across the country as part of the nation’s public health response.

With the pandemic winding down, the Defense Health Agency has modified its plans to take into account lessons learned during COVID-19, according to David Smith, who is performing the duties of assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

The agency will submit the new plan to Congress in the coming weeks, Smith said.

Congress then has 180 days to examine the proposal, and “after that, we’ll begin the work that needs to be done to implement,” Smith said during an interview with Military.com.

Reforms have been underway within the military health system since 2013, when the Pentagon established the Defense Health Agency to assume duties such as medical administration, IT, logistics and training that existed in triplicate under the separate Army, Navy and Air Force medical commands.

In 2017, Congress gave DHA broad authority to reevaluate the scope of its facilities and how DoD serves Tricare beneficiaries who aren’t in the military, such as family members and retirees.

The services became responsible mainly for military operational medicine and maintaining combat-ready medical forces.

As a result, the Pentagon is planning major changes to 50 military health facilities, including 37 health clinics that no longer will see civilian patients and effectively forcing more than 200,000 beneficiaries to the private sector over the course of the next two to four years.

Smith said that as part of the reforms, DoD will uphold access standards, which include being seen at urgent care within 24 hours, same-day acute care for primary appointments and specialty appointments within 28 days, and in some cases may provide “better access.”

“We’ve made clear, though, that the access may be in a different venue, right, for example purchased care versus direct care,” Smith said, referring to Tricare-covered civilian care as opposed to military hospital care.

Although DoD said it would not commence cuts to military medical staffing until it receives the go-ahead from Congress, some facilities already are seeing the pinch through attrition, with military providers leaving and their billets not being filled.

At Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, Washington, the loss of medical personnel through attrition and focus on military personnel have “oversaturated the civilian capacity,” according to Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., a former member of the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee.

“We sent all our people with problems, with identical problems, and now we’ve oversaturated the civilian market. We have to pay attention to second and third order [effects],” Kelly said during a hearing in December 2019.

Smith said that with the upcoming changes, DoD will constantly monitor patient access to care and appointment times to ensure that patients are getting the care they need.

“The clear intent is to do conditions-based assessments, so if we’re getting feedback – and that’s also why we’re going to take up to four years to transition because we want to make sure that everywhere we are doing it, [it’s working],” Smith said. “Clearly industry has assured us that they can do this, right, but the proof will be in the pudding.”

The Defense Department’s proposed fiscal 2023 budget calls for \$54 billion for the military health system, a nearly 8% increase from the start of the pandemic. This year, along with continuing reform efforts, the Defense Health Agency will also award contracts for the next generation of Tricare services.

The contracts, worth up to more than \$58 billion, will determine which companies will oversee the Tricare health program for the next decade.

According to Smith, DHA's new plan contains modifications as a result of changes in the medical infrastructure that occurred in some communities as a result of the pandemic.

He did not give specifics, noting that the plan is still being vetted through the Department of Defense.

"All of these transitions are conditions-based. I think you'll find that a few [targeted facilities] have been pulled off, because we're constantly looking at it and our promise is that we're going to continue to look at it," Smith said.

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## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **32. There's a Better Way to Sell American Weapons**

Wall Street Journal Online, Mar. 30 (1828) | Grant Rumley and David Schenker

Arms exports are a key source of revenue for Russia, typically second only to oil and gas exports, and the war in Ukraine has jeopardized that revenue stream. Russia's arms sales have slumped in recent years, and the combination of Western sanctions and Russia's poor performance in Ukraine won't help. The U.S. can use this opportunity to lure partners away from Russian arms and begin to box Russia out of strategic markets. But it must change its approach.

America's most notable attempt to dissuade countries from buying Russian arms was the bipartisan 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, known by the acronym Caatsa, which included a directive to impose sanctions on nations that engage in a "significant transaction" with Russia's defense or intelligence sectors. Penalties entail a range of financial restrictions, including on exports and loans as well as on banking transactions with U.S. institutions. A later amendment gave the president authority to issue waivers in specific instances. Caatsa sanctions were invoked against Turkey after Ankara took possession of the Russian S-400 air-defense systems in 2020. Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member, was subsequently kicked out of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program for its deal with Russia.

But Caatsa provides too much wiggle room for U.S. policy makers, which weakens its ability to deter potential Russian customers. India bought the same S-400 system from Russia and hasn't been subjected to sanctions under Caatsa. Policy makers regularly make the case that India—which is a key partner in the U.S. competition with China but has a long history of buying arms from Russia—is worthy of a Caatsa waiver. Yet America's willingness to impose sanctions on a NATO ally and not India has confused many other countries.

In the Middle East, Caatsa sanctions loom large but likewise suffer from inconsistent application. In 2017 the United Arab Emirates and Russia announced plans to jointly produce a Russian fifth-generation jet fighter.

Though that deal has yet to produce an actual plane, the first prototype of the Russian fifth-generation Su-75 Checkmate made its debut at the Dubai Air Show in November. Egypt, a reliable customer of both American and Russian arms, seems to have crossed Caatsa red lines, though Washington hasn't responded with sanctions. In 2018 Cairo placed a \$2 billion order for more than two dozen Russian Su-35 fighters. By 2021 Egypt had begun taking delivery of several jets.

Turkey, Egypt, India and the U.A.E. are all countries that either have purchased Russian arms or engaged in significant activity with Russia's defense industry since the passage of Caatsa. They are, respectively, a NATO member, a major non-NATO ally, a major defense partner and a country currently hosting U.S. troops. Taken together, this group is a cross-section of Washington's most important strategic partners, and all have rebuffed U.S. efforts to discourage weapons acquisitions from Moscow through the threat of Caatsa sanctions. The U.S. needs to change tack if it wants to wean customers off Russian arms, gradually reduce another revenue stream for Moscow, and win back partners.

The complacent U.S. defense establishment too often sees itself as the "preferred partner of choice" for foreign customers, viewing U.S. materiel and support as superior to its competitors' despite onerous bureaucratic obstacles, long delivery times and often less-than-competitive price tags for U.S. arms. It must take a hard look at itself to see these deficiencies and address the reasonable complaints of its partners.

The U.S. must also change the way it markets materiel globally. One option is to explore the possibility of co-production of select U.S. weapons systems with dependable partners. Outside the F-35 program, the U.S. has been reluctant to share technology for fear of placing proprietary information at risk. For some top-tier systems, that makes sense. For others, it's an idea worth entertaining. U.S. partners have sought co-production for years but are now beginning to look elsewhere. Saudi Arabia recently signed an agreement with China to produce armed drones jointly and is reportedly producing ballistic missiles with China's help.

Another option is to entice potential customers by rewarding longstanding ones. Partners that have consistently purchased from the U.S. and don't seek closer relationships with Russia or China should be given priority for premium U.S. materiel. The Trump administration opened the door for one such approach when it relaxed the exports of armed drones such as the MQ-9 Reaper to select partners. The Biden administration should continue to offer the MQ-9 to America's closest partners.

Caatsa is a blunt tool that punishes bad choices, but it doesn't motivate countries to make good ones. Worse, its inconsistent implementation alienated friendly states, driving them away from the U.S. and closer to Moscow. Washington should change its approach by clarifying its implementation of Caatsa, streamlining the military procurement process, and making some of the crown jewels of America's arsenal available to close partners. The U.S. can and should leverage the momentum against Russia's invasion to correct a policy that simply isn't working.

*--Mr. Rumley is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute and a former Middle East policy adviser in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Mr. Schenker is a senior fellow and director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute. He served as assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, 2019-21*

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### **33. Russia Could Still Salvage Victory in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 31 (0200), Pg. A17 | Samir Puri

The year I served in east Ukraine as a cease-fire monitor was framed by dramatic events. I arrived in September 2014, shortly after a Malaysia Airlines flight was shot down by a Russian missile above the Donbas. I left in September 2015, as Russia switched its military attention to Syria. Russia was then fighting only in Ukraine's eastern regions, but that first incarnation of the Russia-Ukraine war has lessons for today.

Russia has shown that no matter how badly things go, it can find a way to impose its influence on Ukraine. In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea but the uprisings it inspired in Odessa and Kharkiv fizzled, while its separatist republics in Donetsk and Luhansk gained only incomplete footholds in these regions. Yet that was enough to destabilize Ukraine: Russia's proxies waged a limited war in the Donbas for eight years, giving Vladimir Putin his veneer-thin justification for invading this February.

Mr. Putin may settle for less than he set out to achieve, recasting this botched invasion as the next chapter in regaining Russia's postimperial influence in Ukraine.

As Ukrainian and Russian negotiators meet this week in Turkey, Russian officials may try to impose a fresh set of destabilizing terms on Ukraine. Russia's military has declared an end to the first phase of the invasion and a shift in operational priorities to east Ukraine -- a declaration widely seen by Ukraine's supporters in the U.S. and the U.K. as an admission that the invasion is failing.

The move follows a crucial tenet of war: Modify your strategic goals instead of sticking doggedly to unachievable ones. Russia's goal moderation can be derided as face-saving but in fact Moscow's less-ambitious aims are more achievable than Mr. Putin's dream of regime change.

Strategic failure beckons when maximalist campaign goals are maintained amid a faltering military effort. Afghanistan is a recent example: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization clung to its nation-building goal for almost two decades before leaving in a rout last summer. Goal moderation can be a sensible way to stay in the fight on more advantageous terms, by still advancing some strategic aims while jettisoning others as setbacks mount.

Mr. Putin will be desperate to emerge from the war with something to show for it to counter internal critics who see this as a botched invasion. If he moderates his strategic goals, there are two logical outcomes of Russia's

campaign: Either Russia will “butcher and bolt” by withdrawing on terms at least partly favorable to some Russian objectives, or its forces will remain and bisect a greater portion of Ukraine.

“Butcher and bolt” is a 19th-century phrase for a punitive expedition that wreaks havoc on disobedient imperial subjects after which the aggressor withdraws. Russian forces have demolished cities and shattered many Ukrainians’ lives. The city of Mariupol, where local officials say 5,000 Ukrainians have died, has suffered the sort of devastation once meted out by Russia’s air force in Syria. The Ukrainians may seek reparations if there is discussion of withdrawing Russian forces, but the toll on the country already is huge.

Russian forces are more likely to try to remain in parts of Ukraine. Kyrylo Budanov, head of Ukrainian military intelligence, said Russia wants to “create North, South Korea.” But South Korea retains huge U.S. military garrisons to deter future land grabs. A comparable scenario is unlikely here unless the U.S. sends major troop deployments to western Ukraine.

Divided Cyprus offers another analogy. Since Turkey invaded in 1974, Ankara has sustained the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” and Turkish forces are based there despite low levels of diplomatic recognition. That didn’t stop the Republic of Cyprus from joining the European Union in 2004. The division has evolved into a feature on Europe’s political map.

Russia may try to secure a stretch of land from the Donbas to Crimea even if it faces insurgency later on. Ukraine will never willfully give up its territory, but barring an unforeseen escalation that brings other countries into the fight, a total Russian rout looks unlikely. Even if Ukraine dislodges Russian forces from the 2022 territorial gains, evicting Russia from the 2014 gains will be almost impossible.

This is a bleak prognosis for Ukraine, which is no stranger to division. Its lands were bisected by Austria-Hungary in the west and Russia in the east until both empires collapsed in World War I. Mr. Putin is bent on securing something from his military misadventure. Whether he can depends on his awareness of the shrinking reality of what Russia’s invasion force can achieve.

*--Mr. Puri is senior fellow in hybrid warfare and urban security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and author of “The Shadows of Empire”*

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### **34. How to Meet the Threat of Hypersonic Missiles**

Bloomberg Opinion, Mar. 30 (0800) | Editorial

Headlines about Russia’s use of “hypersonic” missiles in Ukraine have fueled fears that the U.S. is falling behind its rivals in developing such weapons. Although the U.S. needs a strategy to counter the push by Russia and China to deploy hypersonic arsenals, it should be cautious about splurging on new technologies the military doesn’t actually need.

Hypersonic weapons fall into two categories: glide vehicles that are launched on booster rockets before detaching and gliding to a target, and cruise missiles that use oxygen to generate propulsion. Both travel at least five times faster than sound, but that’s true of nearly all ballistic missiles. What distinguishes hypersonics is their ability to fly low and maneuver instead of following a trackable arc — meaning they could potentially evade U.S. missile defenses.

While Vladimir Putin has touted Russia’s gains in building such weapons, the true potency of its arsenal remains unclear. The Kinzhal (“Dagger”) missiles used in Ukraine aren’t technically hypersonics; they’re air-launched ballistic missiles likely modified from Russia’s Iskander missile. Military experts are also skeptical of the progress Russia claims to have made on other hypersonic weapons. China’s test of a globe-spanning hypersonic glider last summer, on the other hand, demonstrated more advanced capabilities.

After once leading the field in developing such weapons, the U.S. has made slow progress in recent years. The Air Force has struggled with its air-launched glider, and the Army and Navy aren’t expecting to deploy their own gliders before 2024 and 2025. Continued investment in research and testing is surely prudent.

Before pouring tens of billions of additional dollars into a new arms race, however, the Pentagon needs to carefully assess how hypersonics can help meet its strategic goals. The aim shouldn’t be to match China or Russia missile-for-missile. Even a large arsenal of such weapons won’t directly mitigate the threat posed by Russian and Chinese weapons. And though hypersonics could prove useful against certain enemy targets, a cheaper and more effective option for many missions may be to improve America’s stealth technology and upgrade its existing ballistic missiles.

Similarly, the Pentagon needs to step up its defenses against hypersonics, while being realistic about what it can actually achieve. Defending the entire U.S. against such weapons would be impossible at any affordable cost and would only drive Russia and China to deploy more missiles to ensure enough got through. A more sensible approach would be to invest in strengthening theater defenses to protect likely targets, such as aircraft carriers and command centers.

Finally, U.S. leaders shouldn’t lose sight of how destabilizing hypersonic weapons could one day become. In a crisis, officials might well be unable to tell what type of warhead a glider is carrying or its intended target, thereby

increasing the risk of unintended escalation. While transparency measures and hypersonic arms control agreements with Russia and China may be hard to envision right now, they may become necessary.

Pentagon planners are right, then, to carefully monitor the threats posed by hypersonics. The key is to avoid a costly overreaction. Foresight and sensible investment will serve the U.S. much better than an unfettered new arms race.

--Editors: Nisid Hajari, Timothy Lavin

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### **35. A Megaton of Waste**

*The White House's new defense budget lavishes money on America's nuclear weapons program in the name of competing with China and Russia. It's totally unnecessary*

Slate.com (War Stories), Mar. 30 (1354) | Fred Kaplan

President Joe Biden's defense budget for 2023 is gargantuan. It comes to \$813.3 billion, nearly \$60 billion higher than the budget he requested a year ago for 2022. Just a few weeks ago, Congress passed a bill adding \$25 billion to that earlier budget. Biden's new budget, which he submitted on Monday, accepts the congressional hike as a baseline and raises the pot by another \$32 billion.

To put this in perspective, Biden's \$813 billion exceeds President Donald Trump's final defense budget by \$75 billion—which, for a sense of proportion, is about 2.5 times what the government spends on Pell grants for low-income college students. It tops the amount that the Trump administration figured it would spend in 2023 by \$40 billion.

And yet congressional Republicans say that, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its threats to expand further, Biden's new budget is much too small, and they're set to throw in tens of billions of dollars more.

Does this make any sense? The world may be more dangerous than it seemed a few months, much less a few years, ago. But have its dangers grown so much in the past year that they warrant spending an extra \$60 billion and so much in the past few weeks that they demand \$30 billion or \$40 billion more? (For anyone wondering, these increases go beyond what's necessary for the military budget to keep up with inflation.) Finally, does Biden's budget spend this extra money in a way that actually deals with the growing threats from Russia or anywhere else?

In other words, it is time to ask the vital question: How much do we really need to spend on defense?

It's a question that remarkably few in official or congressional circles ask. Or, to the extent they do, their answer is always one word: more. They think that a dollar sign backed by a very high number sends a signal of our serious intent to our friends and foes. They focus on how much to spend—not on what to buy.

Some of Biden's budget hikes do go to counter the new Russian threat. For instance, it increases funding for the European Deterrence Initiative—a program that enables the movement of U.S. troops and equipment into NATO's eastern nations, such as Poland, Romania, and the Baltics—from \$3.7 billion to \$6.9 billion.

But that only accounts for about 5 percent of Biden's \$60 billion increase. What about the rest? Much of it will fund more combat planes and warships; research and development into 5G, A.I., and hypersonic missiles; and improvements in the communications tools that link commanders and their weapons. There are legitimate cases to be made for these upgrades, quite aside from Russia's invasion and the subsequent anxieties of NATO allies on the western border of Ukraine.

But the most visible, and surprising, share of Biden's defense budget is the enormous sum for nuclear weapons \$50.9 billion, a 17 percent increase over this year's (already considerable) \$43.2 billion. About a third of this outlay is for the Energy Department's nuclear complex including its weapons labs, plutonium pits, and the production and testing of warheads and bombs. The other two-thirds, controlled by the Defense Department, goes to the major defense contractors.

A debate has raged for years among defense analysts over whether to revamp all three "legs" of America's "strategic nuclear triad"—the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-missile-carrying submarines, and long-range bomber aircraft. Some argue that all three elements of the arsenal are on the verge of obsolescence and need to be replaced. Others contend that, while this will be true for the submarines in the next decade or so, the missiles and bombers can be merely modified (as they have been a few times already); still others add that the land-based missiles should be eliminated or drastically reduced in number (say, from their current 400 to maybe 40). I'm among this last group.

The Pentagon's fact sheet on the budget makes clear that Biden has decided to replace all three legs and build a new long-range air-launched cruise missile, to boot. These new weapons, and their associated gear, consume \$34.3 billion of his proposal—a 24 percent increase over what the administration devoted to them in this year's budget. All of these new missiles, bombers, and submarines are in the research-and-development phase, meaning that, as they move into production, their costs will grow. In other words, starting in a few years, the budget for nuclear weapons will skyrocket.

This decision is surprising because, in his years as senator and vice president, Biden was never enamored of the "nuclear priesthood." As president, some of his appointments to key positions in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council staff were equally skeptical specialists. Two things happened between Inauguration Day and now.

First, Russia and China kept building new nuclear weapons (not more nuclear weapons, but upgrades to existing models). Some analysts argue that, objectively, this shouldn't affect our decisions; as long as we're able to carry out our nuclear war plans—as long as we can deter Russia and China from attacking us and, to some extent, limit

damage if nuclear war breaks out anyway — no need for us to follow Russia’s or China’s wasteful practices. But politically, this is a hard argument to make, especially given the influence of a bipartisan group of legislators whose home districts manufacture missiles, bombers, or submarines.

Second, back when Biden was vice president, he and President Barack Obama got snookered by a particularly agile group of these legislators. In 2010, Obama needed two-thirds of the Senate to ratify the New START arms reduction treaty, which he had signed with Russia’s then-president, Dmitry Medvedev. Several senators threatened not to ratify unless Obama spent more on the nuclear stockpile and agreed to build new missiles, bombers, and submarines. Hawks have pulled this ploy ever since the first U.S.-Soviet arms control treaty back in 1972. Almost every new American nuclear weapon since then has been funded as a bribe for ratification or as a “bargaining chip” for future arms negotiations — except that, once nuclear weapons enter production, they’re almost never bargained away.

Obama tried to be clever under this pressure, pledging to “modernize or replace” all three legs of the triad. He did not regard this as a promise to buy any new weapons. To “modernize” a missile could mean upgrading its software or installing new communications gear.

But in response, the congressional critics rolled out a grand list of new weapons, which carried a 30-year price tag of \$1.3 trillion (it has since grown), and claimed that Obama had signed on to the whole package as part of the deal to ratify New START. When Trump was elected, key Pentagon officials—some of whom had worked for Senate Republicans—labeled this package as “the Obama plan of record.” The message was clear: Obama (who was viewed by Republicans and several centrist Democrats as a weak-on-defense dove) approved these weapons; therefore, you’re an even weaker-on-defense dove if you try to cancel them.

And so from that point on, these weapons — which won’t be fielded for several years — have been presented as part of the U.S. arsenal’s status quo. To oppose their funding is seen as an act not of restraint but of unilateral disarmament.

Last year, Biden raised defense spending and retained the plan to build new nukes, in part because he needed a few moderates to support his extravagant domestic spending plan — and he wouldn’t get them unless he supported extravagant Pentagon spending. Now this year, as the political mood has shifted and as midterms loom ahead, Biden has scaled back his domestic ambitions even while pushing the defense budget upward and onward.

And what will we get for this massive military spending binge? Mostly theater. Nobody has come up with a persuasive scenario in which the U.S., armed with its current nuclear arsenal, is unable to deter Russia or China (or North Korea or some other foe) from aggression, but would be able to deter them, if we only had all these new missiles, bombers, and submarines now.

The war in Ukraine illustrates the point. Biden (properly) refuses to send U.S. troops or pilots into the battle directly, for fear that Russia would see such intervention as an existential threat and respond with nuclear

weapons. Some think Biden is excessively cautious. But none of his critics has claimed that we could gain the upper hand over Russia—that we could intervene and stare down Putin’s threat to respond with nukes—if only we had all these new missiles and bombers and submarines today.

The course of the war in Ukraine calls into question the broader claim that we need to spend a lot more money on defense in order to counter Russia’s new threat in Europe. Russia’s military is doing poorly against Ukraine’s army and civilian resistance forces. Russian tanks are running out of fuel and food as Ukrainians cut their supply lines; these same tanks and other vehicles are getting blown up by easy-to-operate anti-tank missiles that cost not millions but thousands of dollars apiece; Russian planes and helicopters are getting shot out of the sky by similarly inexpensive, shoulder-fired Stinger missiles.

Yes, NATO’s new Eastern European front lines need to be strengthened, because they were barely manned at all before Putin’s move against Ukraine. But do they need to be strengthened so much? It may be smarter and would certainly be cheaper to rethink what we need for defense before we start spending a lot more money in the same old ways. We’ve overrated Russia’s military power; let’s not underrate our own.

*--Fred Kaplan is the author of *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War**

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**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Sun, 6 Mar 2022 19:17:50 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center  
**Subject:** RE: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

Copy. We've been communicating with many of our partners on the disinformation since before the Russian invasion. We will continue to do so and assess how we may need to adjust messaging or prioritization in anticipation of this latest Russian lie gaining traction.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:15 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil>  
**Subject:** Re: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Rob,

Thanks. Unfortunately, not unexpected. This may have spin off impacts on other CTR and BTRP programs as partners possibly question US participation in their countries. Have you considered how to directly message to our other partners?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Date: Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:06:52 PM

To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>

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"DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center" <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil  
<mailto:dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil> >

Subject: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, Russian MOD's Telegram channel media is reporting that they have "evidence" of U.S. bioweapons activities in Ukraine (see below and attached). Our media monitor is looking for any additional reporting on the subject.

Wall Street Journal is asking for comment on the following: "Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov claimed, without providing evidence, that Russia has uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the U.S. defense ministry that was destroyed on February 24, when Moscow launched its assault."

DASD Johnson and DASD Rcif are tracking (DASD Johnson received tip-off of the reporting from another OSD office and alerted us). DASD Johnson and OSD PA have DTRA's "Break Glass" book for this. No action for DTRA at this time.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biolaboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all biological laboratories to urgently eliminate stored stocks of dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present the results of the analysis of the received documents. Some of them, in particular, the

instructions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on the destruction of pathogens and the acts of destruction in the Poltava and

Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now: <https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

# Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the Posture of United States Northern Command and United States S...,sked FINAL

March 25, 2022 12:20PM ET

TRANSCRIPT

March 24, 2022

COMMITTEE HEARING

SEN. JACK REED, D-R.I.

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

MARCH 24, 2022

SPEAKERS:

SEN. JACK REED, D-R.I., CHAIR

SEN. JEANNE SHAHEEN, D-N.H.

SEN. KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, D-N.Y.

SEN. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, D-CONN.

SEN. MAZIE K. HIRONO, D-HAWAII

SEN. TIM Kaine, D-VA.

SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN, D-MASS.

SEN. GARY PETERS, D-MICH.

SEN. TAMMY DUCKWORTH, D-ILL.

SEN. JOE MANCHIN III, D-W.VA.

SEN. ANGUS KING, I-MAINE

SEN. JACKY ROSEN, D-NEV.

SEN. MARK KELLY, D-ARIZ.

SEN. JAMES M. INHOFE, R-OKLA., RANKING MEMBER

SEN. ROGER WICKER, R-MISS.

SEN. DEB FISCHER, R-NEB.

SEN. TOM COTTON, R-ARK.

SEN. MIKE ROUNDS, R-S.D.

SEN. JONI ERNST, R-IOWA

SEN. THOM TILLIS, R-N.C.

SEN. DAN SULLIVAN, R-ALASKA

SEN. MARSHA BLACKBURN, R-TENN.

SEN. KEVIN CRAMER, R-N.D.

SEN. JOSH HAWLEY, R-MO.

SEN. RICK SCOTT, R-FLA.

SEN. TOMMY TUBERVILLE, R-ALA.

WITNESSES:

GENERAL GLEN VANHERCK, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES NORTHERN

COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

GENERAL LAURA RICHARDSON, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN

## COMMAND

REED: Good morning. The committee meets today to receive testimony from General Glen VanHerck, Commander of the United States Northern Command and North America Aerospace Defense Command or NORAD and General Laura Richardson, Commander of the United States Southern Command. General Richardson, I would like to welcome you to your first posture hearing in your current command and I want to thank both of you for your decades of service to our nation.

On behalf of the committee, I also want to thank the women and men serving under your commands for their selfless dedication and service. Thank you very much.

The United States is faced with a wide range of security threats around the globe, but we are increasingly finding these threats edging closer and closer to home. Our strategic competitors, China and Russia, are seeking ways to expand their power regionally in South America and the Arctic, as well as for advancements in long-range missile capabilities and offensive cyber tools.

At the same time, this competition is unfolding amidst a global pandemic, environmental degradation from climate change and the emergence of highly disruptive technologies. The interconnected nature of these threats compounds the challenges that NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM have been tackling for decades and we must calibrate our approach to these regions carefully. I expect today's hearing to help inform that approach.

General VanHerck, your command is responsible for protecting the homeland. Importantly, NORTHCOM is tasked with operating our homeland ballistic missile defense, the ground based Midcourse Defense System, to defend the United States against intercontinental ballistic missiles and hypersonic missiles. The rapid advancements we have seen on this front from states like China, Russia and North Korea are concerning as the nature of hypersonics difficult to defeat with the technology we currently use.

General VanHerck, I would like to know your assessment of the Next Generation Interceptor program's current schedule for deployment and in light of recent, very recent North Korean missile tests, your confidence in the capability of our current ground based interceptors to meet these threats.

NORTHCOM also can use to play a vital role for its defense support to civil authority mission by which the U.S. military responds to requests from civil agencies for domestic assistance. This vision was highlighted recently by NORTHCOM's leadership of operation Allies Welcome, which housed and cared for more than 84,000 evacuees from Afghanistan on military bases across the country.

Further, NORTHCOM was integral to our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, when personnel from NORTHCOM and the National Guard distributed vaccines, ran testing centers and food banks and supported federal health efforts.

General VanHerck, I would like to know whether your command and other federal agencies have the preparations in place to manage the next pandemic outbreak or humanitarian crisis should they arise.

Turning to Southern Command, SOUTHCOM has traditionally focused on counter-narcotics and counter Transnational Criminal Organization missions. Even with limited resources, including minimal intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, SOUTHCOM has sought to leverage non-traditional approaches, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to serve as a testbed for new tactics and operational concepts.

The SOUTHCOM region also continues to experience a rise in political instability, including violence in Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela and security deterioration in the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. The political and economic instability in these SOUTHCOM nations presents a situation that China, Russia and other state actors are now seeking to exploit to increase their own influence.

Short of armed conflict, a critical task of SOUTHCOM is to find ways to counter our competitors malign activities that are coercing our partners. This includes identifying and addressing sources of insecurity and vulnerabilities among our partners that our adversaries seek to exploit to gain leverage or sow division. It's also important to strengthen the resilience of U.S. partners' security forces, including by building defense, institutional capabilities that adhere to the rule of war and respect human rights.

General Richardson, I'm interested in your assessment of the threat from near-peer competitors in the SOUTHCOM area and how we might work strategically with partners in our neighborhood, such as Mexico and Colombia, to build resilience to China and Russia's malign activities.

I want to thank again our witnesses. I look forward to your testimony. As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing in Room STC 217. Let me now turn to the Ranking Member, Senator Inhofe.

INHOFE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and welcome to our witnesses who we've known very well for a long period of time. Our attention is rightly focused on Russia's unprovoked invasion of the Ukraine and the Chinese Communist Party's constant march toward dominance in the Pacific.

General VanHerck, you are responsible for a defense of the homeland. That's the big deal as we discussed, given Putin's threats against our homeland during the Ukraine war and China's threats of a military conflict with the United States over Taiwan. I hope you'll candidly speak about your requirements. Do you have the resources you need and get in much detail, as this the place to do it.

I'm mostly concerned about the situation on the southwest border, it's situation that people have put that somehow that moved off the front page and people are not as concerned about that as we think they should be right now, that we've had the 12 straight months of 150,000 plus illegal immigrants being stopped at the border. And nothing like that ever happened before.

Last month that CBP encountered nearly 165,000 illegal immigrants at the border, which is the highest total for February in the Department of Homeland Security's history. Many of my good friends on the other side of the aisle strongly opposed President Trump when he deployed troops to assist the CBP at the border in 2018. But given the scale of the current crisis, General VanHerck, I wonder whether more border support might be necessary in the near future or currently.

General Richardson, as we discussed in my office, I'm concerned about the growing Chinese threat in your area of responsibility and its national security implications. What China is doing in SOUTHCOM reminds me of what they were doing in Africa 15 years ago. They're using predatory economic and diplomatic practices to bribe and bully countries while they set conditions to build up their military presence and limit United States access and influence.

So I hope you will explain your strategy for this very daunting task. And thank you very much for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Let me recognize General VanHerck for his testimony. General, please sir.

VANHERCK: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today alongside General Richardson. It's my honor to represent the men and women of the United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command as we defend the United States and Canada.

United States Northern Command and NORAD face the most dynamic and strategically complex environment in their respective histories. The commands face multiple simultaneous challenges from strategic competitors who have openly declared their intent to hold our homelands at risk in an effort to advance their own interests.

Today, strategic competitors, rogue nations, non-state actors possess the capability to strike institutions and critical infrastructure in the United States and Canada. Our country is already under attack every day in the information space and the cyber domain. Our competitors, especially Russia and China, are spreading disinformation, actively sowing division and internal discord with the intent to undermine the foundation of our nation, our democracy and democracies around the world.

We're seeing this play out with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Those same competitors have invested heavily in conventional precision strike capabilities and advanced delivery platforms which Russia is currently displaying to the world. Their intent is to hold critical infrastructure in the homeland at risk below the nuclear threshold in order to disrupt and delay our ability to project power globally, while attempting to undermine our will to intervene in a regional overseas crisis.

I believe the strategic deterrent is the foundation of Homeland Defense and that it is necessary for the United States to maintain a reliable and effective nuclear triad. At the same time, I'm concerned that deterrence by cost imposition is currently overweighted and does not adequately account for the conventional capabilities our competitors have already fielded.

This over-reliance increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation because it limits our national leaders' options in crisis and in conflict. Our competitors' advanced conventional capabilities make it necessary to balance deterrence by cost imposition, with a model of deterrence by denial, an integrated deterrence that employs all elements of national influence, leverages our asymmetric advantage of our alliances and our partnerships and provides leaders with a wide range of timely deterrence options.

We must continually demonstrate to potential aggressors, that an attack on our homeland will result in failure. We do that by demonstrating homeland readiness, responsiveness and resiliency, and by displaying a range of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities to defend the homeland.

NORTHCOM support of civil authorities, our security cooperation relationships with allies and partners, are critical to integrated deterrence as is NORAD's mission to provide warning and defend the approaches to North America.

This strategic environment is the new normal. This operating model that we assumed we could project power globally from a safe and secure homeland, has been eroding over the last decade. To provide national leaders with timely and informed options that they need to achieve favorable outcomes, NORTHCOM and NORAD and our homeland defense design are focused on four key principles that starts with all-domain awareness, from undersea to on orbit, and everywhere in between to include cyber domain.

All-domain awareness is required to achieve information dominance, which is the use of advanced capabilities, like machine learning and artificial intelligence to quickly analyze process and deliver data to decisionmakers at the speed of relevance. By doing so, we will increase senior leader decision space and enable decision superiority over our competitors.

Finally, our problems are global in all-domain and they demand globally integrated strategies, plans and actions. These principles are vital elements of our ability to execute a layered defense and integrated deterrence, and they are critical to our nation's ability to deter in competition, de-escalate in crisis and if necessary defeat in conflict.

I'll end by thanking the committee for all you've done to support our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardians, the FY '22 NDAA and the recent passage of the FY '22 appropriations omnibus continue to advance our national defense priorities and the missions of U.S. Northern Command and NORAD.

Today's strategic environment calls for sustained, sufficient and predictable funding in order to prevail. Persistently operating under continuing resolutions over the last decade has contributed to the erosion of our nation's competitive advantage. I join my fellow commanders, the service chiefs, and the Secretary in expressing my appreciation for the resources provided in the FY '22 omnibus, and in urging the on-time passage of both the NDAA and a full year appropriations bill for FY '22 or '23, excuse me.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to your questions.

REED: Thank you, sir. General Richardson, please, your testimony.

RICHARDSON: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you alongside General VanHerck, my most important teammate in keeping the Western Hemisphere safe.

I'm honored to be here with you representing the men and women of U.S. Southern Command to discuss the challenges we share with our neighbors in this hemisphere and the opportunities that we can unlock together.

Today more than ever, America's fate is inextricably linked to events beyond our shores. This region, our shared neighborhood, is under assault from a host of trans-boundary challenges that directly threaten our own homeland. I've been in command almost five months now and the biggest eye opener for me has been the extent to which China and Russia are aggressively expanding their influence in our neighborhood.

Latin America and the Caribbean are experiencing insecurity and instability that has been greatly exacerbated by COVID-19. The People's Republic of China, our long-term strategic competitor, continues its relentless march to expand economic, diplomatic, technological, informational and military influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, and challenges U.S. influence in all these domains.

Without U.S. leadership and modest investment, negative PRC influence in this region could soon resemble the self-serving, predatory influence it now holds in Africa. Let's be clear, the PRC doesn't invest. They extract. Meanwhile, Russia, a more immediate threat, is increasing its engagements in the hemisphere as Putin looks to keep his options open and maintain relationships on our near abroad.

In January, the Russian deputy foreign minister said he could neither affirm or exclude that Russia would send military assets to Cuba and Venezuela. Just days before the Russian unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the Russian deputy prime minister visited Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, countries that maintain close ties with Russia and offer Putin a foothold in our hemisphere.

Finally, recent visits between the presidents of Brazil and Argentina with Putin in Russia demonstrate a concerning potentially broadening of Russia ties in the region. In this hemisphere, Transnational Criminal Organizations operate nearly uncontested and blaze a trail of corruption and violence that creates a wedge and allows the PRC and Russia to exploit these countries.

They threaten citizen security, undermine public confidence in government institutions, and drive irregular migration to our homeland. These TCOs traffic opioids, cocaine, and other deadly drugs into the U.S. fueling both drug overdoses and drug-related violence.

In my initial travels to Latin America and the Caribbean, it's become obvious to me that our partners are our best defense as we work together to counter our shared threats. We must use all available levers to strengthen our partnerships with the 28 like-minded democracies in this hemisphere.

We must maximize important tools like security cooperation programs to train and equip our partner militaries, multilateral exercises to build interoperability, and the State Department's IMET, FMF, and FMS programs to educate, train, and build capacity that our partners use to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us.

Colombia, for example, our strongest partner in the region, exports security by training other Latin American militaries to counter transnational threats. U.S. SOUTHCOM is putting integrated deterrence into action every day using innovative methods to work seamlessly in all-domains with the other combatant commands, the joint force, allies and partner nations, Congress, the U.S. interagency, NGOs, and the private sector.

Now more than ever, the U.S. must lead in this hemisphere and that requires consistent focus and a sustained investment to help build a shared neighborhood that is free, secure and prosperous for our generation and generations to come.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

REED: Well thank you very much General Richardson and thank you also General VanHerck.

General VanHerck, the North Korean missile activity is quite disturbing. Indeed, hours ago they launched a missile which from analysis of the flight path suggest could hit the United States. Given this behavior, what are your thoughts about the current 44 ground-based interceptors and their current capability?

VANHERCK: Mr. Chairman, I'm comfortable with where we are today based on the intelligence I have with the current capabilities and capacity of North Korea.

Going forward, I do believe that they could exceed my capacity and capabilities. That's why it's crucial to keep Next Generation Interceptor on time or early. In my discussions with Admiral Hill, he's confident right now that they're on that path.

As far as the total number of 44 interceptors, that's a policy decision, I look forward to seeing the missile defense review and the policy that it provides in guidance to me to get after the capacity and challenges that you allude to, sir.

REED: So you are at this point confident that the Next Generation Interceptor is on track for deployment. I think the plan is 20 interceptors at Fort Greely by FY2028, is that true?

VANHERCK: Chairman, that is correct. And I'm confident that it is on track for that now or slightly early based on what I've seen.

REED: Very good. You have made your input into the national defense strategy which is yet to be announced. Are you confident that your contribution it will be forwarded to us?

VANHERCK: I am confident that my input will be included. They have been very transparent in the department as they work this.

REED: Thank you very much sir. General Richardson, SOUTHCOM because of a lack of resources which as a veteran of USARSO, I can tell you has been the case for many, many decades, is now relying upon artificial intelligence and other new technologies to compensate. Could you comment upon what you're doing and how successful you are?

RICHARDSON: Absolutely, Chairman. So the advanced ISR or nontraditional ISR that we utilize, since we're not given a lot of resources, we look for other ways of being innovative and using other capabilities that either the Department of Defense has or the other services are trying to use.

And so we'll use that all different kinds of capabilities that use the AI and ML a lot with unclassified data that can rapidly sort through that data and then we use it to tip and cue what limited assets, the higher end assets that we do have to help out with our challenges in the AOR.

REED: You're working closely with the Department of Defense to essentially test some new innovative prototypes in a whole range of both air, land, and sea?

RICHARDSON: Absolutely. And we have five joint capability technology demos that we have in the AOR. And I'd like to highlight, in a permissive environment I offer that because where our adversaries maybe aren't paying as much close attention to us, we can put that to real world use in our area of operations. And then it helps me with domain awareness to find our threats, see what our threats are doing because the AOR is so big.

REED: Well, I want to thank you because I know you've been in contact with civil society groups particularly the Sisters of Mercy and this whole of government and beyond approach is necessary everywhere, but particularly in SOUTHCOM.

And in the Northern Triangle, particularly Honduras, there is a need to support the recent elected government and to begin to seriously isolating individuals who are either involved with criminal activities or other inappropriate activities and support on more vibrant constitutional order. And I thank you for that. Any comments about the situation in the Northern Triangle?

RICHARDSON: Well, first, Chairman, I've had two meetings so far with the human rights leaders and Sisters of Mercy being one of them, Human Rights Watch, and a couple of others.

And they have such an important perspective of the region, they've been traveling there for decades, they've been working in those countries for decades, and certainly taking their perspective and their insight of what they've seen over that period of time is truly valuable.

And we bake human rights into everything that we do in U.S. SOUTHCOM. I have a human rights office in SOUTHCOM. We have had that for 25 years, but it's not about having an office, it's actually what you do with that capability and how we make that a priority in everything that we do in the AOR.

REED: Thank you very much General VanHerck and General Richardson. Let me recognize Senator Inhofe, please.

INHOFE: Thank you Mr. Chairman. As I said in my opening statement, the crisis at the border is worsening considerably under the current administration.

We've had 12 straight months of over 150,000 illegal migrants which was a 63 percent increase from February 2021 and a DHS record for the month of February. And according to the internal Border Patrol estimates from January through August of '21, over 273,000 migrants avoided apprehension and entered our country illegally.

These are new records, this has not happened before. I'm deeply concerned that the crisis will soon get even worse as we discussed in my office, if the Biden Administration ends the Title 42 Border Policy in April, illegal immigration will surge even beyond the current record-setting level.

So General VanHerck, given the worsening conditions and the crisis at the southwest border, are you aware of any discussion within the administration or DHS that could result in any request for additional troops at that border?

VANHERCK: Senator Inhofe, there is a request from the Department of Homeland Security, it's in the planning stages right now of the department to provide additional capability or capacity based on the potential for additional immigration or folks coming through the southwest border.

I don't have the details of that right now and I haven't been tasked to provide any additional support to the Department of Homeland Security at this time.

INHOFE: And I understand that. But is it a reality that's in discussion? General Richardson, it's clear that SOUTHCOM continues to be under resourced despite all of the threats in your AOR and that's something that we need to take closer look at as we develop our NDAA and we'll have to do that.

China as we discussed in my office this week, I'm concerned about their growing presence in SOUTHCOM and consequences for our military. So General Richardson, what do you find most concerning about China's growing presence in your AOR and how could it undermine DOD's ability to operate in these years to come?

RICHARDSON: So thank you Senator. And my concern regarding China and the region is just the access and presence that they have and they've been able to create partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic rollbacks that this has had in the region.

So eight percent of the world's population is in SOUTHCOM AOR, 33 percent of the world's COVID deaths were suffered. So they've had a hard time with that. Economy has contracted eight percent, plunging 22 percent of the population into poverty.

And so when these 28 like-minded democracies in this region, out of 31, are trying to deliver for their people, it's hard. And when China has the Belt and Road initiative, 21 of the 31 countries in this region have signed up and are signatories to that BRI. They need to show that they're delivering for their populations and infrastructure projects is probably the best way that with the BRI that shows progress. But as we know, the work is not done to standard.

A lot of times it leaves these countries with even more debt than when they started. A highway in Jamaica, Jamaica now has six loans as a result of this, they lost 1,200 acres of land and, oh by the way, the highway has a toll on it that most Jamaican's can't even drive on.

The Chinese don't bring in and don't hire host nation workers, they bring in Chinese laborers. So they don't invest. It looks like they're investing, all they do is they take, they extract, and they have strings tied to what they offer.

INHOFE: Yes. You and I talked about this in the office. It's so similar to what the Chinese have been doing now for about 15 years in Africa, and no surprises here.

But I think it's important we get into the record what is happening now because it's happening in your AOR. Something that you didn't anticipate, none of us anticipated the gravity of that situation. I'm glad you're there at the helm. Thank you.

RICHARDSON: Senator, what I would like to mention or my two greatest concern strategically and that's with the Panama Canal.

The projects that Chinese have around the Panama Canal which is a strategic line of communication that we want to keep free and open for the global economy, but also for our global war plans. Also the Straits of Magellan down around the tip of the southern cone from Argentina and the presence of China and projects and things like that. And so that's what bothers me most are those two strategic global lines of communication areas that the Chinese have projects in and around those areas.

INHOFE: So with everything that's going on now, I think it's important that we and you, particularly, need to keep reminding us of that because that's something that people are just not aware of. But Thank you Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you very much Senator Inhofe. Let me recognize Senator Gillibrand please.

GILLIBRAND: Thank you Mr. Chairman. General Richardson, just to continue the line of questioning that Senator Inhofe started. Given the investments that China's making regardless of how extractive they are, what do you think our best response is?

And in particular, can you talk a little bit about how we're engaging with elected governments in the region to counter authoritarian actors? Are we collaborating with agencies and other institutions, with partner countries like judiciaries, legislators, NGOs to support human rights and democracy?

And further, I do want to get a sense of China's also adopted a partner force training model that is of some concern to me and I'd like you to assess how effective is China's partner force training in those countries that participate and how do we ensure these relationships are not enduring?

RICHARDSON: So the way I look at it, Senator, is in terms of our partnerships the U.S. has partners, China has clients. They don't have the partners and our partner nations in the SOUTHCOM AOR want to partner with us.

I go to these countries, I have visited Colombia, Brazil, Jamaica, Belize where I got to visit with leaders from seven Central American countries, Honduras. And you look in their eyes and they want to partner with us and they're having a hard time delivering for their population.

I will tell you though that the PRC is using our playbook in terms of how I do security cooperation in the other combatant commands, the train and equip, the partnering, the exercises. The Chinese don't have exercise like we do. When we have exercises, the U.S. bring 19, 21, 29 different countries together. As I said, they want to partner with us and we have partners.

A great relationship with the interagency and Department of State in the AOR I'd like to highlight. I have my deputy who is a former ambassador for El Salvador sitting behind me, Jean Manes. And I will tell you, we're so lucky to have an ambassador for the Department of State who can help bridge and communicate and help us work more collaboratively with our chiefs of mission in the AOR.

We have 12 more to go for ambassadors to fill those very important seats and eight have been nominated. So thank you for your support in getting those ambassadors in there as quickly as possible.

GILLIBRAND: And then just one final question before I move on to General VanHerck, SOUTHCOM has played an important role in humanitarian operations, especially in nations like Haiti where U.S. support was needed not only after the natural disaster but after the political crisis.

Can you explain how you foresee any changes to SOUTHCOM's posture to continue providing humanitarian assistance, especially as climate and other issues continue to increase migration?

RICHARDSON: We'll continue to watch this AOR, Haiti, all of the challenges that we have in this AOR that are ongoing. And work very closely for a whole of government, a democratic solution to instability and insecurity in the region.

We take that very seriously. We bake in, as I said before, human rights, the rule of law, everything that we do in our security cooperation programs. Everything that I do, my main lever because I don't get assigned forces in SOUTHCOM, I get very limited gif map resources that are assigned to me as well. So I really rely on that 333 security and cooperation funding to work with these partner nations, to help them increase the capacity and capability of their militaries or their defense forces.

GILLIBRAND: That's helpful General. Thank you. General VanHerck, China has attempted to establish a foothold in the Arctic through economic relationships with smaller Arctic states like Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland that grant China access to their vital natural resources.

This strategy is coupled with an increase in China's Arctic capabilities to create something like a polar silk road. Do you see these relationships as leading to an eventual movement of Chinese military assets into the region? And then further, New York Air National Guard conducts several unique missions in support of our scientific missions with the National Scientific Foundation in the Arctic. Can you speak to the importance of our scientific missions in the Arctic and how it supports our overall strategic goals when it comes to that region?

VANHERCK: Thanks. First Senator, absolutely the Chinese are active in the Arctic. Each of the last five years they've sent a vessel under the guise of resource vessel into the Arctic, for military purposes we assess as well. And so they are there. They're influencing nations, they want to change and influence international norms and behavior as well. I would also point out Senator that the Arctic is a strategic location and being able to operate persistently in the Arctic is something that we need to do. So the research that you're talking about is crucial and the investments.

Finally, I understand my time is up. But they're not only active in the Arctic, they're active in the Bahamas, they're active in Mexico as well and I would point that out. Thank you.

REED: Thank you Senator Gillibrand. Thank you. Senator Wicker, please.

WICKER: General VanHerck, let's keep talking about the Arctic then. During your posture hearing last year, I asked you about the Coast Guard's authorization to build six new icebreakers.

And I appreciated your response in support of these ships. But as we all know, they cannot operate in the high north without fuel and supplies. Currently the farthest north deepwater port we have is Dutch Harbor. On the other hand, Nome, Alaska nearly 800 miles north of Dutch Harbor has been granted money to dredge and develop a port in order to provide services to deep draft ships. How would additional icebreakers and the development of the port in Nome enable NORTHCOM to accomplish your mission in the Arctic?

VANHERCK: Thanks Senator. First, the six icebreakers that are on plan for the Coast Guard are crucial to enabling persistence to operate within the Arctic.

Persistence is also enabled by having a fuel capability further north than currently in Dutch Harbor in Nome as you alluded to. That allows either the Coast Guard through their cutters or their icebreakers or Navy vessels to remain more persistent. That's strategically important to that location.

I would like to clarify one thing, the Infrastructure and Jobs Act that was just passed provided about \$250 million for the Port of Nome. The dredging portion of that is not currently funded and it would require that dredging from a 30-foot depth to 40-foot for these vessels that we're talking about to get in there. We're going to work closely to make sure we can get that additional funding for that persistence I need.

WICKER: So, the additional funding is not adequate unless we get the dredging done.

VANHERCK: It is certainly adequate for commercial operations, benefit for the local communities, indigenous people in Alaska, absolutely. For military use, we have to get the additional dredging, that's correct.

WICKER: Okay. Let me switch to General Richardson. The Navy Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, NAVSCIATTS, provides training to partner nations from every combatant command. To date, the school has trained over 13,000 students from more than 120 partner nations.

What's the importance of keeping NAVSCIATTS? What are the potential risks in terms of international support and partnerships? Should its capacity be reduced?

RICHARDSON: Well, thank you for the question, Senator, because NAVSCIATTS is a force multiplier and it's for all of our nations. As you said, 123 partner nations utilize this school, over 13,000 trained.

This school has been open for 52 years and quite honestly, what it does low level, it's pennies to operate. You talk about a low cost, high return on investment, this is it. And quite honestly, if you think about it, the U.S. Navy has big ships. Other nations, there are very few other nations that have really big vessels. And most of the other navies and coast guards from the other partner nation militaries as well as the coast guards have smaller vessels.

You talk about the Amazon, they don't have highways, they have rivers and they need the training. They need their smaller vessels to get this training and it's absolutely critical to our security cooperation and helping build our defense forces and our militaries and naval maritime operations.

WICKER: Good. I do appreciate that. Let me follow up on an engagement that that Senator Inhofe and Senator Gillibrand had with you. I think the discussion with Senator Inhofe was like-minded democracies in SOUTHCOM working with us. Senator Gillibrand asked about engaging with elected governments.

Let me just mention that the Organization of American States is based here in Washington D.C., is the only multilateral organization that includes every country in the western hemisphere except for Cuba. And I would point out to my colleagues that in 2020, President Trump signed into law the Organization of American States Legislative Engagement Act.

Senator Cardin and I were leaders in this effort just as we have tried to enhance our participation with European parliamentarians both in and out of majorities in government in Europe through the OSCE. Do you agree that moving to a parliamentary assembly as the Trump law anticipates would be a positive and could promote cooperation in a variety of government and security issues?

RICHARDSON: Senator, I think that increased engagement in this AOR can be nothing but good. I can only cover so much. Our Department of State can over only cover so much.

And with a program, a strategy, a focus on this area, as I said in my opening statement, can only be more goodness because out of 31 countries and 16 dependencies in the Caribbean, it's a lot of ground to cover. And I would certainly welcome the focus and the attention.

WICKER: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

And now, since a quorum is present, I ask the committee to consider a list of 2,766 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time. Is there a motion to favorably report this list of 2,766 pending military nominations to the Senate?

(UNKNOWN): I so motion.

REED: Is there a second?

(UNKNOWN): Second.

REED: All in favor say aye. Thank you very much. The motion carries.

And let me recognize Senator Kaine and thank Senator Tillis for staying with us.

KAINE: Thank you. Mr. Chair and thanks to our witnesses for your service.

General Richardson, I want to echo a point that Senator Inhofe made, I continue to believe that SOUTHCOM is really under-resourced. You've talked about the value of the security cooperation program. Describe the kinds of activities that you engage with our regional partners and through the security cooperation program.

RICHARDSON: So, we have a myriad of things that we do in terms of the training and the equipping. We do things from small teams, 8 to 13-man teams. We do it in all the domains, special ops included, cyber, information ops.

We do big exercises as I mentioned before, PANAMAX, which is really a defense of the Panama Canal exercise, 29 countries from this AOR participate in that with us. We have Tradewinds, that's been a name that's been around for decades and that's a security operation in a contested environment that we train to, that will bring 21 countries together.

My components, my Navy component will do UNITAS this year; Brazil will host that. That will bring 19 countries together. And when you see the picture of UNITAS, of all the different vessels, the ships and vessels from the other countries and the navies and the coast guards, it's just really impressive.

KAINE: And, General Richardson, just to give the committee kind of a magnitude, you have nearly 30 countries in your AOR. I believe Admiral Faller last year testified that the total security cooperation budget for SOUTHCOM to do the activities you described with that many nations is \$120 million. So, that's sort of what we're talking about, right?

RICHARDSON: That's correct, Senator. And I know that seems like a lot of money, but when I don't have assigned forces and gif map capabilities and that's my main lever for engaging with the partner nations, that's really a low cost, high return on investment.

KAINE: Let me ask about another program, the IMET program, International Military Education Training program, that's another -- security cooperation tends to be in the AOR, but IMET, we bring leaders from SOUTHCOM militaries, nations to the United States for training, that has also very small budget but describe to the committee the value of the IMET program in SOUTHCOM.

RICHARDSON: That's huge. That's the professional military education. That's where they get to come, for example, to our War College which is at the lieutenant colonel level.

Right now, I have 17 chiefs of defense and six ministers of defense that have been to school in the United States. They know that they get the best education and training when they come here. They want to come here. And what we try to work with at \$13 million annually is to have sustained consistent personnel from their militaries attending our professional military education.

KAINE: Well, these are both relatively small investments in SOUTHCOM, a region without assigned forces as General Richardson says, and I'm just going to suggest to my Committee colleagues watch this space. I think there's going to be a budget submitted to us very soon and look at the dollars in these two accounts to SOUTHCOM.

I have a grave concern that challenges elsewhere in the world are going to take these de minimis investments and shrink them even more. And if that's the case I'm going to be advocating strongly that we don't do less but we do more in the region.

My understanding, General Richardson, is also with respect to cyber assets, I know nations like Colombia are dealing with a lot of cyber attacks and misinformation from actors in Venezuela and elsewhere. They get particularly active around elections. There are many elections that are happening in the region this year.

U.S. Cyber Command has so much on them. I understand in SOUTHCOM, your cyber assets are pretty limited. You're making good use of a state partnership program with the South Carolina Guard, good on them and good on you for using them in an effective way. But I understand that Cyber Command does not have many assets that it can currently allow to be used in SOUTHCOM, am I right about that?

RICHARDSON: That's correct, Senator. They have more higher priorities looking towards Europe and then also in the INDOPACOM region. And so, it -- and I'd just like to highlight and thank all the Senators for the support of this National Guard State Partnership Program which is a huge force multiplier for SOUTHCOM.

KAINE: We are not paying attention to this region. We're not paying attention to them on diplomatic circles. We're not we're not paying sufficient attention to them in terms of vaccine distribution. And we're not paying attention to them in the military area. But other nations especially China are paying a lot of attention and I think we should do better.

I want to thank you for your testimony.

REED: I want to thank you, Senator Kaine. And let me now recognize Senator Fischer, please.

FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Richardson, General VanHerck, thank you so much for being here today.

General VanHerck, in your prepared testimony's discussion of hypersonic threats, you state quote, "the impact is the loss of critical decision space for national level decision makers regarding continuity of government and the preservation of retaliatory capabilities, resulting in an increase in the potential for strategic deterrence failure," end quote.

You make a similar assessment of cruise missile threats saying quote, "additionally, these advanced cruise missiles and their supporting platforms will limit national leadership decision space and my ability to provide threat warning and attack assessment which directly influences my ability to support continuity of government operations and provide support to STRATCOM missions, again, the potential consequence is an increased risk of strategic deterrence failure."

Can you elaborate, please, on what you mean about the threat to continuity of government and the risk of deterrence failure?

VANHERCK: Senator, sure. So, one of my biggest challenges is domain awareness, and hypersonics and cruise missiles significantly challenge my ability to conduct my NORAD mission of providing threat warning and attack assessment, what you can't see and what you can't deter and you can't defend from and they will significantly challenge me.

Why I primarily do that is exactly to support continuity of government and the survivable of our nuclear posture, our nuclear forces as well. And when you can't do that, then you have to make some assumptions, that those threats might be nuclear threats that will be inbound and that increases the risk of miscalculation and also the risk of strategic deterrence failure.

So, that's my number one priority is to gain that domain awareness so I can provide that threat warning and attack assessment. I'm currently not tasked to defend against hypersonics. I look forward to seeing the missile defense review. I am tasked to defend against cruise missiles and that's a very tough mission for me right now without domain awareness.

FISCHER: Thank you. You mentioned NORAD, could you update us on our partnership with the Canadians there, please?

VANHERCK: The Canadians are an outstanding ally. Militarily, I have hundreds of them working for us at the headquarters at NORAD, my combined headquarters. I've met multiple times the chief of the defense staff, my boss on the NORAD side is coming to visit me next week as well. Minister Anand, I've met with her in person as well in Canada, great allies.

Canada is in the decision-making process to support NORAD modernization. I look forward to seeing where they go with NORAD modernization. I think the world requires us to think hard about modernizing the forces to operate across the entire AOR for NORAD which includes the Arctic and the infrastructure and the communication capabilities as well. And so, I look forward to seeing what they come up with.

FISCHER: Thank you. We saw this morning that North Korea did another long-range missile test to demonstrate that their ballistic missile capabilities continue to grow and that the threat to the homeland I believe is continuing to increase. With this in mind, is it your view that Next Generation Interceptor, the NGI, needs to be fielded as soon as possible?

VANHERCK: Absolutely, Senator. As soon as we can get that here, I'm confident the contract mechanism rewards fielding it faster and I'm glad it's on track right now.

FISCHER: To be clear on this, when you say it's on track right now, so to be clear on this, do you think delaying the schedule or changing the requirements would put us at a serious risk of being unable to pace ballistic missile threats to our homeland?

VANHERCK: Senator, I'm very concerned about my ability to pace the capacity of production that we assess and the capability that we assess the North Koreans continue to adapt to. That's why the funding for the service life extension program for the current ballistic missile defense capability is so crucial, thank you for that funding. And that's why Next Generation Interceptor is crucial as well, because it will help both get after the additional capacity problems and the capability problems.

FISCHER: Thank you. General Richardson, in the time we have remaining, can you talk about the role that you see that China and Russia are playing in your AOR and specifically how do we improve the relations we have, the quality of our engagements to better compete. I know we're friends and they're clients, viewed as clients, but can you be more specific on what needs to be done?

RICHARDSON: The way I'm on the field, I don't need to outspend China to out-compete them, but I do need my security cooperation funding, that triple three funding, to do security cooperation to help build the capacity and capability within those militaries and defense forces which helps them secure their borders, which helps them with internal security in their country and then also be exporters of training to other Latin American countries, and then in peacekeeping operations around the world, too.

FISCHER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator King, please?

KING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to NORTHCOM, EUCOM and PACOM, my concern is that in a moment of crisis is a question of who's in charge. Are you satisfied with the coordination level between the three combatant commands and the Canadians in case of some kind of crisis in the in the Arctic?

VANHERCK: Senator, I'm comfortable with the way the unified campaign plan is currently laid out. We have outstanding relationships with Canada, outstanding relationships with EUCOM and INDOPACOM. I do think we need to look at based on threat changes, how we would command and control those capabilities.

So, for example, the threats to the homeland today do not reside in my area of responsibility. They are actually existing in other areas of responsibility such as the INDOPACOM area of responsibility, and the EUCOM area of responsibility. So, I do think there's potential gaps and seams that we need to make sure that we close those in a time of crisis and conflict to ensure we don't have challenges that were unaccounted for.

KING: That's exactly my question. And I hope that there will be work actively done to close those gaps and seams because we don't want to be working on that in the middle of a crisis. We want the structure to be on the shelf ready to operationalize. Can the current missile defense system that we have defend us against hypersonics?

VANHERCK: Senator, I'm not tasked to defend against them, but no, it can't because we don't have the domain awareness at this time.

KING: We don't have the domain awareness. We also don't have the technology to deal. So, I think that's important to understand that we do have missile defense, it's important for ballistic missiles, but it will not suffice when it comes to -- when it comes to hypersonics.

General Richardson, could you estimate what percentage of worldwide ISR resources we have to utilize in the in SOUTHCOM AOR?

RICHARDSON: So, Senator, I get about one percent or a little bit less than one percent of the global ISR.

KING: I was going to -- that's what I was afraid you were going to say. And, frankly, I just can't believe that because we're talking -- America is under attack. The principal attack on America right now is drugs, 300 people a day, that's one 9/11 every two weeks, two people in my state every day are dying of overdoses.

And yet, we're treating it as if it's some kind of domestic problem or a law enforcement problem. This is an attack and the fact that you have one percent of the ISR to keep track of this threat to me is a gross misallocation of resources. I realize it's not your responsibility.

But I guess my next question is why, in your opinion, are we so short of ISR if this is -- if we need it in a particular area, why don't we build more Global Hawks? I just don't understand why this is not something that we can't budget for and deal with.

RICHARDSON: So, Senator, I and all my fellow combatant commanders as well, we'll always say that we don't have enough to see and be able to see the threats in our AOR.

KING: Well, the budget ought to reflect that fact so that we could fill that gap. I mean, that's a pretty straightforward sort of mathematical question.

RICHARDSON: Well, and I certainly appreciate Congress always gives me a little extra funding for ISR and so, we have some contracted operated contractor-owned assets for airplanes that actually help me with ISR in the region, be able to look for threats and look for counter-narcotics illicit trafficking.

KING: Let me ask -- let me ask you the same question that I asked General VanHerck and that is, one of my principles of management is that you always want to have one throat to choke. Who's in charge of the anti-drug activities in Latin America? Who's in charge?

RICHARDSON: So, Senator, I am in charge for detection and monitoring and that is to get actionable information about illicit drug trafficking either by air or maritime.

KING: Who's in charge of interdiction?

RICHARDSON: And for interdiction that would be DHS and our law enforcement agencies.

KING: But there's no one individual who can be held responsible for the overall dealing with this issue, is that correct?

RICHARDSON: I would say that that would be our Department of Homeland Security, Senator.

KING: Well, I think that's something we have to -- we have to strengthen and clarify. I'm not going to pursue this, but for the record I would hope you would give us more detail on what you mentioned just earlier about the Panama Canal and Chinese activity, I understand at either end of the Panama Canal as well as the Strait of Magellan. I think that's a very, very serious matter and would like to have more detail. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator King. Senator Cotton, please?

COTTON: General Richardson, I'll give you a chance to talk in a little bit more detail about the Panama Canal because I was troubled by the brief comments you had to Senator Inhofe of all the things you've described that China is doing in your area of responsibility. I think the strategic investments it's made along the Panama Canal is most striking.

I know that this is primarily a State Department and Treasury matter, but can you tell us a little bit more about what's going on around the canal and how SOUTHCOM plays into the interagency efforts to counter the threat and what else you'd like to see from the U.S. government to do so?

RICHARDSON: Thank you for the question, Senator. We work very closely with Panama. And our Corps of Engineers just was able to negotiate a water tender contract with Panama which I think is huge because it's been 15 years in the making.

And so, we have a lot of ground to make up with Panama, but in terms of the investment, China and the strategic investments that they make, just like the Panama Canal when you enter and exit and on either side you have Chinese state-owned enterprises.

And what I worry about Chinese state-owned enterprises that have capability and infrastructure there is that they're used -- they can be used for dual use, which means civilian but also military.

And quite honestly, if you just look at where the port projects are, 29 port projects in the AOR in 17 countries. I mean, these are very methodically thought out, in my opinion, and again, I worry about the access that they get in there under the guise of infrastructure and looking like they're helping economies when they're really not, as well as the resources that are in this AOR.

It's just off the charts. I've got 60 percent of the world's lithium in the Lithium Triangle in South America, that's in Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. You've got 31 percent of the world's fresh water. You have the Amazon.

You have the oil reserves in Venezuela, the light sweet crude that was discovered off the shores of Guyana. There are a lot of resources in this region and, again, I go back to the -- it's not an investment by our competitors, it's there to extract in some way shape or form.

COTTON: What do you think China is up to there, in all those investments around the canal? Is it more about advancing their own interests or holding at risk and threatening ours?

RICHARDSON: I think it's both.

COTTON: I mean, we depend on the canal more because of our geography than does China, right?

RICHARDSON: I would say that the -- I would say yes, but the Panama Canal as well as the Strait of Magellan in my AOR, those two very strategic global lines of communication, must remain open.

COTTON: I agree. I mean should we ever have a conflict with China the decisive effort would be somewhere in the Western Pacific not in the Caribbean Basin or the Eastern Pacific. And it's the very essence of strategy to try to force your adversary to defend what he has no choice but to defend far removed from the theater of decision, which is one reason I'm so worried about these investments around the canal.

The Panama Canal Treaty was actually two treaties, one of them was the Neutrality Treaty. We retained under that Neutrality Treaty the uncontested right to ensure the neutral operation of the canal, correct?

RICHARDSON: That's correct, Senator.

COTTON: Good. One other area I wanted to discuss was agriculture. I know this is somewhat removed from the Department of Defense's lane, but as we've heard you have no assigned forces.

And a lot of what you do is with interagency partners and looking at non-military non-traditional ways to cooperate. Sometimes people overlook the importance of agriculture. I don't think China overlooks it if you consider their investments in South America, especially targeting crops like soybeans.

I think this economic investment seems to be aimed at creating alternative markets for them to buy as well as to crowd out our exports. Fortunately for us, Brazil's soybean crop didn't compare so well to ours, especially in Arkansas.

Can you give me your thoughts on how you can work with agencies like AID and the trade representative to dissuade countries in your area of responsibility from continuing down the path of further economic entanglement with China in the agriculture domain?

RICHARDSON: So, Senator, we work very closely as I mentioned before regarding the folks that we have that work in the western hemisphere. And so, we have a very close working relationship with USAID.

And I've met with Director Powers previously and then she travels the region as well, but none of us have the resources. And so, I think that that helps us work together more collaboratively across all of the interagency and work so close together to figure out how we can invest in this region.

But I'd also like to highlight that China gets 36 percent of its food source from this AOR as well. And so, the AOR just has a lot of resources that are being eyed by our competitors.

COTTON: Yes. They are. And I think this is going to be a matter of growing importance this year given the war in Ukraine and how much grain Ukraine and Russia provide to the rest of the world as well as how many inputs they provide into fertilizer or other agricultural inputs, not only in increasing prices on our grocery shelves here in America but also threats to stability in your region and in Africa, in the Middle East and places that have pretty fragile governments and very limited food supplies.

Thank you.

REED: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Blumenthal, please?

BLUMENTHAL: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your service. Thanks for being here today. This morning, President Biden announced that the United States will welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees who are fleeing an absolutely intolerable situation in Ukraine.

I recently visited the border of Ukraine and Poland with a number of colleagues, bipartisan trip and saw the women and children. They are almost all women and children fleeing the horror and terror that Putin has caused to their country.

And they'll come here through a variety of legal pathways and likely follow the same general program as the Afghan refugees did. I continue to call on the administration to enable more of our at-risk Afghan allies to escape the Taliban. They have targets on their backs. They helped Americans, our troops our diplomats while we were there. And they are under dire threat from the Taliban, but I also applaud the President for his effort to welcome Ukrainians into the United States and there's much more to be done.

The 3.5 million refugees who have already fled Ukraine and the 10 million more internally displaced have added to an already burgeoning refugee and humanitarian crisis around the globe. Literally, last year 26 million refugees -- 26 million refugees were displaced from areas as diverse as Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and other countries.

And these refugees represent a threat as well as an opportunity, literally an opportunity because they have a great deal of talent and skills and potential for contributing to the countries that they may be moving to, but also a threat in so far as the failure to aid them will lead to potential terrorism and other adverse activity.

I've seen the tremendous support that NORTHCOM provided to operation Allies Welcome over the last year in finding capacity on U.S. bases and efficiently housing and processing Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban.

And I hope that NORTHCOM will play a role as well in welcoming and resettling the Ukrainian refugees. General VanHerck, have you been given instructions on the role for NORTHCOM with respect to Ukrainian refugees?

VANHERCK: Senator, I'm aware of the President's announcement. I do not have any direct mission tasks to plan for that yet, as we did with operation Allies Welcome, we stand ready if directed by the Secretary of Defense to do that.

It was an honor to support nearly 74,000 Afghans as we process them through eight installations from DOD. And so once -- if directed, we'll move out, Senator.

BLUMENTHAL: Are there lessons that we should learn from the OAW experience with the Afghan refugee?

VANHERCK: There are absolutely lessons that we've incorporated that we learned during Allies Welcome that I'm sure would make us better prepared if we had to stand up to do this mission again.

BLUMENTHAL: What kinds of lessons?

VANHERCK: Interagency coordination, lessons to make more efficient use of data and information, the ability to track, categorize whether it be medical, whether it be security screening, all of these things were worked closely. And we're in a much better place today than we were when we started last July.

BLUMENTHAL: Well, I was tremendously impressed when I visited Quantico, which is only one of those eight with the enthusiasm and dedication of the Marines who were involved at Quantico in welcoming and aiding the refugees there.

Most of them had never served in either Afghanistan or Iraq. For them this was their deployment so to speak, and they loved doing it and they provided a real American welcome to these new Americans.

And I think that we can all be proud of the work that was done by our military at those bases in providing that first American experience to the Afghan refugees. And I hope the same is done with respect to Ukrainian refugees.

Thank you.

REED: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Rounds, please?

ROUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by thanking both of you for your service to our country. I'd like to begin with General VanHerck. With regards to your mission and your role in keeping our country safe, could you share with us what the activities at our southern border and the challenges that we face on our southern border right now with regard to Transnational Criminal Organizations, violent extremist organizations, and so forth and the porousness of that border right now. Can you share with us what the impact is that that might have on your responsibilities and role?

VANHERCK: Senator, currently, I'm in direct support of the Department of Homeland Security, providing about 2,450 National Guards troops on Title X status. What they're doing is detection and monitoring, intel analysis, and aviation support.

We're really treating the symptoms, counter-narcotics, migration, human trafficking those kinds of things are symptoms, in my mind, of a broader problem and that's Transnational Criminal Organizations who created an environment that's not conducive to raising a family for economic success.

And we see that happening right on our border in Mexico. My concern with that, Senator, is the instability it creates, the opportunity it creates for actors such as China, Russia, and others who might have nefarious activities on their mind to seek access and influence in our AOR from a national security perspective.

ROUNDS: Do you see evidence of that at this time?

VANHERCK: There are actors who are very aggressive and active all across the NORTHCOM AOR to include in the Bahamas and Mexico, China, and Russia. I would point out that the largest portion of GRU members in the world is in Mexico right now. Those are Russian intelligence personnel. And they keep an eye very closely on their opportunities to have influence on U.S. opportunities and access.

ROUNDS: General Richardson, this is your AOR. Would you concur with the General's assessment?

RICHARDSON: Yes, Senator.

ROUNDS: Does that impact your ability to do your role or how does that impact your ability to, to complete your assignments there?

RICHARDSON: So, we work very closely with our partner nations, and as I've said how important the lever is for security cooperation, for us to be on the field, to have our jersey on, have our number and work shoulder to shoulder with our partners. They really want to work with us and everything that, all the levers that I have that you all provide and that I get from the Department of Defense, the Department of State, go into action.

A little goes a long way in this AOR. Again, I don't need to out-compete my competitors but the -- or out-spend them to out-compete them, but we do have to be present and we do have to be there with them.

ROUNDS: Today, we fight war or at least we have to be able to defend against war that comes from multiple domains -- air, land, and sea, space, and cyber space. I understand that right now with regard to cyber capabilities, there's a limit to the number that we have.

General Richardson, can you share with us the challenges you face in terms of being able to meet your responsibilities with the limited cyber capabilities or cyber defense capabilities that we have?

RICHARDSON: So, the -- we do our best in terms of the small teams, the subject matter exchanges -- subject matter expert exchanges that we do with our partner nations, we'll go with like a cyber-assessment team to help with an assessment of their network, maybe 13 -man team that works with the partner nation.

We work over the shoulder. We cannot. We can provide direction and subject matter expertise, but we can't get on the keyboards with them and go to work with them.

ROUNDS: Well, let me ask this in a different way. If in order to do your mission, are you able to receive the number and types of cyber mission teams that you request?

RICHARDSON: We're able to do that through our National Guard State Partnership Program. Cyber Comm does not have the full capacity and capability to support all the combatant commands. And I'm not a priority AOR. And as we see the EUCOM and INDOPACOM are the, right now, the two priorities. And so, I...

ROUNDS: Demand exceeds supply then.

RICHARDSON: That's correct.

ROUNDS: Thank you.

General VanHerck, with regards to all-domain awareness can you very briefly describe to us just how critical cyber is and the challenges that you face in getting the resources that you need?

VANHERCK: Senator, cyber domain awareness is absolutely critical. The vast majority of the key critical infrastructure in the United States of America and Canada for that matter, exists in the private sector. Today, I'm very comfortable where we are with General Nakasone and his teams on the DODIN of the Department of Defense Infrastructure, CISA with other federal networks.

But domain awareness outside of that is relatively an unknown. Many of those municipalities -- companies, their reporting is all we get. And so they actually are voluntarily playing. And so from a domain awareness perspective, we don't know exactly what we don't know.

ROUNDS: Thank you my time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Sullivan, please?

SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank both the witnesses. I think you both are doing an exceptional job in an important AOR that don't always get the attention that they deserve. General VanHerck, I appreciate our meeting the other day.

I want to talk a little bit more and follow up on the discussion about the provision that Senator King and I co-sponsored in the NDAA on the Arctic Security Initiative. You're already hearing here in this hearing a number of senators -- bipartisan group of senators are very focused on that.

As you know, it authorizes the SecDef to establish an Arctic Security Initiative, which is modeled on the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and the European Deterrence Initiative, essentially initiatives from this committee where we have thought the Pentagon wasn't focusing enough on critical regions.

And I think both of them -- PDI and EDI have been quite prophetic saying, hey, Pentagon, focus, Europe, Asia, Taiwan and now the Arctic. Can you please provide a status on the update regarding the assessment, any conclusions you've drawn as you know the Arctic Security Initiative that was passed into law directs you, the NORTHCOM Commander, not OSD to complete an independent security assessment of the Arctic?

VANHERCK: Senator, we're in progress with the assessment. What I commit to you is you will get an honest candid assessment from me. I will coordinate that across the Department. I expect to have my portion of it complete within the next few weeks then the coordination will begin.

The suspense is here in the very near future. I'm likely going to ask for an extension. I believe it's crucial to not do this fast but to do it right. And I hope to have it done by early summer at the latest. I would point...

SULLIVAN: And...

VANHERCK: ... point out real quick if you don't mind that I look forward to seeing what the budget comes out with next week with regards to Arctic for inclusion into my assessment.

SULLIVAN: Are there any things that you can highlight already right now with this committee in terms of your assessment?

VANHERCK: Senator, without seeing the '23 budget, I really can't give you a full assessment of what we're going to see for infrastructure support. I believe we will see additional domain awareness capabilities, significantly funded with the '23 budget. But I look forward to seeing that.

I would assess that there may still be some work to do with regards to the strategies that each of the services have funded or are not funded but put out and the Department strategy. But when the budget comes out, I'll give you the final assessment.

SULLIVAN: Let me ask specifically on that when Secretary Austin was here for his confirmation hearing. I asked if he would commit to work with this committee to ensure the Arctic strategies from the different services are fully resourced.

And he said, quote, "You have my commitment to do that." That's what he told the committee. Do you believe funding for the Arctic Security Initiative in a similar manner that has been done for PDI and EDI is critical to our integrated deterrence efforts in the Arctic? And are -- and are you seeing that funding? Now, I'm not talking about the upcoming budget, I'm talking about what you've seen in the last year?

VANHERCK: To answer the last question we have not seen the funding that I would like to see with regards to the Arctic.

SULLIVAN: So the strategies are coming together. I think they're all coming together well. They're serious. That's a big change from a couple years ago. But you're not seeing the funding as of yet.

VANHERCK: In the past -- that's correct, Senator. I look forward to seeing the 23 budget. The Arctic is strategic in nature. We must be persistent there to compete. That's a part of the integrated deterrence that you mentioned as well.

SULLIVAN: So just for the Pentagon folks watching, it's not just forces, but as Senator Wicker talked about it's infrastructure. I know that it gives some people neuralgia in the Pentagon when we talk about strategic Arctic ports, but that's what we need, isn't it, General? The capability to have presence in a strategic region where one of the most brutal dictators in the world Vladimir Putin has said he's going to own the Arctic, he's going to create the new Suez Canal in the Northern Sea route, and he's going to dominate it. Don't we need a presence ourselves to push back on this dictator in that region of the world?

VANHERCK: We do. We do need a presence. And fuel north of Dutch harbor would do that, as would infrastructure and communications capabilities. I look forward to working with the Canadians on their part of this. They need to be part of it as well, not only the Department of Defense, especially on the infrastructure piece.

SULLIVAN: Well, just a final point, Mr. Chairman, I think this committee has been very strong on this over the last several years in a bipartisan way. And I think the Pentagon needs to wake up. They need to wake up and recognize this is a strategic interest for our nation, and the signal that's coming from the Congress couldn't be more clear. Just like with the European Deterrence Initiative, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, this Arctic Security Initiative falls in that line. And I look forward to working with you and this committee on your assessment and seeing it soon. Thank you.

REED: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

And Senator Peters, please.

PETERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I couldn't agree more with Senator Sullivan on the strategic importance of the Arctic and investments in the Arctic, and I think it is a consensus with members of this committee in a bipartisan way that we need to be focused on that. I had some questions related to that. Senator Sullivan did a great job of addressing some of the questions that that.

But maybe just pick up one thing with you, General Herrick is that the National Guard Bureau, to what extent are you working with them to ensure that they're ready to conduct some cold weather operations in that region?

VANHERCK: We work with all the services including the National Guard Bureau to do that. Actually I'm highly reliant on the National Guard Bureau to execute my day-to-day campaign plan in a voluntary status, actually, so I couldn't be more proud, and appreciate the support because I don't get access to the forces through the Global Force Management Process, and I don't have the assigned forces to do that campaign plan. I'd point out that we need ready, trained and equipped forces to operate throughout my entire area of responsibility, and that includes the Arctic. That's part of the services strategy and something that we have to work on. I just concluded an Arctic edge exercise which included some of the National Guard and many of the services, a joint exercise and some allies and partners in a classified environment. I'll share some observations with you from that, but the Arctic is a challenging environment to operate in and we have work that remains.

PETERS: Right. I appreciate that. General -- General VanHerck, U.S. intelligence indicates that Russia may be positioning itself to use chemical weapons in Ukraine under the guise of a false flag. And certainly while our hearts go out to the brave Ukrainians who are defending their country from this illegal invasion and fighting for freedom, I think we also must use this crisis as an opportunity to consider our own preparedness for such an attack. So my question for you is do you believe the United States is properly prepared to contain and respond to chemical attacks in the homeland, and are there any resource shortfalls impacting Sea-burn Response Enterprise?

VANHERCK: So I believe we're prepared to execute a response to a small event such as we have planned for based on a violent extremist type organization event. For a large scale event in the homeland I think there's much work that still needs to be done that could be additional resources applied to, Senator.

PETERS: Great. Thank you.

General Richardson, in your reply to Senator Kaine, a question that Senator Kaine offered you described the importance of small team engagement with our allies and partners. Nearly every nation in SOUTHCOM AOR participates in the National Guard State Partnership Program, as you're well aware. My question for you is how do you plan to employ your National Guard State Partnership Program units to deepen the defense relationships that we have in the region?

RICHARDSON: So this is a huge force multiplier, Senator, the State Partnership Program. And in some cases two, three decades of relationships that have evolved. And we see the impact of that with Ukraine and California, and that relationship that they have. And so, there was a creation a few years ago, the bilateral affairs officer, which is a National Guard officer that's actually embedded in the embassies with the DOD team there, and then helps integrate that state partnership program in my campaign plan and strategy for the region, and as was brought out and other questions. I don't have all the resources I need but that is reach back into the National Guard and the capabilities especially with the cyber battalions to help me with operations in the cyberspace domain.

PETERS: Yes. An area that we need to have increased focus on without question. Another question for you, General, is are you seeing the Chinese or the Russian military's copy these types of efforts in collaborating with regional militaries for training opportunities? Is this something they're picking up as well?

RICHARDSON: I do, Senator. I see them using part of our playbook against us, actually. And what I've said before is that they don't have partners, they have clients. And so, when we do our big exercises and bring 20 some countries together from the region they don't do that, but they do have a lot of funding to bring large groups of personnel from the militaries or the defense forces to all expense paid professional military education in Beijing for either a year or two years. And if they do that, if I take the country of Guyana, for example, and they do 15 or 20 a year they can get through their defense force in about five years. And so, we've got to -- as I've said before I don't need to outspend China, but I do -- to out-compete them, but I do need to be on the field and my security cooperation and IMET funding. A little bit goes a long way.

PETERS: Great. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Scott, please?

SCOTT: Thank you, Chairman.

General Richardson, can you -- first off, I thank both of you for being here. Thanks for the people, your service and the people the men and women that work with you.

General Richardson, can you describe what you've seen from our enemies over the past six months? Have you had this command and what do you believe their primary goals are in our hemisphere?

RICHARDSON: So, frankly, I'm surprised at how much that our competitors have been able to expand within the region and how they've done that with the proximity to the homeland. And what I've -- what I find myself doing is a lot of educating and informing about my AOR as I travel around and speak to different groups and go to different places to offer the message, and just educate folks because we tend to look east and west, not necessarily south. And I can fly to 80 percent of this AOR. It's huge. It looks huge and it looks really far away. I can fly to 80 percent of it in two to three hours from Miami, and a lot of people don't -- we just kind of forgotten about that.

I would say with the investment of infrastructure over the last five years by our long-term strategic competitor, China, from '17 to '21 an investment of over 50 billion. I a core of engineers, and we average about 50 million per year, so from '17 to '21, about 250 million investment in the region. Now that's not it. I mean USAID is there, and there are other businesses and corporations that are in the region, but there's a -- there's a huge investment by our long-term strategic competitor in the region. Some of these countries as well, as I look to levers, levers that allow me to out-compete my adversary, foreign military sales.

I met for military financing security cooperation, being able to have responsive levers. We can't take a year to two years when our partner nations are asking for capability. A couple of helos, a fighter jet, weapons, vehicles, and we take two years. Our process has got to be able to evolve with the -- with the times, and we got to be faster.

SCOTT: Do you see in our hemisphere that Russia and China have become, clearly no question about, they are adversaries.

RICHARDSON: They are definitely competitors. And I do look at them as adversaries.

SCOTT: So when you see American companies that go do business in China, with the Chinese government, the Chinese military, does that make your job harder or less hard?

RICHARDSON: I look at it from a perspective of the dual use. You have -- they come under the guise of infrastructure doing a good thing for that particular country. That they're -- they look like they're investing in. They don't do a good -- a good job on the project in the first place. That generally becomes evident in anywhere from five to seven years after a project is done. They don't hire host nation workers. They bring in their own laborers. It's, I would say from my perspective it's -- I worry about the civilian and dual use with the military and the PRC being able to bring in and use -- switch something over that's a state-owned enterprise to military use.

SCOTT: When they -- when the Chinese bring in their own labor do they take it back when it's finished, when the project's finished, or do they leave their labor there?

RICHARDSON: I think it depends. I think they actually do both.

SCOTT: Do you see signs of our enemies actively supplying weapons to any state or group, state, or group in Latin America?

RICHARDSON: Yes.

SCOTT: Right, and is that increasing, decreasing, what's happening?

RICHARDSON: I think over -- recently, probably over the past couple of years that's increased. Again, it takes whether they can do it faster or cheaper than us, is that's why I say our levers and our ability to be able to deliver has to --has to speed up and our processes have to get faster with the times.

SCOTT: What type of weapons are they sending into our hemisphere?

RICHARDSON: Fighter aircraft, helicopters, air defense systems, small arms vehicles.

SCOTT: So SOUTHCOM has had an office that supports trade and investment, and works to connect small businesses in the region. How is that doing?

RICHARDSON: In terms of the small business we had the small business director actually attend the Chile inauguration for the president. And in terms of small business I'll tell you what I've done, Senator, is the we were able to bring BENS, which is the Business Executives for National Security, who coordinated a trip into Panama in October with 10 CEOs. And I just took the out brief a couple of weeks ago. It was organized under my predecessor, and then just seeing the value of getting that perspective on the ground because when you talk about the investment levels that the PRC has when they go into these countries with over 50 billion in five years across the AOR, I'm looking at OPM, other people's money. How can we get investment in the region to help with the economic problems that these countries are having?

SCOTT: All right. I thank both of you for your service.

REED: Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Ernst, please?

ERNST: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, General VanHerck, and General Richardson for being here today. We really do appreciate your service to our country. And you both are acutely aware of our adversaries, and how they are actively spreading their economic and military influence beyond their borders to our own doorstep. This is right here as your predecessor Admiral Faller used to say, "in our own neighborhood." And that's such a great way to phrase that because they are there right here.

China in particular is on the offensive here in the Western Hemisphere. And there are days that I truly worry that our posture remains very reactive at best, and on certain days weak at worst. And that's not due to you, it's because we have many, whether it stems all the way from Pennsylvania Avenue, all the way here, we just don't give enough attention to our own neighborhood. Many of my colleagues have already stated that. So I think it's imperative that we must give you all the tools that you need to have at your fingertips the authorities, making sure that they are flexible. But we also need realists in the DOD policy shop, and at the State Department that will actually acknowledge the significance of a great power threat that is emanating through our area.

So, General Richardson, I know that Senator Cotton focused very heavily on the Panama Canal. I had a line of questioning as well in that area. I'm going to skip over quite a bit of that. But just for everyone's information I think last year there were about 14,000 transits through the Panama Canal, and the United States is the number one user of the Panama Canal, and 60 percent of what goes through the Panama Canal, it either originates in the United States or is headed to the United States. And of course I come from a very ag heavy state. A lot of those commodities or products do transit through the Panama Canal, so it is extremely important for us.

So, if we could just hammer down just a little bit more just very briefly, General Richardson, if you could talk about what you see going on around the Panama Canal with the Chinese influence that exists there.

RICHARDSON: So, thank you, Senator. Certainly I'd like to highlight that our country does 740 billion in trade with Latin America and the Caribbean. It's huge. And so, the importance of keeping that, the Panama Canal open and free, and for global economics and the economies, not just the war plans which I worry about as well is extremely important. But the strategic way of the investments and the proximity, and the continued investment with other projects that they make in and around the Panama Canal is very concerning. And so, six billion additional, in addition to the -- on either side of the canal, having state-owned enterprise companies along the canal.

ERNST: Yes. It is very concerning. About a week or so prior to the BENS group and Joe Votel's BENS group going into Panama, I had traveled there with a group of other congressmen to just really see the Chinese influence that is on the ground there and it is extremely concerning, that's why I'm so thankful that the BENS group is engaging in Central America, in Panama and other regions. We do need that economic support in that region so that we can also be a good partner. And if there are ways that the United States maybe won't invest if we can't find other allies and partners that do have the type of supports that might be necessary in that area, I think that we should facilitate where we can.

I'd like to focus a little bit on the mining activities that occur in South America as well. This is an area where we have seen a number of businesses from the United States attempt to get into places like Chile where they have lithium resources. But who beat us to the punch? The Chinese. So if you can talk a little bit about mining activities and how valuable that would be to the United States if we were able to engage in those types of activities?

RICHARDSON: So, the region is just rich with with rare earth minerals. And as you talked about, I mean I just took my granddaughter to the history museum on the mall a couple of weeks ago and got to see just all the minerals and the precious metals, and things like that, resources from the region. The rubies, the emeralds, all of those kinds of things, but when you talk about illegal mining, it's illegal mining, it's illegal logging, it's illegal fishing that happens.

If I -- I know you asked about mining, but if I could mention the fishing. At any given day I have over 600 PRC fishing vessels in my AOR that are off the coasts of Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and they follow the fishing migration patterns, and so, you know where they're going to be by the migration of the fish, and this is about three billion in lost economics productivity that those nations desperately need that the Chinese are taking away. And so, it's all three of those things that are extremely prevalent in this AOR.

ERNST: Yes. I appreciate that very much. I'm glad you brought up all of those other resources. It's just incredibly important that we pay attention to our own neighborhood and not only through our military, but also through our State Department, but also economically as well. So I really appreciate your presence here today.

Thank you, General VanHerck, and thank you so much, General Richardson.

And I yield. Thank you.

REED: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Hawley, please?

HAWLEY: Thank you, Mr.

Thanks to you both for being here. Thank you to you -- for your service to our country.

General VanHerck, let me start with you and let me say it's great to see a fellow Missourian here as always. I noticed something you said in your opening statement, I want to quote it to make sure I get it correct. You said, I think that, "our reliance, America's reliance on deterrence by cost imposition is currently overweighted and significantly increases the risk of miscalculation by limiting our national leaders' options following an attack."

That caught my attention because I have been arguing for a while now about the importance of adopting a strategy of denial, deterrence by denial versus deterrence by constant position, especially as it relates to China. So I wonder if you could just expand on your comments a little bit and tell us why you think it's important to end an over reliance on deterrence by constant position?

VANHERCK: Thanks, Senator. First, I would say cost imposition. The nuclear deterrent is the foundation of homeland defense and we must fully fund a triad. That is the foundation. We also must have a strong conventional force, but that has to also be balanced with deterrence by denial. And deterrence by denial is the capability to deny a potential adversary the ability to believe they can inflict damage on us that may bring us to our knees, and it's the ability to demonstrate readiness, resiliency across the whole of government, responsiveness. We do this every day with hurricanes, wildfires. We demonstrated it with We've demonstrated it with Allies Welcome. All of those contribute to the overarching integrated deterrence. That's what my campaign plan is focused. I don't want to start with defense kinetically in the homeland. I want to keep us out of the crisis and conflict by focusing on that deterrence by denial on a day-to-day basis.

HAWLEY: Let me ask you this. When you say that one of the - one of the dangers of over-relying on deterrence by cost imposition is that it increases the risk of miscalculation and limits options. Can you just explain that piece of it?

VANHERCK: Absolutely. So, without the deterrence by denial and the belief in a potential adversary's mind that they can't be successful, they may actually believe that because the homeland is vulnerable and they could bring us to our knees, that that may be the emboldening factor that leads them to make a decision to attack, whether that be in Taiwan or another place, because they believe that they can disrupt, delay, or destroy our will in the homeland. We want to create the - them to believe and understand that we have the capability that they could never do that to us by defending the key critical infrastructure and having the resiliency and readiness to respond.

HAWLEY: Very good. Thank you for that. Let me shift to the situation involving the drug supply at the southern border and particularly, fentanyl which is our state. Absolutely devastating and we're seeing mass quantities of it. Can you just give us an update on NORTHCOM's efforts to help DHS stem the flow of illegal drugs and particularly fentanyl there at the southern border.

VANHERCK: Senator, currently, NORTHCOM's providing about 2,450 guardsmen from various states in a Title X status doing detection and monitoring, intel analysis, and also aviation support. The request for support for FY23 is in the Department as well and being adjudicated at the Department level. I don't have a tasking yet for '23.

HAWLEY: Let me ask you about the Mexican government. Have they been helping with this - with the flow of drugs, the human trafficking? Has it gotten better or worse in the last year?

VANHERCK: The Mexicans are extremely good partners. I have great relationships with General Sandoval of SEDENA, with Admiral Hada of Sumar. Both are coming to visit me next month. They have tens of thousands of Mexican troops conducting the mission what we need with the common objections and we're very grateful for their partnership.

HAWLEY: What are you looking for them to do in the year ahead?

VANHERCK: Continue to partner, provide additional security. Sumar has port security now. For fentanyl, that's crucial because those precursors often come into ports. We'd like to work additional information sharing to enable them to be more successful in interdicting much of those precursor chemicals that come into Mexico.

HAWLEY: Very good. Let me shift back to China here quickly in my little bit of remaining time. You mentioned Taiwan a second ago. It's no secret Beijing would love to seize Taiwan. They'd love to execute a fait accompli with regard to Taiwan. And we also know that if they attempted to do that, they would seek to prevent us from deploying forces from west coast end of the theater. Tell me about your concerns about China's ability to strike military targets in the homeland using cyber capabilities.

VANHERCK: Well, China possesses extensive cyber capabilities. Those responsible to defend the homeland primarily reside with CISA, Director Easterly, and General Nakasone. My role is to provide defense support of civil authorities in the case of municipalities industry ask for support. We have a good capability. What we don't know, Senator, is the unknown. We don't know where the vulnerabilities are, because of the way we're set up across multiple agencies, across industries that we rely on volunteering their information for cyber vulnerabilities.

HAWLEY: Got it. Thank you both for your service again. General Richardson, I'll give you a few questions for the record. Thanks for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REED: Thank you, Senator Hawley. Senator Rosen, please.

ROSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would really like to thank Generals Richardson and VanHerck today and for your service to our country. Thank you. I want to speak a little bit about Iran's presence in the western hemisphere. General Richardson, during your confirmation hearing, we discussed Iran's presence in Latin American through its proxy, Hezbollah. Its involvement in the Tri-Border region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. And its exchange of arms for oil with, of course, Venezuela.

Over a year ago, Brazil extradited a leading Hezbollah financier to Paraguay which dealt a blow, of course, to the terrorist group. However, we don't often receive the same support in combating Iran or its proxy activities from other countries in the region. Just a little over two months ago, Iranian official, Mossan Rezi, was wanted by INTERPOL for his role as leader of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps in the 1994 AMIA Jewish Community Center bomb in Argentina. He made an appearance at the inauguration of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua.

To hold Iran accountable and Hezbollah accountable for their activities in Latin America, Senator Blackburn and I introduced the Hezbollah in Latin American - Latin American, excuse me, Accountability Act. So, General, could you please update the committee on Hezbollah's recent activity in Latin America? Are we effectively disrupting their agenda? And to your knowledge, is Hezbollah continuing to exchange arms for oil with Venezuela?

RICHARDSON: So, thank you for the question, Senator. And I think the - quietly honestly, thank you for the - for the Act and the - and the work that we partnering with our partner nations is so important through the Security Cooperation Train and Equip 333 funding. That's my main lever to work with these militaries and these defense forces to counter our competitors and counter our threats in the region.

And just as you listed off, you know, what Iran does and has done in our - in our - in my AOR is very concerning and obviously, to impact that - and when I - Secretary of Defense uses the integrated deterrence and as I look at that and you partner with all of the capabilities that are in the region, it's so important that the partner nationals that are dealing with this internally be able to have the capacity and capability to do that, too. I just request that I'm able to continue with that 333 funding, so I am there because they want to partner with us.

ROSEN: Mm-hmm.

RICHARDSON: They want to partner. They look to us. They look for help. They look for assistance. They look for coaching, teaching, mentoring. They want to come to our schools. This is how we make them stronger to handle their own - their issues internally as we work together to counter the threats.

ROSEN: Thank you. I want to - I'll continue on this line of questioning because we know there's also Chinese surveillance technology in South America. And so, I asked you at the confirmation hearing about Chinese state companies deploying that smart city, safe city technology in Latin America. And, of course, you said countries don't like that in the region. So, I'm concerned about the national security ramifications of this. So, I know I have a short time left, but can you provide us an update on the countries who are trying to get rid of the technology implemented in their countries by China and what can we do to help stop this widespread Chinese surveillance?

RICHARDSON: So, we do our best. I mean, not just DOD but also Department of State as we consistently work with them. My senior defense officials and my senior cooperation officials that are down range, that are actually embedded in the embassies and working with our partner nations to advise them about the technology, the surveillance technology, a back door of getting into the defense networks and things like that. Certainly, the possibility of 5G, and if nations get 5G, then our inability to be able to continue to work with them because of that cyber threat.

ROSEN: Thank you. I want to kind of keep on the cyber threat and I'd move over to General VanHerck about missile defense cybersecurity. As MDA works to rapidly deploy missile defense systems to stay ahead of threats, I'm concerned that we might not be taking potential cyber vulnerabilities seriously enough before fielding new systems.

So, on the 2019 Missile Defense Review, as software mentioned - software mentioned only once, this is a key way hackers get in. Even more alarming, GAO's May 2021 reports highlights that none - none of MDA's 17 operational cybersecurity tests planned for fiscal year 2020 were conducted and that cybersecurity testing since 2017 has revealed vulnerabilities. I will take my answer off the record, but I'd just like to know what steps NORAD is taking to address the cybersecurity vulnerabilities. I see my time is up. So, I'll yield to my next question, take it for the record. Thank you. Thank you both, Generals.

REED: Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Tuberville, please.

TUBERVILLE: Good morning. Save the best for last. Glad to see you all. General VanHerck, we're hearing Title 42 is going to expire March the 30th. Are we prepared for it?

VANHERCK: I would defer to the DHS. That's their mission. We are actively planning based at the request of DHS. I don't have a task to do that at this time, but I understand the Department is working through that with DHS.

TUBERVILLE: One of my favorite movies is, I think, We Were Soldiers. Mel Gibson play Col. Hal Moore, who's a friend of mine a few years ago and have since passed away. In that movie, they're getting run over and the code was broken arrow. In other words, they're up - they're on top of us. I saw a Facebook page this morning from Border Patrol calling broken arrow. We got huge problems and - I know we got huge problems all over the world. It doesn't seem like we're addressing this enough and we're going to have sooner or later because it's really going to affect - and it is affecting our country as we speak, but - with the drugs and all that. But just wanted to bring that up. Given your 32 hundred hours of flight time, you've flown about everything, I guess. Is there anything you haven't flown?

VANHERCK: There's plenty. I haven't flown what General Richardson flies, helicopters.

TUBERVILLE: A former Thunderbird Squadron, Commander JV Venable, recently wrote that a fighter pilot needs at least 200 hours a year or four a week. In coaching, we call it practice. But the Air Force and Navy flight hours have fallen to historic lows. Is that concerning?

VANHERCK: From a readiness perspective, from somebody who receives forces from the service, it is concerning to ensure that every force that we receive is ready to execute the missions that I'm tasked to do. Best answered by the services specific to their actual training, but it would be concerning if the trend continues to drop on the flight hours.

TUBERVILLE: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to submit Mr. Venable's report on Air Force readiness and a Wall Street Journal article that references his assessment for the record please.

REED: Without objection.

TUBERVILLE: General Richardson, last week, I met with the Colombian Ambassador. Good guy. They're huge allies. What in-roads have you made then and relationships have you made, because we've got - even from my state, we've got a lot of input down on what goes on in Colombia, you know, with their business dealings, minerals, those things. What have you - what have you seen from Colombia?

RICHARDSON: Our number one security partner and I look to them as like a key linchpin to the security and the stability of the region quite honestly. If you just look over, you - it's really hard to take a snapshot in time of - of a country, but if you look for when - when they - in 1999 and where they were to where they are now, it's just really tremendous. I have the Chief of Defense, General Navarro, visiting on Monday.

TUBERVILLE: Good.

RICHARDSON: We had our staff talks. SOUTHCOM, Colombia staff talks in January. We have - that was the first country I visited in the AOR when I came into command of SOUTHCOM. So, our relationship is excellent. It's strong. It's - we share information. We're constantly communicating. Again, it's coaching, teaching, mentoring. I look at our partners. I mean, they're there on the ground. They see the threats. They're dealing with the threats every day. We have to have those good relationships with them in order to increase our domain awareness to make up for what I don't have in domain awareness and ISR and things like that, but the partnership gives you the trust and the access and the presence with your partner nation.

TUBERVILLE: It's obvious. You're going to be a big key for us in your AOR. But thanks to you all. I'll cut my time short. I yield.

REED: Thank you very much, Senator Tuberville. Senator Kelly, please.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, General VanHerck and General Richardson, thank you for being here today. Yesterday, I held a hearing in this committee's panel on emerging threats to focus on how our military can work with our partner nations to improve security conditions in our hemisphere that in turn impact the U.S. border and our national security.

Throughout South and Central America, criminal elements, China and Russia are seeking to destabilize the region for their own gain. This is a national security challenge and we need to treat it as a national security challenge. With that context in mind, I would like to touch on NORTHCOM's, first, NORTHCOM's mission at the southwest border. The National Guard plays a critical role in this mission providing much needed relief to over-stretched Border Patrol agents and local law enforcement.

I've been to the border many times and I stay in close contact with local elected leaders and law enforcement. I've also delivered additional federal resources. And the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs committed to me earlier this year that National Guard troops would be well-resourced during these missions. So, General VanHerck, in your view, is the National Guard's border mission properly resourced to significantly assist in addressing the crisis at the border?

VANHERCK: First, I share your assessment of the national security imperative, the challenge for us with what's going on at the border. The National Guard forces that are working for us in a Title 10 status are not only resourced by DOD but they're provided resources by DHS. And my assessment is, for the most part, they're resourced to where they need to be. They could have additional resources for observation, detection, and monitoring of those kinds of things from DHS.

I think long term this is not an enduring mission of the Department of Defense. We need to fully fund and resource DHS to do their mission. And the DOD should be used in extremist times for the support on the border mission. I'd like to just make sure that our mission is understood. We're not there enforcing the law as the DHS can do. We're supporting them to free up capacity, so they can do that mission and we provide support, detection and monitoring, aviation support to help them and also the intel analysis.

KELLY: Well, until DHS is fully resourced to do this, let's make sure that the Guard and Reserve have the resources they need in their interim there. General, are you in regular communication with CBP, with Customs and Border Protection and local law enforcement partners on this issue?

VANHERCK: Me personally, yes, not daily or anything like that. I've been to the border multiple times. I was at the border last month as well. I met with both - the Customs and Border Patrol agents and discussed. We had eight in the room as well. I visited in your state as well in Nagales (ph) and been to the border. So, we do that. I have multiple liaisons from 40 government agencies that work in my head quarters to include from DHS and the Border.

KELLY: Well, that's good to hear. We need to - this is a comprehensive and challenging problem and we need to all have - all agencies working together to try to deal with this crisis. General Richardson, in your posture statement, you mentioned the insecurity and instability that's been exacerbated by COVID-19. You know, we know that Transnational Criminal Organizations routinely exploit poverty and stability and corruption to gain political and criminal power.

This is bad for stability. It's bad for our partners who are trying to sustain democratic societies and it's bad for our own interests. When we spoke earlier this week, you specifically mentioned that criminal organizations are using the instability brought about by the economic impacts of COVID-19 to create a wedge that Russia and China are taking advantage of. Can you elaborate on the relationship between Russia, China, and criminal organizations in the region? And how does the instability caused by criminal groups and opportunism of countries like China allow them to expand their reach?

RICHARDSON: So, overall, Senator, I just look at the insecurity and instability, the cycle of vicious threats, this wedge that the TCOs can create which allows the - our competitors, you know, the PRC and Russia to flourish and look like the heroes of the day, right, when they come in with their projects and their money and - or equipment and capability and things like that. And so - and as we talked about as well, the Chinese money launderers that take the money from these TCOs when these TCOs have all this cash, huge, \$310 billion a year annual revenue and move it back and turn it around and the goods that they - that they send back for the TCOs to be able to sell. And it's all cleaned money if you will.

And so, we have to - you know, this isn't just a DOD or a DHS. We also have to, I think, get after this money. And in terms of what our whole of government approach is to follow the money and then be able to crack down, but I know that it's very difficult. These are complex cases that Treasury and Justice have to deal with, but until I think we get it at - we get at - we get after that specific problem, we can't interdict our way out of this. We're not going to be able to do that. We got to go after and follow the money.

KELLY: Well, I want to thank you for the comprehensive answers from our phone call the other day that your staff sent out. I really appreciate that and those are really helpful. I also want to make sure that you have the resources, you know, that you need to tackle this challenge. So, I'm interested to see, you know, what the President's budget looks like for SOUTHCOM, NORTHCOM as well. And since I'm over, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I have some additional questions for the record.

REED: Thank you very much, Senator Kelly. And let me thank you, General VanHerck and General Richardson, for your thoughtful and very, very responsive testimony. At this juncture, I will adjourn the open hearing and we will reconvene at 11:45, approximately 15 minutes in SCC 217 for a closed session. Thank you very much.

END

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# U.S. Strategic Command News Briefs

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AS OF 0600 HOURS, FEBRUARY 28

## SUMMARY

Amid a growing global backlash against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin put his country's nuclear deterrence forces on high alert, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, which described the announcement as, "a warning to the countries lining up to help Ukraine fend off its Russian attackers." In Belarus, voters approved a referendum to allow the country to host nuclear weapons and Russian forces permanently as part of a package of constitutional reforms that also extended the rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, according to *Agence France-Presse*. Also of note, South Korean and Japanese officials said that North Korea launched a ballistic missile toward the sea off its east coast in its eighth missile test of the year, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

## TWEETS

"STRATCOM: 'We saw Mr. Putin's statement on his nuclear forces. STRATCOM remains at an appropriate posture and remains ready should the president call upon us,'" according to a tweet from *CBS News* reporter Olivia Gazis. Relatedly, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) wrote: "Reports that Putin has placed Russia's nuclear forces on higher alert is a stark reminder of why we need a strong, effective deterrent to meet the growing threats facing the U.S. and our allies. The upcoming Nuclear Posture Review cannot ignore this reality." And Aircraft Spots tweeted: "While the situation in Ukraine unfolds, USAF B-52H Stratofortress bombers deployed to Guam, continue to fly power projection missions in the South China Sea & East China Sea."

## Table of Contents

### TOP STORIES

#### 1. Putin Puts Nuclear Forces on Alert

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Ann M. Simmons and Matthew Luxmoore*

With much of the world moving against him, economic sanctions piling up and a military campaign less successful than he expected, President Vladimir Putin of Russia issued on Sunday the ultimate deterrent threat. Mr. Putin put his country's nuclear-deterrence forces on high alert, a warning to the countries lining up to help Ukraine fend off its Russian attackers. The announcement was a window into Mr. Putin's increasing isolation and anger. His behavior is making his inner circle appear visibly uncomfortable.

#### 2. Belarus votes to give up non-nuclear status

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

Belarusians voted Monday to allow the country to host nuclear weapons and Russian forces permanently, results showed, part of a package of constitutional reforms that also extended the rule of leader Alexander Lukashenko.

**3. North Korea Fires Missile, Signaling A Return to Tests**

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A22 | Timothy W. Martin*

North Korea launched a suspected ballistic missile off its east coast on Sunday morning, Tokyo and Seoul authorities said, restarting weapons tests after nearly a month of inaction.

**RUSSIA**

**4. Putin's Nuclear Arsenal Rhetoric Pushes Bounds of Brinkmanship**

*New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | David E. Sanger and William J. Broad*

When Vladimir V. Putin declared Sunday that he was putting his nuclear forces into "special combat readiness" -- a heightened alert status reminiscent of some of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War -- President Biden and his aides had a choice.

**5. Pentagon wants Moscow back channels to prevent nuclear escalation**

*POLITICO Online, Feb. 27 | Bryan Bender*

When Gen. Mark Milley emerged from six hours of tense talks with his Russian counterpart in Helsinki last September, the Joint Chiefs chair looked almost buoyant. Or at least as chipper as the gruff soldier of more than 40 years ever gets in public. "When military leaders of great powers communicate, the world is a safer place," Milley said, striking an optimistic tone. Now, just five months later, with Russian military forces pummeling Ukraine from the air, land and sea, Milley's paean to a common understanding with Moscow is virtually dead. But his relationship with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the general staff of the Russian Armed Forces, is at the center of a highly sensitive behind-the-scenes effort to prevent the biggest war in Europe in generations from spinning into a wider conflict. It's a situation that became more urgent on Sunday, when Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his nuclear forces on high alert after a series of what he called "aggressive statements" by NATO powers.

**6. Russian Strategic Forces Reportedly on High Alert as Fighting in Ukraine Intensifies**

*DOD News, Feb. 27 | David Vergun*

U.S. officials don't doubt reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin has placed Russia's nuclear deterrence forces on high alert, a senior defense official said at a press briefing today. "We have no reason to doubt the validity of these reports," the official said.

**7. UK says no 'significant change' in Russia's nuclear posture**

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed*

The UK government has seen no major change to Russia's nuclear posture despite President Vladimir Putin placing his strategic forces on higher alert, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Monday. "We've looked at their posture. There isn't a significant change," he said on LBC radio, accusing Putin of trying to "flex muscles" with his invasion of Ukraine bogged down. Wallace said he had assured his 12-year-old son: "No, we're not going to have a nuclear war."

**8. Putin nuclear threat linked to 'halted' offensive – Germany**

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

President Vladimir Putin's decision to put Russia's nuclear weapons on high alert "crosses another line" and shows his offensive in Ukraine is not going to plan, Germany's defence minister said Sunday. "In his (Putin's) megalomania, the rapid invasion of Ukraine has been halted by Ukraine's brave and determined actions," Christine Lambrecht told public broadcaster ZDF.

**9. West takes Putin's nuclear threat seriously**

*Financial Times Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Henry Foy, Max Seddon and Demetri Sevastopulo*

Western capitals have long been anxious about Moscow's military doctrine, which allows it to use nuclear weapons to end a conflict as part of its "escalate to de-escalate" strategy. So when Russian president Vladimir Putin put strategic nuclear forces on high alert on Sunday, they took it seriously.

**10. Russia's nuclear forces are on alert. Here's what it means.**

*Washington Post, Feb. 28, Pg. A17 | Missy Ryan, Karoun Demirjian, John Hudson and Shane Harris*

President Vladimir Putin's decision to put Russian nuclear forces on alert thrust the crisis over Ukraine into a more volatile phase on Sunday, fueling the potential for deadly miscalculation as the West's campaign of economic reprisal increases the chances the Russian leader could see his survival and that of the Russian state at risk.

**11. What Just Happened With Putin's Nuclear Forces? Here's What Experts Say**

*DefenseOne.com, Feb. 27 | Caitlin M. Kenney and Bradley Peniston*

Even expert Russia-watchers aren't sure what changed when Vladimir Putin ordered the country's "deterrence forces" to be put on a "special regime of combat duty" on Sunday. A U.S. defense official who spoke to reporters on Sunday called the move "escalatory" but declined to offer more details. Many news organizations interpreted the order as placing Russia's nuclear weapons units on a higher state of alert.

**12. Putin's nuclear posturing requires west to tread extremely carefully**

*The Guardian Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Julian Borger*

Successive generations have experienced what it is like to feel the shadow of nuclear annihilation loom over their daily lives, from the Cuban crisis of 1962, to the missile standoff in Europe in the 1980s. This is shaping up to be our turn. "I'll be honest – I'm nervous," Pavel Podvig, one of the world's leading experts on Russian nuclear forces, said after Vladimir Putin declared a "special mode of combat duty of the deterrence forces".

**13. Biden Halts Russian Arms Control Talks Amid Ukraine Invasion**

*ForeignPolicy.com (Exclusive), Feb. 25 | Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer*

The Biden administration has cut off arms control talks with Russia, sources familiar with the decision told Foreign Policy. The move came after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine's breakaway regions but before he launched the full-scale invasion of the country.

**14. Ukraine demands 'immediate ceasefire', Russian withdrawal**

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed*

Ukraine demanded an immediate Russian ceasefire and troop withdrawal on Monday as its delegation arrived in Belarus for talks with Russian negotiators on the fifth day of the Kremlin's offensive.

**15. As War Rages, Ukraine Agrees to Talks With Russians 'Without Preconditions'**

*New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Valerie Hopkins, Anton Troianovski and Steven Erlanger*

As Russian forces bore down on Ukraine's capital and officials put the toll of civilian dead at more than 350 since the invasion began, the two countries agreed Sunday to sit down for talks "without preconditions," but hopes were not high for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

**16. Russian forces appear to shift to siege warfare in Ukraine – U.S. official**

*Reuters, Feb. 27 | Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart*

Russia, frustrated by early battlefield setbacks in Ukraine, could be shifting its strategy to siege warfare just as President Vladimir Putin raises the risk of a catastrophic miscalculation by putting nuclear forces on heightened alert, a senior U.S. defense official said on Sunday.

**17. Russia's Modernized Military Stumbles**

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A8 | Michael R. Gordon, Max Colchester and Daniel Michaels*

The Russian military has faltered early in its invasion of Ukraine, as stiff resistance threatens to turn Moscow's hopes for a swift victory into a protracted and costly war, U.S. officials and allied military experts say.

**18. Russia's missiles see mixed results in Ukraine war as world watches**

*Reuters (Analysis), Feb. 28 | Josh Smith*

Russia has employed hundreds of powerful and precise ballistic missiles in the first days of its Ukraine attack, but analysts and U.S. officials say many Ukrainian defences remain intact - effects that countries around the world are watching closely.

**19. Ukraine says it downed missile launched by Russian bomber flying over Belarus**

*Reuters, Feb. 27 | Pavel Polityuk*

Ukrainian forces have downed a cruise missile that was launched by a Russian Tu-22 strategic bomber from the territory of Belarus, Valery Zaluzhny, the chief commander of the armed forces, said on Sunday.

## **EUROPE**

**20. B-52s Patrol Europe as U.S. Touts Ironclad Defense After Russia Nuclear Alert**

*Newsweek Online, Feb. 25 | Naveed Jamali and Tom O'Connor*

The Pentagon has emphasized its commitment to the defense of the 30-member NATO alliance as the U.S. sent B-52 strategic bombers to the bloc's eastern front and Russia raised its nuclear alert level. Newsweek asked a senior Pentagon official how the U.S.-NATO nuclear deterrence doctrine is affected by rising tensions between Washington and Moscow over the latter's decision to conduct a "special military operation" that has seen Russian troops advance through Ukraine in an attempt to surround the capital Kyiv.

**21. Offutt aircraft spotted over Europe amid Ukraine crisis**

*Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 26, Pg. A1 | Steve Liewer*

U.S. and NATO ground forces may be steering clear of Ukraine following Russia's invasion, but the alliance's military reconnaissance aircraft - including several from Offutt Air Force Base - have been venturing close enough to keep eyes and ears on the battle below. At least five of the 55th Wing's C-135 variants have been spotted in European skies by air traffic control websites this week. Two have been operating from the Souda Bay naval base in Greece, and three are deployed to RAF Mildenhall, England - though one of those jets has apparently been sidelined after suffering an in-flight mechanical emergency Tuesday.

**22. In Turnaround, Germany Vows Military Boost**

*New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Melissa Eddy*

It took an invasion of a sovereign country nearby, threats of nuclear attack, images of civilians facing off against Russian tanks and a spate of shaming from allies for Germany to shake its decades-long faith in a military-averse foreign policy that was born of the crimes of the Third Reich.

## CHINA

### **23. China calls for de-escalation as Ukraine talks begin**

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed*

Beijing on Monday called for de-escalation and "restraint" over the Ukraine crisis as Russia and Ukraine prepared to meet for their first talks since Moscow's invasion of its western neighbour.

### **24. Xi Weighs His Alliance With an Isolated Putin**

*New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A6 | Steven Lee Myers*

They visited a hockey rink in Beijing and the panda enclosure at the Moscow Zoo. They shared blinis layered with caviar in Russia and, reciprocally, the popular variant in China, jianbing. They have shared birthday cakes and exchanged toasts with shots of vodka, while demurring that neither would dare go overboard with the stuff. For more than a decade, Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir V. Putin of Russia have forged a respectful, perhaps even warm relationship, reflecting the deepening ties between two world powers that share common cause against American military and economic might.

### **25. U.S. Takes Aim at China Over Russia Ties**

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A13 | William Mauldin*

The U.S. wants to pry China away from its tight partnership with Russia. One step, U.S. officials said, is making Beijing feel pain over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### **26. Putin threat tests China's nuclear umbrella pact with Ukraine**

*Washington Times Online, Feb. 26 | Bill Gertz*

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered Moscow's military to raise the alert status of its large nuclear forces on Sunday, and the threat will test a 2012 agreement that calls on China to provide a nuclear deterrent umbrella for Ukraine. Chinese President Xi Jinping and then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich signed the agreement on Dec. 5, 2012, promising that China's nuclear forces would protect Ukraine from nuclear threats. The bilateral treaty described the two states as "strategic partners."

### **27. 'Blitz' Tactics Likely To Be Used in Any P.L.A. Attack on Taiwan, Experts Say**

*South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), Feb. 26, Pg. 4 | Liu Zhen*

Chinese experts say Russia's rapid tactics in Ukraine are likely to be replicated in any People's Liberation Army attack on Taiwan.

### **28. China says U.S. warship sailing in Taiwan Strait 'provocative'**

*Reuters, Feb. 26 | Ben Blanchard and Tony Munroe*

A U.S. warship sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Saturday, part of what the U.S. military calls routine activity but which China described as "provocative".

## KOREAN PENINSULA

### **29. N.K. missile launch aimed at gaining attention amid Ukraine crisis – defense minister**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 28 | Not Attributed*

North Korea's ballistic missile launch this week appears aimed at demonstrating its policy line of "power for power" and grabbing global attention amid the armed conflict in Ukraine, South Korea's defense minister said Monday.

**30. Moon calls for impenetrable defense posture**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 28 | Kim Deok-hyun*

President Moon Jae-in called for a powerful defense posture Monday, saying peace can be achieved only based on strong defense, as the world is reeling from Russia's shocking invasion of Ukraine.

**31. China vows cooperation with North Korea under 'new situation' – KCNA**

*Agence France-Presse, Feb. 26 | Not Attributed*

China's President Xi Jinping emphasised the importance of cooperation between Beijing and Pyongyang in an unspecified "new situation", North Korea's state media reported Saturday.

**32. Presidential candidates spar over missile defense, nuclear-sharing in TV debate**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 25 | Lee Hye-ah*

The four main presidential candidates faced off Friday over a range of national security issues, including nuclear-sharing arrangements and the U.S.-led missile defense system, as they jostled for position during their fourth televised debate.

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**33. Japan PM Opposes Sharing U.S. Nuclear Weapons After Abe Proposal**

*Bloomberg News, Feb. 28 | Isabel Reynolds*

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said sharing nuclear weapons with the U.S. in a way similar to NATO members would not be allowed under Japan's non-nuclear principles, pushing back against a predecessor who floated the idea.

**34. Japan, U.S. confirm need to boost deterrence capabilities**

*Kyodo News (Japan), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed*

The foreign ministers of Japan and the United States on Saturday condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and confirmed the need to enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the bilateral alliance, the Japanese government said.

## **IRAN**

**35. Iran says three key issues remain unresolved in Vienna nuclear talks**

*Reuters, Feb. 28 | Parisa Hafezi*

Iran said on Monday that reviving a 2015 nuclear deal is possible if Western powers take a political decision to resolve three remaining issues, as indirect negotiations between Tehran and Washington enter a crucial stage.

**36. Iran to enrich uranium to 20% even after nuclear deal – nuclear chief**

*Reuters, Feb. 25 | Not Attributed*

Iran will continue to enrich uranium to 20% purity even after sanctions on it are lifted and a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers is revived, Iranian news agencies quoted the country's nuclear chief as saying on Friday. "(Uranium) enrichment ... continues with a maximum ceiling of 60%, which led Westerners to rush to negotiations, and it will continue with the lifting of sanctions by both 20% and 5%," the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Mohammad Eslami, was quoted by the semi-official news agency Fars as saying.

## AIR FORCE

### **37. Air Force Global Strike Command Team Visits Team Minot**

*5th Bomb Wing Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Senior Airman Caleb S. Kimmell*

General Anthony Cotton, Air Force Global Strike Command commander, and Chief Master Sergeant Melvina Smith, AFGSC command chief, visited here Thursday and Friday. While here, the command team toured the Base, hearing first-hand experiences from Airmen and families about their day-to-day support and impact for the nation's long-range strike and nuclear strategic deterrence mission.

### **38. Get to know your local Missile Alert Facility**

*Wyoming Tribune-Eagle (Cheyenne, WY), Feb. 27, Pg. A1 | Will Carpenter*

In a seemingly aimless, but determined drive, the small tour bus takes highways and dirt roads out to a place so barren, there likely isn't another human being for miles. The snow covers the ground and merges with the silver sky, while the cold air seems to penetrate the thick safety-grade windows, through which clouds of horned larks skip and dance out over vast plains like one dense organism. But then there's something different: Two tan metal structures, fenced in and containing warning signs that advise approaching vehicles of something their drivers already know.

### **39. Red Flag 22-1: Integrated mission planning is the first step to B-2 mission success**

*509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Press Release*

Red Flag is a large-scale exercise that offers the 393rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron an opportunity to enhance their integrated mission planning capabilities with the use of ever-evolving intelligence.

### **40. Missouri Airman joins rare group, flying 1,500 hours in B-2**

*131st Bomb Wing, Feb. 25 | Airman 1st Class Whitney Erhart*

Successfully completing 1,500 flight hours is an accomplishment few achieve and one to be remembered. Doing so in a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber is rarer still.

### **41. AFNWC civilian appointed to senior executive service position**

*Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Leah Bryant*

An Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center civilian was promoted to the Senior Executive Service during a virtual ceremony hosted here on Feb. 9. Maj. Gen. Anthony Genatempo, AFNWC commander, promoted Scott Hardiman to his new SES position. Hardiman is the director for the AFNWC Nuclear Command, Control and Communications (NC3) Integration Directorate. He is also dual-hatted as the Air Force program executive officer for NC3.

## ARMY

### **42. RCCTO leader explains hypersonic acquisition strategy**

*InsideDefense.com, Feb. 25 | Ethan Sterenfeld*

If the Army fields the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon on schedule next October, it will meet a target set by then-service Secretary Ryan McCarthy in 2019: develop and build the country's first hypersonic missile in a little more than four years. This was an ambitious goal for an Army that has struggled in recent decades to field new weapon systems on any timeline at all, especially for technology that nobody could produce outside a scientific laboratory. But so far, the program has stayed on track.

## CONGRESS

### **43. Top Republican defense voice in the Senate set to retire this year**

*Defense News Online, Feb. 25 | Leo Shane III and Joe Gould*

Jim Inhofe, the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee and the top Republican defense voice in the Senate, announced on Thursday that he will retire from Congress at the end of the year. The move comes with almost four years left in Inhofe's current Senate term and could leave a significant leadership void in the Senate GOP's military caucus.

## COMMENTARY

### **44. The Ukraine crisis is now a nuclear crisis**

*Washington Post Online ("Monkey Cage" Blog), Feb. 27 | Caitlin Talmadge*

Russia's publicly announced nuclear alert has turned the Ukraine war from a crisis involving nuclear powers to an actual nuclear crisis. With the caveat that we do not have many details about what the Russian alert entails, it is nevertheless a clear sign that President Vladimir Putin does not believe that the conventional military campaign in Ukraine is achieving the political outcomes he wants.

### **45. How Should the U.S. Respond to Putin's Nuclear Provocation?**

*The Atlantic Online, Feb. 27 | Tom Nichols*

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russia's strategic nuclear forces to raise their alert status. (Specifically, he has ordered Russia's "strategic deterrence forces" to "transition to special regime of combat duty.")

### **46. With his war going slowly, Vladimir Putin raises the nuclear stakes**

*The Economist Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Editorial*

As Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine in the early hours of February 24th, he warned the West to stay out of it. "Whoever tries to hinder us... should know that Russia's response... will lead you to such consequences that you have never encountered in your history," he said. It was interpreted as a barely veiled threat to use nuclear weapons. On February 27th, several days into his war, and without much to show for the fighting so far, Mr Putin removed the veil entirely.

### **47. A hurting stalemate? The risks of nuclear weapon use in the Ukraine crisis**

*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Feb. 27 | Francesca Giovannini*

Nuclear experts are trained to think the unthinkable. So, here is an unthinkable scenario that might actually happen in real life: The battle over Ukraine drags on. From both the European Union and the United States, fresh weapons and other supplies continue to enter into Ukraine and allow the Ukrainian forces to fight on. The battle reaches what conflict resolution expert William Zartman calls "a hurting stalemate" situation. The balance of forces on the ground is not completely or perfectly symmetrical, but what was once considered a completely disproportioned asymmetry of forces has been gradually re-equilibrated, in favor of the Ukrainian forces.

### **48. Putin's Nuclear Threat Shatters a Security Shield**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Feb. 27 | Stephen Mihm*

All eyes are on the conventional war unfolding in Ukraine. But a very different kind of conflict looms over the conflict. Before invading, Putin staged nuclear weapons drills around Russia's border with Ukraine. In case anyone missed the point, his speech justifying the invasion reminded listeners that his country remained "one of the most powerful nuclear powers."

#### **49. Russia's Ukraine War Heightens Urgency Around Biden's Nuclear Weapons Strategy**

*TheIntercept.com, Feb. 25 | Sara Sirota*

As the week began, nonproliferation advocates weren't optimistic that President Joe Biden would stand by his early commitments to "reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy." He might reverse former President Donald Trump's decisions to pursue a nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile or to retain the B83 gravity bomb, the most destructive weapon in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, they thought. He might roll back Trump's policy allowing a nuclear response to "significant non-nuclear strategic attacks" or even consider a coveted "no first use" policy that Biden had shown interest in as vice president. But prospects that he would do the heavier lifting and halt Northrop Grumman's contract to replace the intercontinental ballistic missile system — considered one of the most dangerous and unnecessary weapons in the nuclear arsenal — were practically nonexistent. Combined with multiple other weapons programs, the brand-new ICBM system puts the U.S. in its largest nuclear modernization effort since the Cold War.

#### **50. Is the United States Ready for the Third Nuclear Age?**

*National Interest Online, Feb. 26 | Andrew Futter*

In the next few weeks, the Biden administration is likely to release both a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and a Missile Defense Review (MDR). These two documents are the chance for President Joe Biden and his national security team to "put their stamp" publicly on how they intend to approach issues of nuclear deterrence and national security policy. All previous NPRs and MDRs have marked an important moment in the evolution of U.S. nuclear thinking (each president has released an NPR since 1994 and an MDR since 2010), but the nuclear environment confronting the United States and the wider global nuclear order today will be quite different than what we have seen before.

#### **51. Ukraine Leads the World**

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A20 | Editorial*

Vladimir Putin's Ukraine invasion isn't going according to his script, and for that the world owes a great debt to the heroic people of that besieged country of 41 million. Their resistance against fearsome odds is an inspiration and has awakened the world to the menace of the Kremlin autocrat. Ukraine deserves more support to raise the costs of war for Mr. Putin with arms, the toughest sanctions, and global ostracism.

#### **52. We must stand with Ukrainians**

*Washington Post, Feb. 28, Pg. A22 | Editorial*

Five Days after Vladimir Putin launched his war on Ukraine, it is apparent that things are not going the overconfident Russian president's way. Russia has so far failed to take any of Ukraine's major cities, disable its military communications or decapitate the government. The Russian Ministry of Defense's own extended battle report on Sunday admitted for the first time to Russian dead and wounded - but claimed no major victories. In video of a meeting with Mr. Putin, Russia's top two military chiefs looked stricken as he ordered them to place his nation's nuclear forces into a "special mode of combat duty."

#### **53. Taking NATO's Article V Seriously**

*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 26, Pg. A16 | Editorial*

Vladimir Putin's likely conquest of Ukraine raises an uncomfortable question: Could Russia next attack a member of NATO? The alliance had better prepare for the possibility because the Russian dictator has all but promised to test it. "The United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power," President Biden said Thursday. "There is no doubt -- no doubt that the United States and every NATO ally will meet our Article V commitments, which says that an attack on one is an attack on all."

## STATE-RUN MEDIA

### **54. Putin orders "special duty regime" in Russia's deterrence forces**

*TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

In response to aggressive statements in the West Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued orders to introduce what he described as a "special duty regime" in Russia's deterrence forces.

### **55. Sanctions may interrupt dialogue on strategic stability, Medvedev says**

*TASS (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed*

Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev noted that sanctions may serve as an excuse to interrupt dialogue on strategic stability and to exit the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START Treaty).

### **56. It would be US 'golden dream' to have nuclear weapons in Ukraine – diplomat**

*TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the emergence of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would be a "golden dream" for Washington.

### **57. Kiev Aims to Create Ballistic Missiles Able of Reaching Urals – Rogozin**

*Sputnik News (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed*

Kiev wants to create ballistic missile systems that have the ability to strike far into the Russian territory and Ukraine has the potential for this, Dmitry Rogozin, head of the Roscosmos state corporation Roscosmos state corporation, said on Saturday.

### **58. Russia doesn't want Ukraine to develop 'dirty bomb' – Russian envoy to UN**

*Interfax (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed*

The Russian and Ukrainian military have agreed to jointly ensure security of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, while Russia does not want Ukraine to develop a "dirty bomb," Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya said.

### **59. Kiev regime's leaders to be inevitably punished – Russian Defense Ministry**

*TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

The Kiev regime's ringleaders and their minions will be tracked down and inevitably and properly punished, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told a news briefing on Sunday.

### **60. Kremlin Spokesman Refers Question on Special Channel With US to Defense Ministry**

*Sputnik News (Russia), Feb. 28 | Not Attributed*

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov redirected the question on a possible special communication channel between the Russian military and the Pentagon to the Ministry of Defense. Politico has reported, citing sources, that the Pentagon wants to establish a channel, like the one that was set up in Syria in 2015, to communicate with Russia on the situation in Ukraine.

### **61. Belarus will agree to host nuclear arms, if Poland or Lithuania do so – Lukashenko**

*TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed*

Minsk will address Russia with an invitation to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus, if the United States deploys them in Poland and Lithuania, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said on Sunday.

## **62. US distorts China's neutral stance, 'uses Ukraine crisis to sow discord between China, Russia'**

*Global Times (China), Feb. 26, Pg. 2 | Yang Sheng and Xu Yelu*

The US has tried very hard to distort China's neutral stance of calling for dialogue on the Ukraine crisis, with the US State Department asking China to "pressure Russia" to respect the principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and even accusing China of "using Russia to create a new world order."

## **63. Alert! Abe's remarks are unlocking Japan's militarism**

*Global Times Online (China), Feb. 28 | Editorial*

Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe said on Sunday that Japan should consider a nuclear-weapons sharing agreement with the US in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine. He took some NATO member states as example, saying that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement enables the US to keep its nuclear weapons in Europe under its custody. He claimed that "we should not put a taboo on discussions about the reality we face," in spite of Japan's participation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the three principles of no producing, no possessing or not allowing nuclear arms on its territory. Despite the obscurity of his words, Abe's intention is clear: He wants to move toward the pursuit of nuclear weapons.

## **TWEETS OF NOTE**

*Twitter, Feb. 25-28*

## **TOP STORIES**

### **1. Putin Puts Nuclear Forces on Alert**

Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Ann M. Simmons and Matthew Luxmoore

With much of the world moving against him, economic sanctions piling up and a military campaign less successful than he expected, President Vladimir Putin of Russia issued on Sunday the ultimate deterrent threat.

Mr. Putin put his country's nuclear-deterrence forces on high alert, a warning to the countries lining up to help Ukraine fend off its Russian attackers. The announcement was a window into Mr. Putin's increasing isolation and anger. His behavior is making his inner circle appear visibly uncomfortable.

Mr. Putin issued his warning Sunday sitting at one end of a very long table. Seated far down the table were two top lieutenants who typically exude confidence. After Mr. Putin ordered them to put the country's nuclear weapons on high alert, Sergei Shoigu, his longtime defense minister and stalwart ally, lowered his head in a sign of consent.

So far, the Russian leader appears to have miscalculated the economic and political costs as well as the on-the-ground challenges of an attack on Ukraine. His aggression threatens to have far-reaching consequences for both his global standing and the stability of his nation.

Just before the attack, he singled out another close adviser in a televised national security council meeting seen by millions of Russians, taking to task his spy chief, Sergei Naryshkin, for his failure to "speak directly." Mr. Naryshkin appeared uncomfortable and stumbled over his words as the Kremlin leader pressed him to express his views on whether the breakaway eastern Ukraine regions of Donetsk and Luhansk should be recognized as independent.

For more than a decade, Mr. Putin has pushed the boundaries of international behavior, often coming away with what he wanted with penalties that were manageable. He invaded the former Soviet republic of Georgia in 2008 to support two breakaway republics, seized Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and threw Russia's military might behind Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

But he built toward his biggest gamble ever during the isolation of Covid-19. Mr. Putin retreated to his residence outside Moscow and imposed stringent quarantine requirements on anyone wanting to see him.

It was during that period that he began making his current case for attacking Ukraine. In a 7,000-word essay written last summer and published on the Kremlin's website, Mr. Putin outlined what he said was evidence that Ukraine is an artificially created country infiltrated by foreign forces and overrun by nationalists who threaten Russia's security.

Mr. Putin's essay soon became so core to the Kremlin's narrative on Ukraine that the Defense Ministry added it to the curriculum studied by all Russian service members, including the 190,000 troops estimated to have massed near Ukraine's borders ahead of Thursday's invasion.

Mr. Putin's rhetoric grew increasingly hostile, in particular to the West and to Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators met in Paris in January to discuss ways to implement an earlier deal between the two countries called the Minsk-2 agreement. The deal, which remained dormant amid disagreements over how to implement it, gave Russia significant say in Ukraine's future and Mr. Putin a potentially face-saving way to de-escalate -- until he chose to invade and rendered the agreement unviable.

"The current president recently said that no part of the Minsk agreements is to his liking," Mr. Putin said, referring to Mr. Zelensky. Then Mr. Putin used a common Russian quip: "Like it or not, you've got to suffer through this, my beauty."

"Ukraine is truly a beauty," Mr. Zelensky later responded, "but when he says 'my beauty,' that seems a bit much."

After talks with President Emmanuel Macron of France around the same time, the blame again shifted to NATO.

"We are not moving toward NATO, but NATO is moving toward us," Mr. Putin charged at a briefing following talks with Mr. Macron on Feb. 8. "Therefore, to say that Russia is behaving aggressively, at least, does not correspond to sound logic."

Mr. Putin's treatise on Ukraine ultimately became the basis of two angry, threatening speeches given last week, one announcing Russia's recognition of the breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine as independent states and another, on Thursday, launching a "special military operation" to rid Ukraine of NATO-supplied weapons and what Mr. Putin falsely claims are the Nazis who run the country.

"Now a few very important words for those who may be tempted to interfere in events," Mr. Putin said in Thursday's address. "Whoever attempts to interfere with us, let alone create threats to our country, to our people, should know that Russia's answer will be immediate and will lead to consequences of the kind you've never faced before in your history."

Mr. Putin's nuclear threat came as much of the world declared him an international pariah. He is among a small number of leaders to be hit by personal sanctions. That club includes Mr. al-Assad of Syria, North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro.

Now evidence is mounting that even some allies might be moving away from him. Turkey is weighing a request from Ukraine to block Russian warships from entering the Black Sea through a strategic chokepoint. Ibrahim Kalin, a spokesman and top aide to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, tweeted Sunday that his country would "continue our efforts to help the people of Ukraine and end bloodshed in this unjust and unlawful war." Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic and ally of Russia, has sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Mr. Putin will face added pressure from ordinary Russians who are already being hit by sanctions. Long lines at ATMs over the weekend prompted the central bank to say the Russian financial system was stable. The ruble and stocks are expected to decline in Moscow on Monday as sanctions hit those markets. Prominent Russians including some oligarchs have criticized the invasion.

A senior U.S. defense official said Mr. Putin's move on nuclear weapons was unnecessary because Russia has never been under threat by NATO and it is dangerous because of the possibility of a miscalculation.

Mr. Putin first touted Russia's nuclear power before the invasion when he reminded his nation that it is one of the most powerful nuclear nations in the world, and warned that an attack on Russia would lead to defeat of any potential aggressor.

The potential use of nuclear weapons -- by Ukraine, not Russia -- was a well-trodden justification for Russia's attack.

But Ukraine has no nuclear weapons. In 1994, three years after the demise of the Soviet Union, the newly independent state agreed to give up its roughly 1,800 nuclear weapons in exchange for security assurances from the U.S., the U.K. and Russia. Experts in nuclear weaponry have said that while Ukraine has a rich history of nuclear research and has deposits of uranium, it has never had key elements of nuclear industrial infrastructure critical for building nuclear weapons.

--Sabrina Siddiqui in Washington, D.C. contributed to this article

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Washington Examiner: [Europe stares down Putin's nuclear threat: 'Everything is on the table right now'](#)

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## **2. Belarus votes to give up non-nuclear status**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

Belarusians voted Monday to allow the country to host nuclear weapons and Russian forces permanently, results showed, part of a package of constitutional reforms that also extended the rule of leader Alexander Lukashenko.

The referendum was held Sunday as the ex-Soviet country's neighbour Ukraine is under attack from Russian troops and delegations from Moscow and Kyiv are expected to meet for talks on the Belarusian border.

Central Election Commission head Igor Karpenko said 65.16 percent of referendum participants voted in favour of the amendments and 10.07 percent voted against, Russian news agencies reported.

According to Karpenko, voter turnout stood at 78.63 percent.

To come into force, the amendments need to receive at least 50 percent of the vote with a turnout of over half the electorate.

Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994, promised the referendum in the wake of historic protests against his disputed re-election in 2020.

By amending the constitution Lukashenko, 67, follows in the footsteps of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who in 2020 oversaw a vote on constitutional changes that made it possible for him to remain in power until 2036.

The constitutional changes also grant immunity to former leaders for crimes committed during their term in office.

Russia is a key ally of Belarus and last week Lukashenko allowed Russian troops to use Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine from the north.

Belarus inherited a number of Soviet nuclear warheads following the break-up of the USSR in 1991, according to the Nuclear Threat Initiative think tank, which it then transferred to Russia.

Lukashenko first floated possible changes after a presidential vote in August 2020 sparked unprecedented demonstrations that were met with a brutal crackdown.

He claimed a sixth term in the vote and imprisoned leading opposition figures, while his main rival Svetlana Tikhonovskaya was forced to seek refuge in neighbouring Lithuania.

The amendments would reinstate presidential term limits -- previously ditched by Lukashenko -- to two five-year terms, but they would only apply to the next elected president.

Were Lukashenko to put himself forward as a candidate for re-election in 2025, he could remain in power for an additional ten years.

Tikhonovskaya's office in Lithuania has hit out at the vote, saying that a sweeping crackdown on any dissenting voices since the 2020 election made any real discussion of the proposals impossible.

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Wall Street Journal: [Belarus Set to Open Door To Moscow's Nuclear Arms](#)

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### **3. North Korea Fires Missile, Signaling A Return to Tests**

Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A22 | Timothy W. Martin

SEOUL -- North Korea launched a suspected ballistic missile off its east coast on Sunday morning, Tokyo and Seoul authorities said, restarting weapons tests after nearly a month of inaction.

The single missile was fired around 7:52 a.m. local time from the Sunan area, Seoul's military said. It traveled around 185 miles and hit an altitude of more than 370 miles, before splashing into the waters between Korea and Japan, Tokyo's military said.

Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi criticized the test. "If their idea was to conduct this at an unguarded moment for the international community while it was responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we absolutely cannot condone this."

North Korea said it had tested reconnaissance satellite technology, conducting "vertical and oblique photographing of a specific area on earth," according to state media on Monday. Systems for high-definition photography, data transmission and altitude-control devices were verified by the country's aerospace and defense science officials, state media said.

The rocket technology required to launch a reconnaissance satellite into space closely mirrors that of long-range missiles, weapons experts say. Pyongyang, while detailing a five-year weapons strategy policy early last year, listed reconnaissance satellite technology for military purposes as a key pursuit.

The Kim Jong Un regime started 2022 by conducting a flurry of missile launches. Its seven weapons tests in January were more than all of last year. But until Sunday, North Korea had stayed quiet since Jan. 30.

Some security experts said Pyongyang would have wanted to keep a low profile during the Winter Olympics so as not to embarrass Beijing, one of the regime's few allies.

In January, Pyongyang fired missiles from a train and from an airfield. Mr. Kim attended the final test of the country's self-proclaimed hypersonic technology, making his first in-person visit to a launch in nearly two years.

The U.S. and North Korea haven't held formal nuclear talks in more than two years. The Kim regime has brushed off outreach from the Biden administration and has kept its borders largely sealed off throughout the pandemic. It has spurned offers by international relief groups to provide millions of Covid-19 vaccinations.

North Korea's Politburo, at a meeting in January, threatened to resume nuclear or long-range missile tests, having refrained from such behavior for more than four years. Pyongyang's dozens of missile launches in recent years have showcased shorter-range technology.

With global attention diverted to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, North Korea may see it as a chance to test weapons without as much risk of punishment, said Jean H. Lee, a senior fellow at the Korea program at the Wilson Center, a think tank in Washington.

"Regardless, I think Kim has his own timeline and goals for new weapons in 2022," Ms. Lee said. "He wants to have new weapons to unveil this spring. Tests get him closer to perfecting the technology."

A more distracted U.S. could also influence how North Korea views the prospects of denuclearization negotiations, should the Biden administration be forced to deal with a sustained conflict in Europe and juggle a tense relationship with China, said Go Myong-hyun, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute, a Seoul-based think tank.

"North Korea will be able to tell Washington: 'We could save you some trouble -- let's settle this,'" Mr. Go said. "It's something North Korea can definitely put on the table."

North Korea counts neighboring Russia and China as among its closest allies. In recent weeks, the Kim regime reopened its borders to allow in a handful of cargo-train shipments inbound from China. Beijing and Moscow have recently blocked Washington's move to impose extra United Nations sanctions on the Kim regime and have previously advocated for the world to relax the economic restrictions.

--Chieko Tsuneoka in Tokyo contributed this article

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## **RUSSIA**

### **4. Putin's Nuclear Arsenal Rhetoric Pushes Bounds of Brinkmanship**

New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | David E. Sanger and William J. Broad

WASHINGTON -- When Vladimir V. Putin declared Sunday that he was putting his nuclear forces into "special combat readiness" -- a heightened alert status reminiscent of some of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War -- President Biden and his aides had a choice.

They could match the move and put American forces on Defcon 3 -- known to moviegoers as that moment when the Air Force rolls out bombers, and nuclear silos and submarines are put on high alert. Or the president could largely ignore it, sending out aides to portray Mr. Putin as once again manufacturing a menace, threatening Armageddon for a war he started without provocation.

For now, at least, Mr. Biden chose to de-escalate. The American ambassador to the United Nations reminded the Security Council on Sunday afternoon that Russia was "under no threat" and chided Mr. Putin for "another escalatory and unnecessary step that threatens us all." The White House made it clear that America's own alert status had not changed.

But to many in the administration, who spoke on Sunday on the condition of anonymity, it was a stark reminder of how quickly the Ukraine crisis could spin into a direct superpower confrontation -- and how it may yet do so, as Mr. Putin tests how far he can go and threatens to use the ultimate weapon to get there.

And his outburst highlighted anew the question, coursing through the American intelligence community, about the state of mind of the Russian leader, a man previously described as pragmatic, calculating and cunning. The former director of national intelligence, James R. Clapper Jr., said in public today what some officials have been saying in private since the Russian leader began accusing Ukraine of genocide and claiming it was developing nuclear weapons of its own.

"I personally think he's unhinged," Mr. Clapper said on CNN. "I worry about his acuity and balance."

Others wonder if Mr. Putin wants to create that impression, to add to Washington's unease. Similar concerns drove the decision not to have Mr. Biden, in Delaware for the weekend, respond to Mr. Putin's threats. It was the second time in a week that Mr. Putin has reminded the world, and Washington, that he has a massive arsenal and might be tempted to use it. But what made the latest nuclear outburst notable was that it was staged for television, as Mr. Putin

told his generals that he was acting because of the West's "aggressive comments" about Ukraine. Russia's most senior military officer, Valery Gerasimov, sat stone-faced as Mr. Putin issued his directive, leaving some wondering what he was thinking, and how he might respond.

"It was bizarre," said Graham T. Allison of Harvard University, whose study of the Kennedy administration's handling of the Cuban missile crisis, "Essence of Decision," has been read by generations of international relations students -- and many of the national security staff surrounding Mr. Biden today. Mr. Putin's citation of "aggressive comments" as a justification for putting one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals on alert status seemed both disproportionate and puzzling, he said. "It makes no sense."

Professor Allison, who worked on the project to decommission thousands of nuclear weapons that once belonged to the Soviet Union, which centered on Ukraine, said the incident is "adding to the worry that Putin's grasp on reality may be loosening."

Now the question is how General Gerasimov will translate Mr. Putin's vaguely worded order for "special combat readiness" into action. The answer should be clear in the next day or two.

A vast nuclear-detection apparatus run by the United States and its allies monitors Russia's nuclear forces at all times, and experts said they would not be surprised to see Russian bombers taken out of their hangars and loaded with nuclear weapons, or submarines stuffed with nuclear weapons leave port and head out to sea.

Both Russia and the United States conduct drills that replicate various levels of nuclear alert status, so the choreography of such moves is well understood by both sides. A deviation from usual practice would almost certainly be noticeable.

The ground-based nuclear forces -- the intercontinental ballistic missiles kept in silos by both nations -- are always in a state of readiness, a keystone to the strategy of "mutually assured destruction" that helped avoid nuclear exchanges at even the most tense moments of the Cold War.

Whatever one thinks of Mr. Putin's judgment, the decision to put the forces on alert in the midst of extraordinary tensions over the invasion of Ukraine was highly unusual. It came only a few days after he warned the United States and other NATO powers to stay out of the conflict, adding that "the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history."

It has put an end, at least for now, to the discussions between Russia and the United States about what they do in four years, when the one remaining nuclear treaty between the two countries, called New START, expires. The treaty limits each side to 1,550 deployed strategic weapons, down from tens of thousands at the height of the Cold War. But that does not include smaller, tactical weapons designed for battlefield use, a major worry in the current crisis. Just as Mr. Putin claimed last week that the United States had designs to put such weapons on Ukrainian territory -- one of his many justifications for the invasion -- American officials fear that Mr. Putin's next move is to put them in Ukraine, if he succeeds in seizing the country, and in Belarus.

Until last week, the two nations were meeting regularly to discuss new arms-control regimes, including a revival of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which President Donald J. Trump abandoned in 2019. But the United States said last week that it was suspending those talks.

The immediate concern is that a heightened alert level, by design, loosens the safeguards on nuclear weapons, making it more possible that they could be used, by accident or design.

In recent years, Russia has adopted a doctrine that lowers the threshold for using nuclear arms, and for making public threats of unleashing their powers in deadly atomic strikes.

"It's what he does," Hans M. Kristensen, the director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, a global policy think tank in Washington, said in an interview. "It's verbal saber-rattling. We'll see where he goes with it. This war is four days old and he's already made nuclear threats twice."

Mr. Kristensen noted that in 2014, when Mr. Putin annexed Crimea, the peninsular part of southern Ukraine that juts into the Black Sea, the Russian president also raised the possibility that his forces might turn to atomic weapons. He recalled that when Mr. Putin was asked how he would react to retaliatory sanctions by the West, he "said he was willing to put his nuclear forces on alert."

Mr. Putin's announcement on Sunday came hours after Europe and the United States announced new sanctions, including banning some Russian banks from using the SWIFT financial messaging system, which settles international accounts, and crippling the Russian central bank's ability to stabilize a falling ruble.

Matthew Kroenig, a professor of government and foreign service at Georgetown University who specializes in atomic strategy, said history bristled with cases in which nuclear powers had threatened to unleash their arsenals on one another. He pointed to the Berlin crisis of the late 1950s, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, a border war between the Soviet Union and China in 1969, the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and a war between India and Pakistan in 1999.

He also noted that Mr. Trump had leveled similar threats against Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, after his armed forces conducted a series of long-range missile tests. In his first year in office, 2017, Mr. Trump threatened "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

Mr. Putin's outburst reminded many nuclear experts of one of Mr. Trump's tweets, in which he noted: "North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the 'Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times.' Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!"

Mr. Trump later insisted that the threat was calculated, and that it had brought Mr. Kim to the negotiating table for a series of three high-profile meetings between the two leaders. But the talks collapsed, and Mr. Kim's nuclear stockpile is now significantly larger, by most unclassified estimates, than it was before Mr. Trump issued the threat.

"Nuclear-armed states can't fight nuclear wars because it would risk their extinction, but they can and do threaten it," Dr. Kroenig noted on Sunday. "They play games of nuclear chicken, of raising the risk of war in hopes that the other side will back down and say, 'Geez, this isn't worth fighting a nuclear war over.'"

Mr. Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists said the threats could be empty unless matched with evidence that nuclear weapons are being removed from storage and prepared for action.

"Unless we see that kind of thing," Mr. Kristensen said, "it's rhetoric -- it's madman brinkmanship."

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CNN: [White House responds to Russia's decision to put deterrence forces on high alert](#)

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#### **5. Pentagon wants Moscow back channels to prevent nuclear escalation**

***As the U.S. and NATO rush weapons into Ukraine, DoD officials want more military channels to Putin's top leaders. But Russia's not picking up the phone***

POLITICO Online, Feb. 27 | Bryan Bender

When Gen. Mark Milley emerged from six hours of tense talks with his Russian counterpart in Helsinki last September, the Joint Chiefs chair looked almost buoyant. Or at least as chipper as the gruff soldier of more than 40 years ever gets in public. “When military leaders of great powers communicate, the world is a safer place,” Milley said, striking an optimistic tone.

Now, just five months later, with Russian military forces pummeling Ukraine from the air, land and sea, Milley’s paean to a common understanding with Moscow is virtually dead.

But his relationship with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the general staff of the Russian Armed Forces, is at the center of a highly sensitive behind-the-scenes effort to prevent the biggest war in Europe in generations from spinning into a wider conflict. It’s a situation that became more urgent on Sunday, when Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his nuclear forces on high alert after a series of what he called “aggressive statements” by NATO powers.

Since their meeting in Finland, the two men have spoken multiple times, including during the initial Russian buildup in November and again earlier this month.

Milley and Gerasimov have not spoken since the latest hostilities, two DoD officials told POLITICO. But Pentagon officials say they hope their line of communication — which has been more frequent than that of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his counterpart, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu — can help open up more regular links with Russian forces as the conflict ratchets up.

“Now that Ukrainian airspace is in dispute and being contested and Ukrainian airspace runs right up alongside NATO airspace, we have conveyed to the Russians that we believe a conduit at the operational level is needed ... so we can avoid miscalculation,” a senior Pentagon official told POLITICO. “And we have not received any response from them in terms of whether they agree, whether they are willing to set something up.”

The official cited as a possible model the “deconfliction” line that U.S. and Russian forces set up in 2015 to prevent their forces operating in close proximity in Syria from coming to blows. The purpose, the official said, would be to have a reliable means to telegraph, “We’re about to do this, stay the heck out of the way.”

But with the U.S. and other NATO militaries resupplying Ukrainian forces, that demarcation seems fuzzy at best. Western powers, while committed to not putting troops into direct conflict with Russia’s invading army, have been overt in recent days about backing Ukraine’s war effort. And with two nuclear powers just a border away from a potential shooting war, the potential for conflict is real — as is the necessity for a de-escalation process, say officials.

A battlefield-level mechanism to ensure each sides’ red lines aren’t violated, would likely fall under the top NATO commander in Europe, U.S. Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, who has authority to directly reach out to the Russian high command, according to two DoD officials in Europe who are directly involved in Ukraine planning.

But the relationship between Milley and Gerasimov, the two nations’ top military officers, is seen as a way to pave the way for more urgent communication at lower levels. “That is what the Milley-Gerasimov thing is for,” said the senior Pentagon official.

The sources all spoke on condition that they not be identified discussing internal deliberations. And they were reluctant to offer many details to avoid violating confidences that could prove critical in the coming days.

Current and former officials and experts said the links at the highest levels of the U.S. and Russian military commands are proving increasingly important as the fighting in and around Ukraine expands and as the world’s two largest nuclear powers have cut off most diplomatic engagements.

Putin has consistently accused the United States of stoking the conflict and pressuring Russia into a war as a pretext to cripple its economy, while President Joe Biden has labeled Russia's assault on Ukraine as a "war of choice" without any justification.

### *Planes in close proximity*

In the past 48 hours, Washington and Moscow have halted "strategic stability talks," aimed at lowering the temperature. Now, with new instructions late last week that U.S. diplomats must cancel most contacts with Russian counterparts, some level of back-channel communications is more necessary than ever.

"We're constantly seeing fighter planes come into very close contact" in the region, said Emma Claire Foley, a Russia specialist at disarmament group Global Zero who oversees the Military Incidents Project, which tracks "close calls" between NATO and Russian military forces. "They're not always using transponders. They are not communicating with air traffic control. In those situations, there can be accidents ... that can have massive consequences."

"Any personal relationship is immensely important when you are dealing with these issues of incredible consequence," she added, singling out "these unnecessary missions using nuclear-capable aircraft."

"All of this presents a risk of escalation," Foley said.

When the Russian invasion began in earnest last week, U.S. forces in the region were immediately ordered to pull back from the war zone.

"As soon as the Russians did what they did, we had to get out of the way," said one of the U.S. military officials in Europe directly involved in the planning.

That included redirecting a "pretty robust" operation of spy planes and drones flying over Ukrainian airspace, the official said.

Now, the U.S. Air Force is relying on high-flying aircraft over Ukraine such as the U-2 spy plane that can avoid most anti-aircraft missiles and drones because there is "a little bit more risk tolerance for that."

"One of the things we don't want to do," the official said, "is provoke a conflict with the Russians directly."

Still, the risk of direct confrontations between NATO forces and Russia is only growing as the conflict intensifies, according to a number of current and former national security officials.

The U.S. and its allies are stepping up air patrols along NATO's eastern region and on Saturday announced a slew of new arms shipments for Ukrainian forces.

In a sign of growing concern these actions could escalate the conflict, the Pentagon on Saturday publicly pushed back on Russian claims that U.S. forces were assisting the Ukrainians in defending their territory on the Black Sea, where a flotilla of Russian warships carrying troops has opened another front. "Chalk this up to just one more lie by the Russian Ministry of Defense," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby tweeted.

There is deepening uncertainty about Putin's ultimate intentions — particularly whether he intends to violate the territory of NATO members. Any such incursion would trigger Article 5 of the NATO treaty that stipulates an attack on one is an attack on all.

NATO outlined on Friday a laundry list of Russian actions it sees as threatening a wider military conflict.

"Beyond Ukraine, we see provocative Russian military activities near NATO's borders stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea," it said. That includes "irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric," along with "military posturing."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also warned on Friday that a cyberattack on one of the alliance's members would trigger the "commitment clause" in the NATO treaty that compels a collective response.

The Biden administration has also made it clear to Russia that it will not sit out the conflict if Russia attacks a NATO ally. "We're going to do what we need to do to defend every inch of NATO territory," Kirby told reporters.

*'It could get dicey'*

But the rhetoric out of Moscow has only grown more bombastic. "It's time to padlock the embassies and continue contacts looking at each other through binoculars and gun sights," said Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian president who is now the deputy head of Russia's security council, on Saturday.

Foley said she is watching how the decision by NATO countries to send more arms to Ukraine "will be interpreted" by Russia.

It all makes the behind-the-scenes messaging between military leaders so important, said Lynn Rusten, former senior director for arms control and nonproliferation on the White House National Security Council during the Obama administration and now vice president at the nonprofit Nuclear Threat Initiative.

"There is a lot of uncertainty about where Putin is going to go and what his aims are," she said. "There are lots of opportunities for things to escalate. It could get dicey."

Only NATO and Russian military officials can effectively "deconflict" their forces in the region and ensure clear "signaling and intent," Rusten added. "The military-to-military links are the most important."

Publicly, the Pentagon has been mum on how the two sides are communicating. Asked this week whether there were any new deconfliction mechanisms like Washington and Moscow fashioned during Syria's civil war, Kirby told reporters, "There's been no guidance by the department with respect to broader communications. It's normal channels on normal issues with the Russians."

"Obviously," he added, "we're always going to be mindful of force protection risks, we're always going to be mindful of the potential for miscalculation and for mistakes to be made that could escalate things."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki also punted when asked Friday about whether Biden or other top leaders were communicating directly with the Kremlin.

"Obviously, our national security team has a range of means of communicating with the Russians," she said.

But she made clear it's "not the moment where diplomacy feels appropriate."

"It does not mean we have ruled out diplomacy forever," Psaki added. "[T]he president remains open to engaging on — at a leader-to-leader level, but this is not the moment."

That leaves the generals and commanders close to the fight to avoid a larger war.

*A history of de-escalation communication*

Washington and Moscow first set up a direct “hotline” in 1963 after the Cuban missile crisis, when the two sides came perilously close to nuclear war. (They only learned later how close to Armageddon that faulty intelligence and miscalculation had brought them.)

The hotline was originally in the form of a teletype, then a facsimile machine; it is now a secure email link located in the National Military Command Center, the 24-hour operations hub in the Pentagon.

One former top U.S. commander said in the current crisis there are multiple ways the U.S. and Russian military leaders can communicate quickly, but sees the Milley-Gerasimov relationship as more crucial than ever.

“Know your enemy as you know your friends,” he said, paraphrasing the ancient Chinese general and philosopher Sun Tzu. “Those relationships are so, so important in helping you not misjudge and misstep, because a lot of times you don’t get the direct communication during the crisis. You really just have to rely on your knowledge of each other.”

“I hope that that relationship has been allowed to grow,” added the retired general, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak on Milley’s behalf. “Politically, there is some difficulty in mil-to-mil relationships but hopefully that one hasn’t deteriorated to the point of not having spoken for any extended period of time.”

He worries about miscues with the Russian forces at lower levels: “a misstep someplace by a tactical commander, or something like that — a miscommunication.”

A number of people cited the Russian separatists’ deadly shutdown of a commercial airliner over eastern Ukraine in 2014 as one example of how “the fog of war” could lead to a direct confrontation between NATO and Russian forces.

As for a nuclear miscalculation, that is seen as highly unlikely but not out of the question.

“Most of the time nuclear weapons are self-detering,” said the retired general. “But sometimes something could trap you in a logic train that puts you in a position that you think it’s a plausible approach. That’s the scary part.”

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## **6. Russian Strategic Forces Reportedly on High Alert as Fighting in Ukraine Intensifies**

DOD News, Feb. 27 | David Vergun

U.S. officials don’t doubt reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin has placed Russia’s nuclear deterrence forces on high alert, a senior defense official said at a press briefing today.

“We have no reason to doubt the validity of these reports,” the official said.

This is an unnecessary step for Putin to take because Russia has never been under threat from NATO and certainly not from Ukraine, the official said.

It is escalatory because it’s potentially putting at play forces that could, if there’s a miscalculation, make things much more dangerous, the official said.

“We remain confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our allies and our partners, and that includes in the strategic deterrent realm,” the official said.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, the official said that roughly two-thirds of Russian forces arrayed along the border are now inside Ukraine, an increase over the last 24 hours when roughly half of those forces were inside Ukraine.

Ukrainians are putting up stiff resistance in the face of invading Russian forces, the official said, adding that no major cities inside Ukraine have yet been captured.

"We believe that their advance was slowed both by resistance from the Ukrainians, who have been quite creative in finding ways to attack columns, and, number two, by the fuel shortages and the sustainment issues that they have had," the official said.

Logistics shortages have been particularly acute in their advanced on Kharkiv," which is in northeast Ukraine, the official said.

Some Russian reconnaissance elements have been in Kyiv over the last two days, and there are reports that they are wearing Ukrainian military uniforms to disguise themselves, the official said. In some cases, they have been identified by locals and by the Ukrainian military.

Russian forces, which are converging from the northeast and northwest, remain about 30 kilometers from the city center of Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, the official said.

In the south of Ukraine, Russian forces are moving northeast toward Mariupol and are now about 50 kilometers from the center of that city, the official said. They are also moving northwest toward the city of Kherson.

"Our assessment is that Mariupol is defended, and the Ukrainians will put up stiff resistance there," the official said.

The airspace over Ukraine is still contested, and that means that Ukrainians are still using their own aircraft and air and missile defense systems, which are believed to be still intact and still viable, although somewhat degraded, the official said.

Russians continue launching missiles against targets in Ukraine, mostly short-range, ballistic missiles, the official said. There are indications that some of the missiles launched have experienced failures.

There are indications that Russian forces are adopting siege tactics around the city of Chernihiv, which is northeast of Kyiv. This is particularly troubling as it could result in civilian casualties, the official said.

The U.S. and NATO continue providing Ukraine with lethal and nonlethal assistance, the official said.

An increased number of people, including some Americans, are leaving Ukraine, with many going to Poland, the official said. The 82nd Airborne Division is poised near the border and prepared to assist should the need arise.

"Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy is still governing his country, still viable, still active," the official said. "He still has command and control over his armed forces."

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## **7. UK says no 'significant change' in Russia's nuclear posture**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed

The UK government has seen no major change to Russia's nuclear posture despite President Vladimir Putin placing his strategic forces on higher alert, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Monday.

"We've looked at their posture. There isn't a significant change," he said on LBC radio, accusing Putin of trying to "flex muscles" with his invasion of Ukraine bogged down.

Wallace said he had assured his 12-year-old son: "No, we're not going to have a nuclear war."

"What I've said to him is, look, President Putin is dealing at the moment in a rhetoric, he wants to distract from what's gone wrong in Ukraine, and he wants us all to be reminded that he has a nuclear deterrent."

But Britain, France and the United States had their own nuclear deterrence available, Wallace stressed: "It's kept us safe for decades. It is a deterrent by definition and design."

The minister said the progress of Russia's advance into Ukraine was deteriorating, telling BBC radio in a separate interview: "There are many reports of Russians either sort of deserting or surrendering.

"Because they are confused as much as anyone why they are engaged in a war with people they're probably related to."

#### RELATED STORY:

Agence France-Presse: [Putin nuclear threat 'distraction' from events in Ukraine – UK PM](#)

Reuters: [UK says Putin nuclear remarks aimed to distract from Ukraine troubles](#)

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### **8. Putin nuclear threat linked to 'halted' offensive – Germany**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

President Vladimir Putin's decision to put Russia's nuclear weapons on high alert "crosses another line" and shows his offensive in Ukraine is not going to plan, Germany's defence minister said Sunday.

"In his (Putin's) megalomania, the rapid invasion of Ukraine has been halted by Ukraine's brave and determined actions," Christine Lambrecht told public broadcaster ZDF.

Earlier Sunday Putin ordered his defence chiefs to put the country's "deterrence forces" on high alert, accusing Western countries of taking "unfriendly" steps against his country amid Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"We would be well advised to take Putin and his declarations very seriously and not to underestimate him," said Lambrecht, calling on the West to remain "very vigilant".

The White House has already condemned Putin's announcement as "totally unacceptable" and an unnecessary escalation.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg also denounced it as "dangerous" and "irresponsible".

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### **9. West takes Putin's nuclear threat seriously**

***Russian president's 'escalate-to-de-escalate' strategy comes after military setbacks and rising pressure from sanctions***

Financial Times Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Henry Foy, Max Seddon and Demetri Sevastopulo

BRUSSELS/MOSCOW/WASHINGTON -- Western capitals have long been anxious about Moscow's military doctrine, which allows it to use nuclear weapons to end a conflict as part of its "escalate to de-escalate" strategy. So when Russian president Vladimir Putin put strategic nuclear forces on high alert on Sunday, they took it seriously.

Putin's decision to prepare Russia's nuclear weapons for increased launch readiness sparked immediate condemnation from the US and Nato that it had made the world "much more dangerous".

"This is not only an unnecessary step for him [Putin] to take but an escalatory one," said a senior US defence official. "Unnecessary because Russia has never been under threat by the west or by Nato and certainly wasn't under any threat by Ukraine. And escalatory because it is clearly potentially putting at play forces that, if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous."

Announced amid an invasion of Ukraine that has struggled to achieve Moscow's primary objectives and a day after the US, EU and other western allies unveiled potentially crippling economic sanctions, it signalled the Kremlin felt that it had no option but to intensify its threats, analysts said.

"There's a real possibility Putin could turn to nuclear weapons if he continues to experience military setbacks and sees the diplomatic and political situation crumbling," said Caitlin Talmadge, a nuclear policy expert at Georgetown University.

"It's not just a response to how his conventional campaign [in Ukraine] is going but to these other developments, with sanctions and Germany sending weapons to Ukraine," she added. "The entire picture to him looks pretty bleak. If he wanted to use tactical nuclear weapons to achieve [his aims] in Ukraine, he could do that."

Putin's order, which applies to Russia's traditional nuclear deterrent and its new hypersonic missiles, does not mean he is ordering preparations for a nuclear strike.

But according to Russia's nuclear doctrine, published in 2020, the Kremlin "reserves the right to use nuclear weapons", including "for the prevention of an escalation of military actions and their termination on conditions that are acceptable for the Russian Federation and/or its allies".

Western countries interpreted that as a lowering of the bar for the use of nuclear weapons: until 2020, Moscow's stated policy was to use nuclear weapons when "the very existence of the state is threatened".

Matthew Kroenig, a nuclear expert at the Atlantic Council, said Putin's response on Sunday was textbook Russian strategy.

"This really is Russia's military strategy to backstop conventional aggression with nuclear threats, or what is known as the 'escalate to de-escalate strategy'. The message to the west, Nato and US is, 'Don't get involved or we can escalate things to the highest level'," Kroenig said, adding that he thought Putin was bluffing.

Putin's decision followed a warning he issued at the outset of his invasion of Ukraine last Thursday, that any attempt by other countries to "meddle" would be met with consequences, a phrase interpreted to mean possible nuclear attacks.

Since the start of the invasion, Russia has failed to capture Kyiv or Kharkiv, Ukraine's two biggest cities, and suffered heavy losses against a far stronger Ukrainian defence than even its allies expected.

In addition, western countries have agreed on a sanctions package that cuts off some Russian banks from the global Swift financial messaging network and attempts to prevent Russia's central bank from using its \$630bn worth of international reserves, the toughest economic restrictions imposed on Moscow.

The nuclear announcement also came shortly after Russian and Ukrainian government delegates agreed to meet for talks, the first such discussions since the invasion began. Lawrence Freedman, emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London, said Putin might see the threat of a nuclear strike combined with the offer of a potential peace deal as a "way out of this mess he is in".

"While this might be an attempt to deter the west from imposing new, harsh sanctions on the country's financial sector or supplying weapons to Ukraine, the move escalates tensions between Russia and the west to an unprecedented

level," said Andrius Tursa, eastern Europe expert at political risk consultancy Teneo. "The fact that Putin is turning into a pariah on the international stage makes him even more dangerous and unpredictable."

Under the order, Russia could begin dispersing intercontinental ballistic missiles from their bases and fitting them to long-range heavy bombers, threatening the US, or move tactical warheads from their centralised storage facilities to their deployment locations, threatening Ukraine, said James Acton, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment.

"Equipping bombers with warheads and then having those bombers in the air is clearly a more aggressive signal than keeping those bombers on the ground," Acton said.

While conventional clashes between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India in 2000-2001 alarmed the world and Israel began preparations to make nuclear weapons deployable during the 1973 Yom Kippur war, Putin's decision is the first time a recognised nuclear state has overtly moved to such a state of preparedness since the 1962 stand-off between Washington and Moscow over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Putin's order is a "preliminary command" rather than active preparations for a strike, said Pavel Podvig, a senior research scientist at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva.

"In peacetime, the system is there but the circuitry is disconnected. So you cannot physically transmit the signal even if you want to," Podvig said. "Even if you press the button, nothing would happen."

Podvig warned, however, that "there is a deficit of rational thinking in certain quarters" that added to the tensions. "People said invading Ukraine was crazy and irresponsible — this is an order of magnitude higher."

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#### **10. Russia's nuclear forces are on alert. Here's what it means.**

Washington Post, Feb. 28, Pg. A17 | Missy Ryan, Karoun Demirjian, John Hudson and Shane Harris

President Vladimir Putin's decision to put Russian nuclear forces on alert thrust the crisis over Ukraine into a more volatile phase on Sunday, fueling the potential for deadly miscalculation as the West's campaign of economic reprisal increases the chances the Russian leader could see his survival and that of the Russian state at risk.

U.S. officials were scrambling in the hours following Putin's order, issued as Russian troops face stiff resistance in the fourth day of their invasion of Ukraine, to decode what the enigmatic leader's decision meant in practice. Experts said it was the first time the Kremlin, which has the world's biggest nuclear stockpile, had made such an announcement since the Russian Federation was established in 1991.

Putin described the move as a response to what he called "aggressive statements" from the West and its escalating package of economic retaliation. The sanctions, including new steps unveiled Saturday that would cut off Russia's financial institutions from the global economy and cripple its central bank, have already sent the ruble tumbling to a record low, raising questions about how Russia's economy can hold on.

Biden administration officials condemned Putin's order as a warning over Ukraine, where Putin has depicted his invasion as a security imperative rather than a signal of his intent to employ a nuclear device. They noted that Russia, just last month, was one of the nations signed on to a declaration saying that atomic war could not be won and should never be fought.

"This is just an attempt, an escalatory attempt, to justify further action on their part," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told MSNBC. "We have the ability, of course, to defend ourselves, as does NATO. But I think we all need to be very clear-eyed and call this out for what it is."

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, President Biden's ambassador to the United Nations, said the decision illustrated Putin's desire to browbeat his opponents into submission. "Certainly, nothing is off the table with this guy," she said on CBS News' "Face the Nation." "He's willing to use whatever tools he can to intimidate Ukrainians and the world."

But Samuel Charap, a Russia expert at the Rand Corp., said the United States and its allies would have to tread carefully as they seek to increase the pain on Russia's economy without triggering a violent response from Putin or a round of unpredictable tit-for-tat escalation.

"Credibly communicating the limits of our intentions - even though the sanctions themselves are totally justified - is really difficult," he said. "It is plausible for them to interpret our sanctions as an attempt to fundamentally damage the Russia state and overthrow its government."

Pavel Podvig, an expert on Russia's nuclear forces at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, said Sunday's announcement would enable Russia's military command and control system to transmit a nuclear launch order and would make it less vulnerable to decapitation in the event that either Putin or his top military advisers were dead or incapacitated.

Russia has nearly 6,000 warheads, slightly more than the United States' approximately 5,400, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

The move follows Putin's warning, in a speech last week announcing his operation in Ukraine, that outside countries interfering in Ukraine would face consequences "such as you have never seen in your entire history," a remark many analysts saw as a nuclear hint.

Putin also personally oversaw nuclear exercises earlier this month as tensions mounted over Ukraine.

But instead of backing off, Ukraine's allies in the West have vowed to increase military support to the government in Kyiv. For the first time, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced on Sunday that the European Union will finance arms supplies to a country under attack, and the bloc will bar landing and flyovers by Russian aircraft.

NATO nations, including the United States, have said they will not send forces to fight in Ukraine but will attempt to help the government of Volodymyr Zelensky fend off Russia's attack, as it bars men of fighting age from the leaving the country and hands out weapons to lightly trained volunteers.

Perhaps even more than the military aid, the new economic measures, orchestrated in large part by the Biden administration, are likely to be seen as an unacceptable attack on Putin's regime, analysts said. The new measures to sever access to the SWIFT interbank messaging system and prohibit Russia's central bank from rescuing the domestic economy signal a new level of global unity against Putin's invasion and will dramatically increase the challenges the Russian leader faces at home.

Analysts predicted the new penalties could trigger bank runs and massive inflation in Russia, potentially sparking domestic unrest and representing the harshest such measures slapped on any country in modern times. They follow another signal decision last week when Germany announced it would not approve a major gas pipeline that would have given Russia needed foreign cash.

While Russia's own military doctrine lays out the potential use of nuclear weapons only in the event the existence of its state is at risk, some Russia experts believe its true trigger point may fall beneath that threshold.

"Here we have to ask to what extent Putin feels that 'l'état, c'est moi,' " said Olga Oliker, Europe and Central Asia director at the International Crisis Group, using a French phrase that translates to "I myself am the nation." "I can't answer that question. I can say it worries me just about now."

A European diplomat, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe an internal analysis of the alert decision, said that Western nations' apprehension about what they assessed to be Putin's isolation, his decision-making and his access to realistic information "makes it more concerning than it would otherwise be."

Some U.S. officials believe the move's timing, just as Moscow and Kyiv agree to talks on the Belarusian border, is aimed at extracting maximum concessions from Ukraine, such as the resignation of its president and cabinet of advisers, deactivating the country's military, and a declaration of permanent neutrality, said a senior State Department official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity citing the situation's ongoing sensitivity.

Another diplomat said Putin is not serious about the negotiations with Ukraine, and the nuclear alert combined with its alleged firing of Iskander missiles into Ukraine from Belarus - are a sign to the West to stay out of the conflict.

A senior defense official, speaking to reporters on Sunday morning, said the decision was unnecessary and escalatory.

"Unnecessary because Russia's never been under threat by the West or by NATO and certainly wasn't under any threat by Ukraine," the official said. "And escalatory because it's clearly potentially putting at play forces that, if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous."

While experts said they did not expect Putin to attempt any sort of nuclear strike on the West or a smaller-scale nuclear attack within Ukraine - where conventional Russian forces already have a major advantage - they said the fact the alert was occurring at a time when a major conflict is unfolding on NATO's borders made it much more dangerous. With tensions already at their highest level in decades, an encounter between Russian and NATO planes over the Baltic Sea, for example, becomes much more perilous.

Officials have said they will not disclose any changes to America's own nuclear alert status.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said the Biden administration was right to refrain from making such an announcement.

"This is where it's important for President Biden and Putin immediately back away from nuclear saber-rattling and any discussion of nuclear weapons, which have absolutely no place at this moment," he said.

While Ben Hodges, the former commanding general of U.S. Army forces in Europe, said Putin's move was dangerous, he noted that the threat of using nuclear weapons "cost him nothing" while actually using them would "cost him everything."

"I hope/believe that many of his inner circle will work to prevent this," Hodges said. "I am looking for signs of dissension within the Kremlin as protests in Moscow grow stronger."

*--Paul Sonne, Dan Lamothe, Ashley Parker and Tyler Pager contributed to this report*

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Agence France-Presse: [Key questions after Putin's nuclear announcement](#)

Vox.com: [How to think about the risk of nuclear war, according to 3 experts](#)

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**11. What Just Happened With Putin's Nuclear Forces? Here's What Experts Say  
Whatever it is, U.S. officials are calling it escalatory—but not "high alert"**

Even expert Russia-watchers aren't sure what changed when Vladimir Putin ordered the country's "deterrence forces" to be put on a "special regime of combat duty" on Sunday.

A U.S. defense official who spoke to reporters on Sunday called the move "escalatory" but declined to offer more details. Many news organizations interpreted the order as placing Russia's nuclear weapons units on a higher state of alert.

Several experts said that Putin's order might have been most directly about nuclear command-and-control.

"We've never heard announcements like that before," said Pavel Podvig, a senior researcher with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, or UNIDIR. "I don't have absolute certainty what it means. My best guess is that he was referring to the way the command-and-control systems operate."

"The way I believe it works, and the way it's supposed to work, is that normally, under the day-to-day status, the system is not capable of transmitting orders" to launch nuclear weapons, Podvig said in an interview with Defense One. "But you can bring it into the status where it is capable."

A command-and-control shift is one possibility, said James Acton, who co-directs the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In an interview, he said he believes the increased alert is for a select group of people and units, and possibly not even for all of Russia's nuclear forces.

Acton noted that there are many other steps required for nuclear use that may or may not be announced. He laid out some of them in an earlier Twitter thread, including warheads for non-strategic systems being moved out of centralized storage and mobile ICBMs being dispersed. And he said U.S. intelligence officials are probably monitoring Russia's nuclear forces for visible changes.

While the likelihood of use of nuclear weapons is still fairly small, it is now higher than a few weeks ago, Acton said.

"So this is unusual. This hasn't happened for a long time. And that's concerning," he said.

The last time nuclear alert levels were raised by the United States or Russia or the Soviet Union was 48 years ago, when the U.S. raised its level during the Yom Kippur War.

Adding to the uncertainty, it's unclear what Western reaction Putin hoped to provoke with the announcement, Acton said. Putin said Sunday that he was reacting to sanctions imposed on Russia and "aggressive statements" made by Western governments.

"I don't know that he knows exactly what he wants us to do in his own mind. And that's kind of concerning for me," Acton said. "I do think we have to try and find a face-saving way for Putin to extricate himself from this crisis."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was in a scheduled meeting with Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, head of U.S. European Command Gen. Tod Wolters and others when they heard Putin's announcement of the heightened nuclear forces posture, a senior defense official told reporters on Sunday.

The official would not say whether the United States had made any changes to its own posture in response, and called Putin's actions "escalatory."

"It's clearly potentially putting into play forces that could, that if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous," the official said.

Asked about any change to U.S. posture, the official said, "I would just tell you that we remain confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our allies and our partners, and that includes in the strategic deterrent realm, and that is as far as I'm going to go on that question."

Podvig said the main danger is of an escalatory spiral, and he said other countries should refrain from nuclear signaling of their own.

"In my view, the response to that should be a forceful and clear message from everyone, not just the U.S. or nuclear power states, that this is not acceptable, waving your nuclear forces like that, it should not be done, under any circumstances," he said.

That was the kind of message sent on Sunday morning by Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who called the alert a "totally unacceptable" escalation of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

In contrast, Podvig called a Thursday statement by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian—"I think that Vladimir Putin must also understand that the Atlantic alliance is a nuclear alliance"—"exactly the wrong kind of message."

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## **12. Putin's nuclear posturing requires west to tread extremely carefully**

The Guardian Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Julian Borger

WASHINGTON -- Successive generations have experienced what it is like to feel the shadow of nuclear annihilation loom over their daily lives, from the Cuban crisis of 1962, to the missile standoff in Europe in the 1980s. This is shaping up to be our turn.

"I'll be honest – I'm nervous," Pavel Podvig, one of the world's leading experts on Russian nuclear forces, said after Vladimir Putin declared a "special mode of combat duty of the deterrence forces".

It is first time it has been done at least since the end of the cold war, and probably longer, according to Podvig, an analyst based in Geneva, where he runs a research project on Russian nuclear forces. "Things have not been rational in the Kremlin recently, and so it's not a good sign," he said.

Among Russia watchers and nuclear weapons experts, there is no dispute that Putin's penchant for brandishing Russia's arsenal reflects weakness and insecurity. And that is not a good trait in the leader of a nuclear superpower.

The country's economy is hollowed out, smaller in dollar terms than South Korea's and dependent on the vagaries of the oil and gas market. His regime relies increasingly on repression, and its armed forces are proving far from invincible in Ukraine. Russia's 6,000-warhead arsenal is the only thing that makes it a superpower.

Putin's nuclear signalling is designed to deter the US and its allies from further intervention in Ukraine and economic measures that he may see as an existential threat. But escalation can also take on a momentum of its own, and because the margins are so thin – leaders have only a few minutes to make decisions if they believe their countries are under attack – the US and its allies will have to tread extremely carefully in their response.

It is not immediately clear what the practical implications of Putin's announcement will be. It could mean that bombs are loaded on to bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles on mobile launchers are dispersed, or more nuclear-armed submarines put out to sea. Or it could be more of an administrative process.

"As I understand the way the system works, in peacetime it cannot physically transmit a launch order, as if the circuits were 'disconnected'," Podvig said. Putin's order could involve "connecting the wires, so a launch order can go through if issued".

The challenge for the Nato allies now is maintaining the support Ukraine needs for its survival while making clear Putin has a way out of the crisis, rather than climbing up the escalation ladder to the point where it takes on a logic of its own.

The threat of a no-fly zone over parts of Ukraine implies Nato is willing to shoot down Russian planes, and would represent a dramatic escalation, while hints at regime change in Moscow are likely to deepen Putin's paranoia.

Laura Kennedy, an expert on disarmament and a former US deputy assistant secretary of state, said there was "no need or sense in mirroring Putin's reckless nuclear threats, which should be universally condemned".

"I think it's in everyone's interests for the west to spell out that the most punishing sanctions ... will be lifted when the status quo ante is restored," said James Acton, co-director of the nuclear policy programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

But he added that off-ramps only work as long as Putin can see them and wants to take them. That is in question if the Russian leader has come to see the subjugation of Ukraine as essential to his political survival at home.

"It's difficult for the west to create a de-escalation pathway," Acton said. "Much presumably depends on how Putin views the domestic consequences of his backing down – something over which the west has no control."

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### **13. Biden Halts Russian Arms Control Talks Amid Ukraine Invasion**

#### ***Officials said the talks had become an arena for Russia to complain about NATO***

ForeignPolicy.com (Exclusive), Feb. 25 | Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer

The Biden administration has cut off arms control talks with Russia, sources familiar with the decision told Foreign Policy. The move came after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine's breakaway regions but before he launched the full-scale invasion of the country.

The decision, while perhaps unsurprising given Russia's dramatic escalation in the conflict, interrupts a major Biden administration foreign-policy priority to revive arms control talks with Washington's former Cold War rival.

Shortly after U.S. President Joe Biden took office, he launched a "strategic stability dialogue" with Russia, with the aim of finalizing a new strategic arms control deal and pursuing possibilities for new negotiations on cyberattacks and cutting-edge nuclear weapons technology.

That dialogue has now been completely halted, officials and sources familiar with the matter confirmed, as Putin continues his all-out military assault on Ukraine and has threatened any country thinking of intervening with "consequences like you've never seen." The U.S. State Department is still clarifying diplomatic guidance for U.S. interactions with Russia moving forward.

The halt in arms talks could have outsized significance after Putin made veiled threats about Russia's nuclear weapons arsenal in the runup to Russia's invasion of Ukraine—though Western officials caution that any chance of a nuclear escalation over the Russian invasion remains highly remote.

"Today's Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states," Putin said in a televised address before the invasion early Thursday morning. "There should be no doubt for anyone that any potential aggressor will face defeat and ominous consequences should it directly attack our country."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded to Putin's veiled threat in a CBS News interview that evening. "I can't begin to get into his head and to say exactly what he means by that," Blinken said. "But again, we've been prepared for whatever course that he chooses to take."

The decision to halt strategic stability talks follows past U.S. precedent. After Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and launched an invasion into Ukraine's Donbass region in 2014, the Obama administration suspended most arms control dialogues with Russia, though it continued working with Russian diplomats on the Iran nuclear deal, the so-called New START deal, and efforts to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons.

In 2019, under then-U.S. President Donald Trump, the United States formally withdrew from a Cold War-era treaty with Russia to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) that could strike between a range of around 310 to 3,400 miles, accusing Russia of having violated the treaty by testing and deploying missile systems that the treaty banned. All NATO allies backed Trump's decision and blamed Russia's violations for the INF treaty's demise. But some arms control experts still criticized the move at the time, voicing fears that Trump was dismantling an important arms control regime before exhausting all avenues to salvage the treaty.

After entering office, Biden vowed to reverse Trump-era arms control policies and revive arms talks on a variety of weapons systems with Moscow.

Just days after being inaugurated, Biden reauthorized the New START Treaty, which limits the number of strategic nuclear missiles that both sides can possess, such as deployed ballistic missiles and strategic bombers, warheads, and missile tubes. That agreement covers both countries' arsenals until 2026 but does not include Russia's novel nuclear weapons systems first unveiled by Putin in 2018, such as nuclear-powered cruise missiles, ballistic missiles launched from the air, and underwater vehicles—all of which boast ranges beyond the New START limits.

The U.S.-Russia dialogue had initially started off on promising footing, and both Biden and Putin agreed to continue talks after they met in person in Geneva in June 2021, despite rising tensions between their two countries.

But in recent weeks, as Russian forces amassed for an attack on Ukraine and the Biden administration publicized U.S. intelligence on Kremlin plans to create a pretext for invasion, officials familiar with the matter said the dialogue became mostly an arena for Russia to air its grievances about NATO military buildups in Europe and other topics of Kremlin displeasure.

One senior U.S. congressional aide, who spoke to Foreign Policy on condition of anonymity to speak about sensitive policy deliberations, said the decision to kill the talks was a good move because it denies Putin a forum through which to gain additional leverage.

"The Russians want these things. They like these things. They want to be seen as world players sitting down with the U.S. face to face," the aide said of the arms control talks. "They also see it as a way to get further concessions and things that will benefit them." Russia has also repeatedly complained about U.S. missile defenses in Europe, such as sites for Aegis Ashore batteries in Romania that will soon be active in Poland, fearing they could be converted to launch offensive weapons at Russia.

In a statement, a U.S. State Department spokesperson said the administration had no plans to convene another strategic stability dialogue with Russia at this point. Other officials and sources familiar with the matter said the Biden administration made the decision to halt the dialogue even before Russia's full-fledged invasion. The officials and aides do not foresee any context in which talks could restart if troops remain in Ukraine.

"As long as Russia is illegally occupying parts of Ukraine, the security dialogues should come to a full and complete halt," the senior congressional aide said.

In the week leading up to the invasion, Russia conducted military exercises of its nuclear forces in neighboring Belarus, including by test-firing its latest hypersonic and cruise missiles. Belarus's embattled president, Aleksandr Lukashenko, a close Putin ally on the Ukrainian border, has also offered to host Russian tactical nuclear weapons in his country.

U.S. officials aren't yet concerned about nuclear escalation, however. On Thursday, a senior U.S. defense official said the Defense Department has seen no signs that Russia has put its nuclear forces on alert after the invasion. But some nonproliferation experts said the freeze out can't continue forever.

"Although Putin's regime must suffer international isolation now, U.S. and Russian leaders must eventually seek to resume talks through their stalled strategic security dialogue to defuse broader NATO-Russia tensions and maintain common sense arms control measures to prevent an all-out arms race," Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, wrote in a recent editorial.

But other Western officials appeared more eager to send a clear message to Putin to avoid a spillover of the conflict. "I think that Vladimir Putin must also understand that the Atlantic alliance is a nuclear alliance," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Thursday.

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Wall Street Journal: [U.S. Halts Arms-Controls Talks With Russia](#)

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#### **14. Ukraine demands 'immediate ceasefire', Russian withdrawal**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed

Ukraine demanded an immediate Russian ceasefire and troop withdrawal on Monday as its delegation arrived in Belarus for talks with Russian negotiators on the fifth day of the Kremlin's offensive.

Ukraine's delegation is set to meet Russian representatives for the first talks since Moscow's invasion, as the fighting for several Ukrainian cities continues and the Russian ruble collapses.

The meeting will take place just across the border in neighbouring Belarus, a key Kremlin ally that has allowed Russian troops passage to attack Ukraine.

"The Ukrainian delegation arrived at the Ukrainian-Belarusian border to take part in talks with representatives of the Russian Federation," the Ukrainian presidency said in a statement.

"The key issue of the talks is an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops from Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a separate statement urged Russian troops to abandon their equipment and leave the battlefield in order to save their lives, claiming that more than 4,500 Russian soldiers had already lost their lives.

He also urged the European Union to give Ukraine "immediate" membership, via a special procedure.

Russian state media posted video of Ukrainian delegates arriving by helicopter.

Russian delegate Leonid Slutsky, the head of the Russian parliament's international affairs committee, wrote on the Telegram messenger service: "We will start soon".

The talks come as Ukraine's forces fiercely resist the Russian offensive, a day after President Vladimir Putin ordered his defence chiefs to put the country's nuclear forces on high alert.

The Ukrainian delegation includes defence minister Oleksiy Reznikov as well as deputy foreign minister Mykola Tochytskyi.

The talks come after a phone call between Zelensky and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Zelensky has said he is sceptical about the possibility of a breakthrough.

"As always: I do not really believe in the outcome of this meeting, but let them try," he said.

Kyiv was initially reluctant to send a delegation to Belarus, given the country's role as facilitator in Russia's attack on Ukraine.

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### **15. As War Rages, Ukraine Agrees to Talks With Russians 'Without Preconditions'**

New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Valerie Hopkins, Anton Troianovski and Steven Erlanger

KYIV, Ukraine -- As Russian forces bore down on Ukraine's capital and officials put the toll of civilian dead at more than 350 since the invasion began, the two countries agreed Sunday to sit down for talks "without preconditions," but hopes were not high for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Even as Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, agreed to send a delegation to meet with Russian officials near the border with Belarus, he said that he expected little to come of it. He declined to agree to any conditions or concessions before the talks, making it clear that he would not grant Russia the upper hand after its unprovoked attacks.

"I do not really believe in the outcome of this meeting," he said, "but let them try to make sure that no citizen of Ukraine has any doubt that I, as a president, have not tried to stop the war."

As world leaders moved to isolate Moscow and inflict heavy economic pain over the invasion, Russia showed little apparent interest in de-escalating.

President Vladimir V. Putin, denouncing the West's "aggressive" actions, said he had told his defense minister and his top military commander to place Russia's nuclear forces on alert. Not only are Western countries imposing "illegitimate sanctions" against Russia, Mr. Putin said, "but senior officials of leading NATO countries are allowing themselves to make aggressive statements directed at our country."

In Ukraine, Russian forces were on the move in the south, threatening a major port, and in the north, where they were continuing their drive toward Kyiv.

But Ukrainian officials took some obvious satisfaction in Russia's call for talks, which came as its forces met far more resistance than expected, failing to quickly seize the capital, Kyiv.

"The enemy expected an easy walk, but got real hell," said Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. Russia's leadership, he said, "does not understand that it is at war not only with the armed forces of Ukraine, but with the entire Ukrainian people."

But international military experts cautioned that the war is young.

They noted that Ukrainian forces are spread thin, with only limited ammunition, and that thousands of better-trained Russian soldiers have not yet been thrown into the fight. The worry is that Mr. Putin may move to harsher tactics, including the shelling of cities, if his forces get bogged down.

The Ukraine Interior Ministry said Sunday that 352 civilians have been killed since the invasion began, including 14 children.

The request for talks also came as the European Union moved to impose tough new economic sanctions on Russia, and as demonstrations in Berlin, Prague, London, Madrid and Brussels over the weekend on behalf of Ukrainians made Moscow's isolation clear.

The White House, through Jen Psaki, the press secretary, cast the nuclear alert as another example of Mr. Putin's manufacturing threat and using it to justify confrontation.

Top Pentagon leaders remain confident about the United States' ability to defend itself and its allies, according to a Pentagon official who briefed reporters. The official called the move to put Russia's nuclear forces on alert unnecessary and escalatory, and said that Mr. Putin had made the possibility of a miscalculation much more dangerous.

Slowed by Ukrainian resistance and their own logistical shortcomings, Russian forces have already begun adopting harsher methods such as rocket attacks in the city of Chernihiv, to the northeast of Kyiv, the Pentagon official said. Those tactics could produce many more civilian casualties.

Russian troops, he said, are adopting a siege mentality, which increases the likelihood of their taking civilian life and damaging infrastructure.

In Ukraine's south, the official said, Russian troops are advancing, moving up from Crimea and also mounting an amphibious assault near Mariupol, where they are within 50 kilometers of the city. Mariupol, a major port, is viewed as part of any Russian land bridge from Donetsk and Luhansk -- the eastern Ukrainian regions Moscow just recognized as independent states -- to Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014.

Russian forces were also on the move from the north, where they were making a drive toward Kyiv.

In the center of Ukraine, Russia appears to be trying to cut off the main Ukrainian military forces, which have been defending the former line of contact with the Donetsk and Luhansk enclaves, to prevent them from moving toward the capital and getting supplies sent by Western allies overland through Poland.

Russian troops, at least for a time, also drew closer to the center of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, according to videos and photographs analyzed by The New York Times. The footage showed Ukrainians firing rockets toward Russian troops, as well as some Russian military vehicles burning and others being ransacked by Ukrainian forces.

With each passing day of war, Mr. Zelensky, a former comic, has embraced his new role: as a symbol of bravery and patriotism who has united his citizens against an invader.

Once derided because of his entertainment past as the unlikeliest of presidents, Mr. Zelensky has transformed into the leader Ukraine did not know it needed. Dressed in an army-green T-shirt or fleece, unshaven and wan, he has inspired Ukrainians to defend their streets with the most rudimentary of weapons. He has also won over much of Europe, which has been moved to aid a country it sees as fighting bravely for independence, freedom and democracy.

Mr. Zelensky's decision to remain in Kyiv -- and his family's decision to remain in Ukraine -- has moved many. Some have drawn an unflattering contrast with the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, who fled Kabul as soon as the Taliban were on the outskirts, demoralizing what was left of the Afghan Army.

And Mr. Zelensky's response to a reported American offer to evacuate him -- "I need ammunition, not a ride" -- will most likely go down in Ukrainian history, whatever the outcome of the battle.

The Ukrainian president and his team have made deft use of social media. His impassioned speeches from the streets of Kyiv have gone viral. And they have also posted photos and short videos of Ukrainians filling Molotov cocktails, volunteering to fight, being issued automatic weapons and vowing to defend their country.

Mr. Zelensky has also inspired European leaders to do more to help his country. His leadership and the resilience of the Ukrainian people "are an inspiration to us all," said Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission.

Appearing onscreen during an emergency summit meeting of European Union leaders several days ago, he gave a passionate 10-minute speech that moved some reluctant leaders to endorse a harsher package of economic sanctions on Russia, said a senior European official who was in the room.

"This may be the last time you see me alive," Mr. Zelensky told them.

The silence in the room after Mr. Zelensky spoke was impressive, the official said, and it was his impression the speech made a major difference in convincing more reluctant countries, like Germany, Italy and Hungary, to agree to tougher financial and banking sanctions and to deliver defensive weapons to Ukraine.

The new government of Germany also made what some consider a historic shift toward taking more responsibility for European security. Hampered by its own totalitarian history, Germany has been a reluctant hard-power player since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But on Sunday, in a strong speech before the German Parliament, Chancellor Olaf Scholz turned the page.

Germany will send defensive weapons to Ukraine; support tougher economic sanctions, including the exclusion of major Russian banks from the SWIFT payments system; and raise military spending to more than 2 percent of its gross domestic product for the foreseeable future -- long a NATO goal that Germany had resisted. Mr. Scholz also proposed a 100 billion euro fund to strengthen the German army.

Mr. Scholz, German officials say, believes that Mr. Putin lied to him personally in their direct talks in Moscow about the Ukraine crisis and that the Russian invasion created serious new threats to German and European security that cannot be ignored.

In an emergency virtual meeting of European Union foreign ministers on Sunday, the bloc agreed to further tough economic sanctions on Russia and to ban Russian aircraft from E.U. bloc's airspace. They also agreed for the first time to use E.U. funding to reimburse member countries for the purchase and shipment of military equipment to a country under attack.

Ms. von der Leyen, the commission president, called it "a watershed moment."

Weapons and equipment of all kinds are being sent overland through Poland into western Ukraine, which is still out of Russia's reach. Some experts think Russian efforts to disrupt such convoys will increase once the shipments are inside Ukraine.

Ms. von der Leyen also said that the European Union would move to ban the state-owned news outlets Russia Today and Sputnik, so they "will no longer be able to spread their lies to justify Putin's war and to sow division."

Europe will continue to welcome refugees, she said. As many as seven million Ukrainians are internally displaced by the conflict, European officials said.

In Kyiv, Nataly Kasianenko, 31, has been sheltering for days with her husband and a dachshund in a parking garage in the northern Obolon neighborhood, six miles from the city center, which was the scene of intense fighting on Friday and Saturday. "I actually lost track of days and nights and nights," she said. "We even forgot to eat because of this tension."

Despite the fear, she said, they are staying.

"It's in our blood, it's Ukrainian blood," she said. "We can't just leave, we cannot just surrender -- we will always stay on our land."

*--Valerie Hopkins reported from Kyiv, Anton Troianovski from Moscow and Steven Erlanger from Brussels. Andrew E. Kramer, Michael Schwartz, Marc Santora, Helene Cooper, Aishvarya Kavi, Matina Stevis-Gridneff, Monika Pronczuk, Melissa Eddy contributed reporting*

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Wall Street Journal: [Ukrainian Forces Hold Kyiv as Talks With Russia Are Planned](#)

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## **16. Russian forces appear to shift to siege warfare in Ukraine – U.S. official**

Reuters, Feb. 27 | Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart

WASHINGTON -- Russia, frustrated by early battlefield setbacks in Ukraine, could be shifting its strategy to siege warfare just as President Vladimir Putin raises the risk of a catastrophic miscalculation by putting nuclear forces on heightened alert, a senior U.S. defense official said on Sunday.

Putin gave the order to his nuclear forces as Washington assesses that Russian troops have made limited progress in their four-day-old invasion due to stiff Ukrainian resistance and planning failures that have left some units without fuel or other supplies, U.S. officials said.

As missiles rained down on Ukrainian cities, hundreds of thousands of civilians, mainly women and children, were fleeing the Russian assault into neighboring countries.

The United States assesses that Russia has fired more than 350 missiles at Ukrainian targets so far, some hitting civilian infrastructure, the senior U.S. defense official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Still, it had so far mainly focused on military targets.

Citing a Russian offensive on the Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, north of Kyiv, the official cited early indications that Russia might be adopting siege tactics.

"It appears that they are adopting a siege mentality, which any student of military tactics and strategy will tell you, when you adopt siege tactics, it increases the likelihood of collateral damage," the official said.

So far, the Russian offensive cannot claim any major victories. Russian has not taken any Ukrainian city, does not control Ukraine's airspace, and its troops remained roughly 30 km (19 miles) from Kyiv's city center for a second day, the official said.

Siege tactics typically involve encircling enemy positions, cutting off supply and escape routes, then attacking with a combined force of armor, ground troops and engineers.

The senior U.S. defense official said it remained to be seen what Russian forces would do next, but the early signs were worrying.

"The indications are enough in terms of how they're positioning their forces around the city (of Chernihiv), how they're beginning this barrage using rockets, that gives us concern," the official said.

"In order for a siege ... to be successful, you basically, by design, are going to be targeting civilian infrastructure and causing civilian harm."

Images on social media showed some Russian military vehicles in Ukraine, including battle tanks, that had apparently been abandoned after running out of fuel, raising questions about logistical failures.

"They simply don't have a lot of experience moving on another nation state at this level of complexity and size," the official said.

The official said it was unclear whether it was a failure in planning or execution, but added that Russian forces were likely to adapt and overcome the challenges.

Russia has still not moved into Ukraine about a third of the troops that Putin had arrayed around its borders, the official said. But it has rapidly increased the number of forces Moscow has sent into Ukraine in recent days.

## NUCLEAR RISK

The Pentagon learned of the heightened Russian alert for its nuclear forces from Putin's televised announcement, the senior U.S. defense official said, instead of from American intelligence sources.

Just after Putin spoke, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the top U.S. commander for Europe, General Tod Wolters, held a pre-scheduled meeting at 8:30 a.m. (1330 GMT) at which they discussed the Russian president's decision.

Although Washington was still gathering information, Putin's move was troubling, the official said.

"It's clearly, essentially, putting in play forces that, if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous," the official said.

Asked whether the United States would continue to provide military assistance to Ukraine following Putin's announcement, the official said: "That support is going to go forward."

Mick Mulroy, a former senior Pentagon official and retired CIA paramilitary officer, said he believed Putin's decision to elevate the alert of his nuclear forces was a reaction to battlefield losses.

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## 17. Russia's Modernized Military Stumbles

### *Initial setbacks spur expectation that Putin's forces will step up their firepower*

Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A8 | Michael R. Gordon, Max Colchester and Daniel Michaels

The Russian military has faltered early in its invasion of Ukraine, as stiff resistance threatens to turn Moscow's hopes for a swift victory into a protracted and costly war, U.S. officials and allied military experts say.

The Kremlin's invasion represents the most formidable challenge for the Russian military since it was modernized under Gen. Valery Gerasimov, Russia's top military officer who was appointed to his post in 2012. Yet no Ukrainian cities have been taken by the Russian military. Some of the Ukrainian Air Force and air defenses are still intact.

Western officials and analysts say Russia's strategy had been based on the premise that an initial barrage of missile strikes and a thrust toward Ukraine's capital would bring about the quick collapse of President Volodymyr Zelensky's government. Mr. Zelensky, however, remains defiant while facing long odds.

Russia holds many military advantages over Ukraine. One third of Russia's combat power near Ukraine is still outside the country, the Pentagon says, and has yet to enter the fray. The next few days could prove pivotal, as Russian President Vladimir Putin ponders whether to take a more aggressive approach to bludgeon Mr. Zelensky's government into submission, potentially causing more civilian casualties.

Russia has an array of artillery, rockets and air power. Employing these weapons, however, would only further antagonize the population that Moscow is hoping to draw into its sphere of influence and make it harder for the Kremlin to control the country of 44 million.

Since the start of the conflict, Russia has fired more than 320 missiles. Its ground forces have advanced from Belarus to within 30 kilometers of Kyiv's center. Russian forces moved swiftly from bases in Crimea and carried out a rare amphibious landing from the Sea of Azov.

Now, the Pentagon says there are signs Russia is resorting to more firepower, including rockets, in its attempt to take Chernihiv, a city 150 kilometers northeast of Kyiv.

Mick Ryan, a retired Australian Army major general who has studied advanced warfare, says Russia's failure so far to achieve decisive gains and its potential depletion of precision-munition supplies "probably will force them to use older weapons that are less precise and more deadly."

"In the next 72 hours I expect greater lethality on the battlefield," he added.

Western analysts say there are few parallels between Russia's approach in Ukraine and how it would face off against a NATO force, where mass firepower would be used from the outset and the potential use of nuclear weapons could also be threatened.

The Russian military has improved considerably since its wars to subdue insurgents in Chechnya, which lasted until 2000, and intervention eight years later in Georgia, which secured two breakaway regions.

Russia's operations since then had been limited and sometimes were carried out in areas where there was a reservoir of support. In 2014, the Russians quietly infiltrated Crimea with special forces, naval infantry and intelligence operatives and secured the peninsula with nary a shot. That same year, Russia intervened in the Donbas region in southeast Ukraine and marshaled a proxy force of separatists.

Russia's 2015 intervention in Syria to buttress Syrian President Bashar al-Assad showcased its air power and long-range missile capability. In contrast to the invasion of Ukraine, however, the Syria operation didn't include the deployment of a large number of Russian ground forces or combat against an organized army.

James Hackett, senior fellow for defense and military analysis at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, noted Russia still retains advantages in personnel and equipment, though movement could now be more difficult than before since bridges have been destroyed and the Ukrainians have had time to better prepare defenses. The course of the conflict, analysts say, will turn on whether Ukraine can hold Kyiv and what kind of guerrilla battle the Ukrainians can maintain.

Jack Watling, an expert on land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute, a British defense think tank, says his analysis before Russia's invasion had been that Ukraine's conventional forces would hold out for 10 days before shifting to more unconventional resistance warfare.

Previous conflicts, Mr. Watling said, have shown that "the Russians always take more military losses than they should." But a question is how much public support Mr. Putin will have at home, as the war drags on and Russian soldiers die.

Moscow's hope, he said, had been to avoid this prospect by planning a "shock and awe" demonstration that involved rapid advances and the seizure of a few key objectives in the hope the Zelensky government would quickly surrender or flee.

"That failed," he said.

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## **18. Russia's missiles see mixed results in Ukraine war as world watches**

Reuters (Analysis), Feb. 28 | Josh Smith

Russia has employed hundreds of powerful and precise ballistic missiles in the first days of its Ukraine attack, but analysts and U.S. officials say many Ukrainian defences remain intact - effects that countries around the world are watching closely.

The use of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) is likely being watched closely as a real-world case study by China, North Korea, and other countries that have been developing increasingly advanced arsenals of such weapons in recent years. And Western governments who see Russia as an adversary are eager to gather data on the missiles' effects in combat.

Russia had fired more than 320 missiles as of Sunday morning, with the majority of them SRBMs, a U.S. official told reporters.

According to U.S. estimates, the initial hours of the Russian onslaught last week included more than 100 missiles launched from land and sea, mostly SRBMs but also cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles.

That would make it the most intense SRBM bombardment between two territorial contiguous states in a conflict, said Ankit Panda, a senior fellow at the U.S.-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"What we've seen in Ukraine corresponds to how many military establishments in many countries, including China and North Korea, may think of using precision ballistic missiles in future conflicts," he said.

### **ACCURATE MISSILES**

Russia most likely used its only SRBM in active service, the Iskander-M, said Timothy Wright, a research analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

First used in combat in 2008 in Georgia, the Iskander is designed to confound missile defences by flying on a low trajectory and manoeuvring in flight to strike targets as far out as 500km with an accuracy of 2-5 metres, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

"It is likely to be able to accurately target and destroy what it is being fired at," Wright said, adding that Russia appears to possess around 150 launchers, which can also fire cruise missiles.

There also appears to be evidence that Russia has used the OTR-21 Tochka SRBM, which was believed to have been retired, he said. "If these were in storage, Russia may have decided to put them to use, rather than scrap them."

What the missiles targeted and how much damage they caused remains unclear amid the confusion of the developing war, but analysts said there appear to have been some strikes on Ukrainian air bases.

Iskander missiles launched from Belarus had hit an airport in Zhytomyr in northern Ukraine on Sunday, an adviser to Ukraine's interior minister said.

"We see some damage at airports, and it looks fairly accurate," said Jeffrey Lewis, a missile researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS).

Some strikes by unknown weapons at air bases appeared relatively limited in scope, however, and in some instances potentially misplaced, such as hitting stored rather than operational aircraft, said Joseph Dempsey, a defence researcher at IISS.

Ukraine has the Cold War-era Russian-made S-300v anti-aircraft missile system, which also has anti-ballistic missile capabilities, Wright said. It is unclear whether any engaged the Russian missiles, and some S-300v vehicles appeared to have been destroyed by strikes, he added.

The U.S. official said on Sunday that there were indications that some Russian missiles experienced launch failures.

"It's not the majority," the official said. "But we do believe that some number of their launches have not been successful."

Russia has not demonstrated its full air and missile capabilities and will most likely increase its waves of strikes in the coming days to degrade Ukraine's surviving defences, including anti-aircraft units that have shot down several Russian aircraft, the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War said in a report.

"The Russian failure to comprehensively strike key Ukrainian assets is a surprising break from expected Russian operations and has likely enabled stiffer Ukrainian defence," the report said.

Some of Russia's hesitancy could be due to a lack of real-time reconnaissance and targeting data, but given the number of static targets, a more likely explanation is a desire to minimize casualties among Ukrainians, said Dmitry Stefanovich, a weapons researcher at Moscow's Institute of World Economy and Politics.

"While Iskander-M is a very capable and precise system, the probability of collateral damage, obviously, increases with the number and intensity of weapons used," he said. "If any takeaway is relevant for other SRBM-owning states, it is that those can be employed in limited manner and cautiously, an all-in salvo is not the only option."

## GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

As the heir to the former Soviet Union's substantial missile arsenal, Russia boasts the widest inventory of ballistic and cruise missiles in the world, according to CSIS.

But other countries are buying or developing their own new missiles, driven by security concerns and a desire to reduce reliance on other suppliers.

Before the decade is out, Asia in particular will be bristling with conventional missiles that fly farther and faster, hit harder, and are more sophisticated than ever before.

China is mass producing its DF-26 - a multipurpose weapon with a range of up to 4,000 kilometres - while the United States is developing new weapons aimed at countering Beijing in the Pacific.

Taiwan and Japan are also boosting their missile capabilities, as well as defence systems designed to counter missile threats.

South Korea's defence minister said on Monday the country would accelerate development of various "long-range, ultra-precision, and high-power ballistic missiles... and possess overwhelming striking capabilities against strategic targets" to counter North Korea's growing arsenal.

Although it hasn't tested its longest-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) since 2017, North Korea has rolled out a flurry of new SRBMs, including one that appears influenced by the Iskander's design.

Like the Iskander, North Korea's latest missiles - including "hypersonic" weapons tested in January - are designed to be faster and more manoeuvrable than older weapons, enabling them to potentially evade missile defences.

Analysts say that although such SRBMs can't reach the United States, they would likely be used in the first wave if a war broke out, striking nearby air defences, air bases, and other targets similar to the way Russia used its missiles in the ongoing invasion.

"North Korean and (Chinese) militaries are taking copious notes right now," said Markus Garlauskas, a former U.S. intelligence officer on North Korea.

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### **19. Ukraine says it downed missile launched by Russian bomber flying over Belarus**

Reuters, Feb. 27 | Pavel Polityuk

KYIV -- Ukrainian forces have downed a cruise missile that was launched by a Russian Tu-22 strategic bomber from the territory of Belarus, Valery Zaluzhny, the chief commander of the armed forces, said on Sunday.

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## **EUROPE**

### **20. B-52s Patrol Europe as U.S. Touts Ironclad Defense After Russia Nuclear Alert**

Newsweek Online, Feb. 25 | Naveed Jamali and Tom O'Connor

The Pentagon has emphasized its commitment to the defense of the 30-member NATO alliance as the U.S. sent B-52 strategic bombers to the bloc's eastern front and Russia raised its nuclear alert level.

Newsweek asked a senior Pentagon official how the U.S.-NATO nuclear deterrence doctrine is affected by rising tensions between Washington and Moscow over the latter's decision to conduct a "special military operation" that has seen Russian troops advance through Ukraine in an attempt to surround the capital Kyiv.

"The defense of our allies in Article 5 remains ironclad across the realm of military capabilities," the official said.

Article 5 outlines the principle of "collective defence" in NATO's founding treaty. It stipulates that "an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all Allies," according to the NATO website. It was invoked for the first time after the 9/11 attacks, and also "in response to the situation in Syria and the Russian attack on Ukraine," according to their website.

The announcement came the same day as Putin instructed his armed forces to "introduce a special combat service regime in the Russian army's defence forces," after he said that "top officials in NATO's leading countries have been said making aggressive statements against our country." He also condemned a growing list of sanctions and restrictions from the West targeting Russia, including those that blacklist Putin himself.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg criticized what he called "dangerous rhetoric" from the Russian leader and slammed the move as "irresponsible." White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki accused the Kremlin of "manufacturing threats that don't exist in order to justify further aggression."

The U.S. and its allies have dismissed Putin's pretext for attacking Ukraine, which the Russian leader has accused of threatening Russia's national security by seeking to join NATO and even seeking nuclear weapons of its own. As

tensions mounted earlier this month, with Washington warning of an impending invasion and Moscow denying such plans, the U.S. sent B-52s to the United Kingdom.

About a week later, Putin ordered an exercise of Russia's strategic deterrence forces, involving warplanes, warships, submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles that make up the country's nuclear triad.

Then, after Russia began its attack on Ukraine, the U.S. sent B-52s directly to NATO's eastern front, conducting operations over the Arctic and Baltic Sea, as well as over Poland.

The U.S., France and the United Kingdom are the only nuclear powers within NATO, but a number of allied nations operate dual-use aircraft capable of delivering U.S. weapons of mass destruction.

NATO issued a statement Wednesday, the same day that Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of hostilities against Ukraine, outlining the coalition's "nuclear deterrence posture," which the bloc said "relies on nuclear weapons forward-deployed by the United States in Europe, as well as on the capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned."

"A number of NATO member countries contribute a dual-capable aircraft (DCA) capability to the Alliance," the statement said. "These aircraft are central to NATO's nuclear deterrence mission and are available for nuclear roles at various levels of readiness. In their nuclear role, the aircraft are equipped to carry nuclear bombs in a conflict and personnel are trained accordingly."

So while the U.S. "maintains absolute control and custody of their nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe," other "Allies provide military support for the DCA mission with conventional forces and capabilities."

The arrangement has been at the core of Moscow's fears about NATO's eastward expansion and military activities near Russia's borders. The U.S. has previously conducted exercises involving B-52s near Russia's borders, including a 2019 drill with Norway that Moscow saw as training for a potential strike against Russia.

In declaring Russia's military operation against Ukraine, Putin added a stark warning against anyone outside forces that may seek to intervene.

"Whoever tries to interfere with us, and even more so to create threats for our country, for our people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will lead to such consequences that you have never experienced in your history," Putin warned at the time.

"We are ready for any development of events," he added. "All the necessary decisions in this regard have been made. I hope that I will be heard."

In another potentially high-stakes development on Sunday, Russian ally Belarus, from which Russian troops have penetrated Ukraine in a push for Kyiv, announced the successful passing of a referendum that would renounce the nation's non-nuclear status and potentially allow for the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on Belarussian territory.

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## **21. Offutt aircraft spotted over Europe amid Ukraine crisis**

***Crews keep eyes, ears on action; one jet sidelined; Air Force recon crews from Offutt keeping eyes and ears on Ukraine action***

Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 26, Pg. A1 | Steve Liewer

U.S. and NATO ground forces may be steering clear of Ukraine following Russia's invasion, but the alliance's military reconnaissance aircraft - including several from Offutt Air Force Base - have been venturing close enough to keep eyes and ears on the battle below.

At least five of the 55th Wing's C-135 variants have been spotted in European skies by air traffic control websites this week. Two have been operating from the Souda Bay naval base in Greece, and three are deployed to RAF Mildenhall, England - though one of those jets has apparently been sidelined after suffering an in-flight mechanical emergency Tuesday.

Collectively the Offutt jets flew 10 of the 86 surveillance missions known to have been flown over Europe by U.S., NATO, Swedish and Ukrainian aircraft between Sunday and Thursday, according to Amelia Smith, an online aircraft tracker who has been posting daily summaries on Twitter using her handle @ameliairheart.

Thursday, the first full day after Russia launched its widespread attack, saw 25 reconnaissance flights over the continent, the busiest day in the past three months. But the U.S. and NATO didn't fly manned aircraft over Ukraine and the nearby Black Sea, instead pulling back to listen from the skies of Poland and Romania, which border Ukraine on the west.

Instead, they left flights over the conflict zone to unmanned aircraft. Smith noted that two remotely piloted RQ-4 Global Hawks flew long-duration missions over Ukraine and the Black Sea. Flying twice as high as other planes, the Global Hawks can see and hear far into Russian territory.

Three of the 55th Wing planes spotted this week are RC-135V/W Rivet Joints. They can listen to radar and radio signals on the ground up to 300 miles away, allowing them to monitor the location and movements of Russian forces.

Rivet Joint crews include analysts and linguists who can make sense of intercepted voice communications. The three planes flew a total of five missions earlier this week over Ukraine and near Crimea, a territory occupied and annexed by Russia in 2014. One Rivet Joint flying Thursday stayed in Poland.

The 55th Wing has also deployed an RC-135U Combat Sent to Greece, and a WC-135W Constant Phoenix to England.

The Combat Sent's specialty is honing in on radar installations and pinpointing adversaries' air defense systems. Though it flew missions off of Crimea earlier this month, its two flights earlier this week were both in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea near Lebanon and Syria, with no apparent connection to the Ukraine crisis.

The Constant Phoenix crew uses sensitive on-board equipment to gather atmospheric samples and check them for radioactive particles. It has previously been deployed off the coast of North Korea after that country's nuclear tests. The same plane, tail number 61-2667, was used in 2011 to measure atmospheric radiation after the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan.

The Constant Phoenix arrived in England Jan. 30, according to air-traffic monitoring websites, and has flown four times since. Air Force officials have said its deployment is also unrelated to Ukraine, and none of its flights have been near Ukrainian territory.

The Air Force's only remaining nuke-sniffer, No. 61-2667 is known at Offutt as the oldest, crankiest and most trouble-prone plane in the fleet.

And it lived up to its reputation Tuesday, when its pilot declared an emergency shortly before landing at Mildenhall.

The aircraft, flying with the callsign JAKE21, had been airborne for 11 hours on a mission over the Baltic Sea when the pilot declared the emergency. He told controllers that the plane had experienced a failure of its hydraulic system,

which controls braking and flaps, according to a recording posted on social media by a Dutch airplane spotter using the Twitter handle @EHEH\_Spotter.

That's a common problem among aged aircraft like the WC-135W, which was delivered to the Air Force from a Boeing assembly line in April 1962.

Robert Hopkins III, a former RC-135 pilot and a current historian of Air Force reconnaissance flights, said the plane has two hydraulic systems plus a manual backup.

Still, he said, in some cases the lack of anti-skid protection can lead to blown tires, among other problems.

Fire, rescue and police vehicles met the plane when it landed at Mildenhall at 4:39 p.m. local time carrying a crew of eight.

"The crew followed all prescribed emergency and safety procedures," according to a statement from the 100th Air Refueling Wing at Mildenhall. "Everyone on board returned safely with no injuries."

The same plane was grounded for nearly two months last year in Australia, also after suffering a hydraulic failure. The WC-135W had the second-worst "mission-capable" rate of any aircraft type in the Air Force in 2021 at just over 48%, meaning it was mechanically capable of flying its assigned missions less than half the time.

No. 61-2667 is the only one of the 55th Wing's C-135 variants that hasn't received upgraded engines and flight systems since it was built. Only very experienced pilots are allowed to fly it.

The plane won't be around much longer. The Air Force ordered three RC-135R aerial tankers refitted for the radiation-monitoring mission, at a cost of \$218 million. The first is scheduled for delivery this summer. No. 61-2667 is slated to be retired to the Air Force's Arizona boneyard soon after.

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## **22. In Turnaround, Germany Vows Military Boost**

New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A1 | Melissa Eddy

BERLIN -- It took an invasion of a sovereign country nearby, threats of nuclear attack, images of civilians facing off against Russian tanks and a spate of shaming from allies for Germany to shake its decades-long faith in a military-averse foreign policy that was born of the crimes of the Third Reich.

But once Chancellor Olaf Scholz decided to act, the country's about-face was swift.

"Feb. 24, 2022, marks a historic turning point in the history of our continent," Mr. Scholz said in an address to a special session of Parliament on Sunday, citing the date when President Vladimir V. Putin ordered Russian forces to launch an unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

He announced that Germany would increase its military spending to more than 2 percent of the country's economic output, beginning immediately with a one-off 100 billion euros, or \$113 billion, to invest in the country's woefully underequipped armed forces. He added that Germany would speed up construction of two terminals for receiving liquefied natural gas, or LNG, part of efforts to ease the country's reliance on Russian energy.

"At the heart of the matter is the question of whether power can break the law," Mr. Scholz said. "Whether we allow Putin to turn back the hands of time to the days of the great powers of the 19th century. Or whether we find it within ourselves to set limits on a warmonger like Putin."

The events of the past week have shocked countries with typically pacifist miens, as well as those more closely aligned with Russia. Both have found the invasion impossible to watch quietly. Viktor Orban, the pro-Russia, anti-immigrant prime minister of Hungary, who denounced sanctions against Russia just weeks ago, reversed his position this weekend. And Japan, which was hesitant to impose sanctions on Russia in 2014, strongly condemned last week's invasion.

In Germany, the chancellor's speech capped a week that saw the country abandon more than 30 years of trying to balance its Western alliances with strong economic ties to Russia. Starting with the decision on Tuesday to scrap an \$11 billion natural gas pipeline, the German government's steps since, driven by the horror of Mr. Putin's attack on the citizens of a democratic, sovereign European country, mark a fundamental shift in not only the country's foreign and defense policies, but its relationship with Russia.

"He just repositioned Germany strategically," Daniela Schwarzzer, executive director for Europe and Eurasia at the Open Society Foundations, said about Mr. Scholz's address.

Germany, and especially the center-left Social Democratic Party of Mr. Scholz, has long favored an inclusive approach toward Russia, arguing about the danger of shutting Moscow out of Europe. But the images of Ukrainians fleeing the invasion dragged up older Germans' memories of fleeing from the advancing Red Army during World War II, and triggered outrage among a younger generation weaned on the promise of a peaceful, unified Europe.

On Sunday, several hundred thousand Germans marched through the heart of Berlin in a demonstration of support for Ukraine, waving signs that read "Stop Putin" and "No War."

Appealing to Germans' commitment to European unity and the deep cultural and economic ties that reach back centuries, Mr. Scholz placed the blame for Russia's aggression squarely on Mr. Putin, not the Russian people. But he left no doubt that Germany would no longer sit back and rely on other countries to provide its natural gas, or its military security.

"The narrative that Scholz employed today is there to last," Ms. Schwarzzer said. "He spoke about responsibility to Europe, what it takes to provide for democracy, freedom and security. He left no doubt that this has to happen."

The country's firm repudiation of its horrific Nazi past meant that it had long adopted a foreign policy of diplomacy and deterrence. But since the Russian invasion, many of Germany's allies have accused it of not doing enough to fortify itself and Europe.

Germany pledged in 2014 that it would increase its military spending to 2 percent of its overall economic output -- the goal set for NATO member states -- within a decade, but projections had shown the government was not on track to meet that target, even as that deadline approached. The topic had long been a source of conflict between Berlin and Washington, which spends more than 3 percent of its G.D.P. on defense. The debate escalated under former President Donald J. Trump, who would regularly berate the German government for failing to carry its weight in the alliance.

In his speech, Mr. Scholz proposed that the military spending be anchored into the country's constitution. That would ensure, he said, that the country would not again find itself with a military force of soldiers equipped with rifles that misfire, planes that can't fly and ships that can't sail. And he made clear that the doubling down on defense was for Germany's own good.

"We are doing this for us as well, for our own security," he said.

On Saturday, the German government dropped its resistance to two other measures the country's allies in Europe and the United States were seeking: cutting off key Russian banks from the money transfer network known as SWIFT and sending weapons to Ukraine.

That came after an admonishment from Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland, who traveled to Berlin to personally "shake Germany's conscience" on how to respond to Russia's attack on Ukraine. "Today there is no time for selfishness," Mr. Morawiecki said, in announcing his visit on Twitter.

Germany has had a policy of refusing to send weapons into conflict zones, although it has a steady business selling them to countries in the Middle East. But after the meeting with Mr. Morawiecki -- who was joined by President Gitanas Nausėda of Lithuania -- the government announced it would send 1,000 shoulder-launched anti-tank rockets and 500 surface-to-air Stinger missiles to Ukraine.

It also lifted its objections to allowing German-made weapons that were held by the Dutch and Estonian governments to be sent to Ukraine, enabling transfers that it had blocked for months.

Just weeks ago, the German government was pilloried for what critics called its tepid response to Russia's troop buildup, after it announced that it would send Ukraine 5,000 helmets and a field hospital to help the country defend itself.

"In a matter of a week, political taboos about military spending to relations with Russia have fallen to the wayside," said Sudha David-Wilp, a trans-Atlantic fellow with the German Marshall Fund in Berlin. "Germany is putting money where its mouth is to strengthen defense capabilities, and is braced to isolate Russia even at a cost to its own economy."

Last week, Mr. Scholz also caved to pressure from abroad to abandon a disputed natural gas pipeline that would link Russia directly to Germany, Nord Stream 2, as his economy minister declared the country would pivot away from its dependence on Russia, which currently supplies more than half of its natural gas needs.

Going forward, Germany will ensure that there are strategic reserves of coal and natural gas, Mr. Scholz said, similar to those the country holds for oil. In the long run, Germany would like to radically transform its energy sector to lessen its dependence on fossil fuels, but the process will take time and in the short term, Germans will feel the pinch in rising prices for energy and other goods.

The Ukrainian ambassador in Berlin, whose demands for German weapons for months had seemingly fallen on deaf ears, listened to Mr. Scholz's speech on Sunday from the visitors' balcony and was given a minute-long standing ovation by lawmakers of all parties, even the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

Its lawmakers, who regularly use their positions to grandstand and loudly oppose speeches coming from the government instead applauded some elements of Mr. Scholz's remarks, which the largest opposition party, the Christian Democrats, agreed to support.

"The mainstream political parties in Germany realize this is a 1939 moment and seem ready to support this new government in meeting the challenge at hand," Ms. David-Wilp said.

*--Christopher F. Schuetze contributed reporting*

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## **CHINA**

### **23. China calls for de-escalation as Ukraine talks begin**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 28 | Not Attributed

Beijing on Monday called for de-escalation and "restraint" over the Ukraine crisis as Russia and Ukraine prepared to meet for their first talks since Moscow's invasion of its western neighbour.

Russia invaded on Thursday and quickly announced it had neutralised key Ukrainian military facilities, with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday ordering his country's nuclear forces onto high alert.

Representatives from Moscow and Kyiv are set to meet on the border with Belarus on Monday, after Western allies hit Russia with a slew of sanctions and pledged arms for Ukraine.

China has trod a cautious diplomatic tightrope on the crisis as it tries to balance its core foreign policy line -- that a country's sovereignty is sacrosanct and others should not interfere -- with its support for close ally Moscow.

Instead it has called for Russia's "reasonable" security demands to be heard, repeatedly refusing to condemn Putin's actions or use the term "invasion".

Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday urged both sides to "remain calm and exercise restraint to prevent further escalation of the situation."

"China pays close attention to changes in the Ukraine situation and supports all efforts to de-escalate the situation and resolve it politically," Wang said at a regular press briefing.

Among a range of sanctions imposed on Moscow over its aggression towards Ukraine, the West has said it would remove some Russian banks from the SWIFT bank messaging system and freeze central bank assets.

China does not support the use of sanctions, Wang added, saying Beijing is "even more opposed to unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law."

Sanctions against Russia could "interfere with the process of political settlement," and China will continue normal trade relations with Moscow, he said.

Beijing voted to abstain from a Friday UN Security Council resolution condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, which was vetoed by Russia.

China's President Xi Jinping told Putin in a call last week that he hoped the crisis could be resolved with a "balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism through negotiations."

But as Beijing tries to stick to a neutral position, Chinese nationals in Ukraine have claimed to face rising hostility as public perceptions of the Asian country sour given China's position on the invasion.

The Chinese embassy in Kyiv on Sunday warned citizens not to "provoke" locals and to refrain from revealing their nationality, just days after telling those leaving Kyiv to display a Chinese flag on their vehicles.

The embassy had announced Thursday that it would prepare charter flights to evacuate its citizens -- but later said it was still too unsafe to do so.

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#### **24. Xi Weighs His Alliance With an Isolated Putin**

New York Times, Feb. 28, Pg. A6 | Steven Lee Myers

They visited a hockey rink in Beijing and the panda enclosure at the Moscow Zoo. They shared blinis layered with caviar in Russia and, reciprocally, the popular variant in China, jianbing. They have shared birthday cakes and exchanged toasts with shots of vodka, while demurring that neither would dare go overboard with the stuff.

For more than a decade, Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir V. Putin of Russia have forged a respectful, perhaps even warm relationship, reflecting the deepening ties between two world powers that share common cause against American military and economic might.

The invasion of Ukraine could upend all that -- or forge, in diplomatic isolation, an alliance that reshapes the world order in the 21st century.

Three days into the conflict, it seemed clear on Sunday that Mr. Putin's expectation of a quick subjugation of Ukraine was foundering. Ukrainian resistance slowed or stalled Russia's forces, while Western nations sharply escalated economic pressure on Russia, which was looking almost totally isolated.

Mr. Putin's attack on Ukraine has forced Mr. Xi into what Kevin Rudd, the Australian ex-prime minister who was once a diplomat in Beijing, called an "impossible balancing act" between his personal camaraderie with the Russian leader and the potential for blowback for China, should it be seen as endorsing an invasion condemned by most of the world.

On Friday, Mr. Xi spoke by telephone with the man he called his "best friend" in 2019, but stopped far short of endorsing the assault on Ukraine. He said all countries should "abandon a Cold War mentality," and he expressed support when Mr. Putin told him he would seek a negotiated resolution to the war, according to the Chinese government's summary of the call.

But there is no sign that Mr. Xi did anything to ward off the invasion, if he knew it was coming. His senior advisers rebuffed American requests to use China's influence with Mr. Putin to discourage an attack; instead, China shared the Americans' intelligence with the Russians and accused the United States of trying to sow discord, according to American officials.

For China, the costs of Mr. Putin's adventurism could be high.

"I don't think this is good for anybody," said Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization, a research organization in Beijing that advises the government. "Conflict is not a solution, and China doesn't want to see things deteriorate."

China has deep ties with Europe and the United States that it cannot afford to sever, despite growing tensions in those relationships. The Ukraine invasion has rattled Chinese stock markets and threatens to roil the global economy during an important political year for Beijing that is expected to end with an extension of Mr. Xi's rule.

The international furor over Ukraine -- and the diplomatic isolation Mr. Putin is expected to face -- could also serve as a warning of what Mr. Xi can expect if he uses force to subdue Taiwan, the self-governing democracy that China claims as its territory.

Mr. Putin, for his part, appears to be banking on China's support over Ukraine -- explicit or not -- in the face of punitive measures that the United States and others have already begun to impose.

China has already lifted some restrictions on Russian wheat imports, but it has yet to indicate whether it will abide by American and European sanctions meant to restrict Russia's access to capital.

"It's really going to be an acid test," said John Culver, a retired Central Intelligence Agency officer who studied China. "It's going to demonstrate whether China would really support Russia and provide economic support in violation of sanctions, or even face sanctions itself."

Only three weeks ago, on the eve of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi met for the 38th time since Mr. Xi became China's leader, declaring that the friendship between their countries had "no limits."

Outside their inner circles, it is not known whether Mr. Putin disclosed his plans for Ukraine to Mr. Xi then. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, suggested that he had not.

Now, Mr. Putin has forced China into the awkward position of explaining how the invasion does not violate the principle of respect for national sovereignty that is, officially, a pillar of China's foreign policy.

"They must feel like they've been played," Mr. Culver said of the Chinese leaders.

China's uncertainty over the issue has been clear in the statements of officials like Ms. Hua, who declined to call the invasion an invasion and sought to shift the blame for it to the United States. China may consider Taiwan an unconquered province, but it has explicitly recognized Ukraine as a sovereign nation, one with which it has close economic ties.

However the war ends, it has already underscored how important -- and complex -- the relationship between Mr. Xi and Mr. Putin has become.

It has been shaped by striking biographical parallels, but also by differences that could test their "no limits" pledge.

Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi were born only eight months apart -- Oct. 7, 1952, and June 15, 1953, respectively -- and both were children of Communist powers that rose out of the catastrophic convulsions of war and revolution. They idolized their fathers, veterans of those conflicts, and were inculcated in the Marxist-Leninist view of world affairs.

Mr. Xi's father oversaw China's cadre of Soviet experts and visited the Soviet Union in 1959, bringing back gifts for his son that were later destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, according to Joseph Torigian, an assistant professor at American University and author of a forthcoming biography of Mr. Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun.

Mr. Xi has recalled in interviews that he grew up reading Russian literature and was inspired by a minor character in "What Is to Be Done?" the 1863 novel by Nikolai Chernyshevsky, who sleeps on a bed of nails.

"They have very similar views of the role of history in politics and how attacks on their own history are seen as treacherous and dangerous," Mr. Torigian said of the two leaders.

Both ended up in government service, Mr. Putin as an intelligence officer in the K.G.B. and Mr. Xi as a regional party functionary after the political rehabilitation of his father, who had been imprisoned during the Mao era, accused of spying for the Soviets.

Sergey Alexsashenko, who was a deputy chairman of the Russian central bank during Mr. Putin's rise in the 1990s, said there was a key difference between the two leaders' biographies.

Mr. Putin, he noted, served in the intelligence service when the Soviet Union was entering its inexorable decline in the 1970s and 1980s, while Mr. Xi joined the government ranks as China's transformation from impoverished nation to global economic powerhouse began.

"For Xi, the history of China while he's a mature man is a history of success," Mr. Alexsashenko said. "He wants to move ahead with this rebuilding for the future. For Putin, all good was in the past."

The experience that most closely binds them is the global political turmoil of 1989, beginning with the protests in Tiananmen Square in Beijing that China crushed, followed by the demonstrations that toppled the Soviet Union's satellite states in Europe.

Mr. Xi, then an official in Fujian Province, warned in a party newspaper that democracy without restriction meant "no constraints or sense of responsibility."

Mr. Putin was by then a lieutenant colonel at the K.G.B.'s Dresden outpost, watching helplessly as protesters ransacked the local headquarters of the Stasi, East Germany's secret police. He was forced to retreat to the Soviet Union, which collapsed two years later, creating new borders that he is now essentially trying to erase.

Both leaders have spoken often about the lessons of that period, reinforcing what they see as the need for a strong state hand to control popular sentiment.

In a speech in 2013, Mr. Xi denigrated the last Soviet leader, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, for letting the Soviet Union fall on his watch, something Mr. Putin has called the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

"In the end," Mr. Xi said, "nobody was a real man."

Mr. Putin's pivot toward China began under Mr. Xi's predecessors. He settled a border dispute that had flared into a short war between the Soviet Union and China in 1969, and he eased visa restrictions that allowed for a trade boom across their border.

When Mr. Xi came to power a decade ago, the entente between the countries accelerated into a deepening relationship that has overcome decades of division and suspicion. Trade has skyrocketed, reaching \$146 billion last year. The two militaries train together and conduct joint air and naval patrols along China's coast.

"Even though the bilateral relationship is not an alliance, in its closeness and effectiveness this relationship even exceeds that of an alliance," Mr. Xi told his counterpart during virtual talks in December, according to Mr. Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri V. Ushakov.

That relationship seemed to reach a new peak at the Olympics. After their meeting, the leaders issued a lengthy joint statement that raised alarms in Washington.

It was the first time China had explicitly endorsed Russia's demand for a halt to NATO expansion, though it had criticized previous NATO applications by individual countries, including Montenegro and North Macedonia.

The two leaders also vowed to resist American-led efforts to promote pluralistic democracy and said they would fight foreign influence under the guise of what both call "color revolutions," after the popular uprisings in former Soviet republics like Ukraine and Georgia.

Even so, Mr. Xi now appears uncomfortable with how Mr. Putin has chosen to bring Ukraine to heel. "I think the Chinese are going to have balance how much they want to invest in Putin," Mr. Culver, the former intelligence officer, said, "and how much it's going to cost them strategically."

*--Anton Troianovski, Chris Buckley and Claire Fu contributed reporting or research*

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## **25. U.S. Takes Aim at China Over Russia Ties**

### ***Sanctions, U.N. debates seek to press Beijing not to support Ukraine invasion***

Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, Pg. A13 | William Mauldin

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. wants to pry China away from its tight partnership with Russia. One step, U.S. officials said, is making Beijing feel pain over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Washington is looking to gain from any divisions between Moscow and Beijing, the officials said, and Russia's full-scale assault on Ukraine is an opportunity to force China to choose between siding with Russia and maintaining valuable economic ties to Europe, the U.S. and other parts of the world.

Punitive economic measures imposed on Russia, particularly export controls on certain technologies, would potentially hit China if its businesses and banks try to help Moscow, the officials said.

If China "or any other country wants to engage in activity that would be subject to our sanctions, they'll be subject to our sanctions," a State Department official said.

The U.S. is using international forums to force China to take a public stand on the invasion, an administration official said. At the United Nations Security Council on Friday, when Russia vetoed a U.S.-backed resolution requiring Russia to withdraw from Ukraine, China abstained, along with India and the United Arab Emirates, drawing criticism from the U.S.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the countries that abstained were aligning themselves with the "aggressive and unprovoked actions of Russia."

The U.S. is pushing for a U.N. General Assembly debate this week on a similar resolution, with an eye toward dividing Russia from China, U.N. diplomats said. A meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva this week is another opportunity.

China has called for a negotiated solution to the Ukraine crisis and has chafed at U.S. suggestions that Beijing will be tainted by association with Moscow.

"The truly discredited countries are those that want only to interfere in other countries' internal affairs and wage wars in the name of democracy and human rights," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing last week.

The Beijing-Moscow entente presents a geopolitical challenge for the U.S., potentially requiring Washington to prepare for conflict on both ends of the Eurasian continent, instead of focusing on what has been the Biden administration's top priority of countering China. Already, the Ukraine conflict has delayed release of key strategy documents on defense and national security as the administration works through the new challenges.

Getting China to lessen support for Russia would further isolate Moscow over Ukraine, reduce the ability of the two to work together on other issues and call into question Beijing's reliability as a partner, the officials said.

The sanctions and other measures the U.S. and European allies are assembling against Russia, the officials said, also serve as a signal to Beijing of what it might face if it attacks Taiwan, a democratically ruled island that Beijing claims as Chinese territory.

Coaxing Beijing to ditch Moscow will require a combination of careful diplomacy and signaling, since the two governments see the U.S. as trying to blunt their global ambitions, former officials and foreign-policy specialists said.

If the administration proceeds down the path of seeking to divide Russia and China, "we could make China feel very, very uncomfortable and perhaps rethink the advantages of being close to Moscow," said Bonnie Glaser, director of the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund, a Washington-based think tank.

China has been struggling to adjust its public position on Ukraine since the invasion, trying to honor its partnership with Russia, while calling for negotiations and reiterating its long-professed principles of national sovereignty and noninterference.

China's balancing act has proved difficult on the ground in Ukraine, despite the countries' robust trade and investment relations; China is a major purchaser of Ukrainian corn and wheat.

Under Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, China-Russia relations are as close as they have been since the Sino-Soviet bloc of the early 1950s, united by the leaders' shared goal to diminish U.S. power, which they see as aimed at hampering their interests. That was given bold expression when Mr. Xi hosted Mr. Putin on the eve of the Olympics, amid the Russian buildup of forces around Ukraine.

A 5,000-word statement released afterward criticized the U.S. and its alliances for undermining China's and Russia's security interests. It opposed expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -- adopting the position taken by Mr. Putin as he threatened Ukraine and marking the first time Beijing explicitly backed Moscow on a European security issue.

Since November, when the Biden administration began warning about Russia's positioning of troops in border areas near Ukraine, officials have tried to get Beijing to use its influence with Moscow to stop an invasion. In recent weeks, Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke twice with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the matter.

"We asked the PRC that they use that influence in a constructive way, in the first instance, to prevent war, and now that we're in the midst of an invasion to put a halt to it as quickly as is can be achieved," the senior State Department official said, referring to the People's Republic of China, China's official name. Another official said the outreach to China was similar to that to other countries that might have influence with Moscow, including Kazakhstan.

After the Putin-Xi statement this month, Biden administration officials huddled to discuss strategies for dealing with the Beijing-Moscow cooperation, people briefed on the matter said. The officials decided on a tactic to highlight the partnership and make China pay a price for it, the people said.

Escalating sanctions are among the sharpest warning flares to Beijing. The U.S. and European Union are largely cutting off Russia's financial sector from the Western financial system and ordering freezes of any assets in the West held by Mr. Putin and members of his inner circle. Export controls enacted by the U.S., the EU, Japan and others prohibit the transfer of critical technologies.

Washington is watching to see if Chinese financial institutions will try to fill the financing shortfall or whether Chinese technology companies will seek to skirt new limits on exports to Russia.

*--Vivian Salama, Courtney McBride and Lingling Wei contributed to this article*

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## **26. Putin threat tests China's nuclear umbrella pact with Ukraine**

Washington Times Online, Feb. 26 | Bill Gertz

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered Moscow's military to raise the alert status of its large nuclear forces on Sunday, and the threat will test a 2012 agreement that calls on China to provide a nuclear deterrent umbrella for Ukraine.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich signed the agreement on Dec. 5, 2012, promising that China's nuclear forces would protect Ukraine from nuclear threats.

The bilateral treaty described the two states as "strategic partners."

"China pledges unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the nuclear-free Ukraine and China further pledges to provide Ukraine nuclear security guarantee when Ukraine encounters an invasion involving nuclear weapons or Ukraine is under threat of a nuclear invasion," a joint statement on the pact said.

A Chinese Embassy spokesman did not immediately return an email request for comment on whether China will invoke the agreement in providing a nuclear deterrent for Ukraine.

Nearly two decades earlier, Ukraine voluntarily gave up the nuclear weapons it inherited upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which would've been the world's third-biggest arsenal, and joined the global treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-weapons state.

As Russian military forces bogged down in efforts to pacify Ukraine rapidly using a three-pronged military offensive, Mr. Putin said Sunday that "aggressive statements" by NATO prompted the directive.

"Western countries aren't only taking unfriendly actions against our country in the economic sphere, but top officials from leading NATO members made aggressive statements regarding our country," Mr. Putin said in comments broadcast on Russian television.

If the higher alert status is detected by U.S. and western intelligence agencies, U.S. strategic forces – missiles, submarines and bombers – would almost certainly respond by raising their alert status.

The nuclear alert is part of a new Russian military doctrine called "escalate to de-escalate" that reflects Moscow's weaker conventional forces and stronger nuclear power.

U.S. defense officials have said the new doctrine means Russia's military will more rapidly escalate to the use of nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear arms or possibly strategic weapons, in a regional conflict.

At the Pentagon, a senior defense official said the United States "had no reason to doubt" the ordering of a higher nuclear alert status.

The official said the action represented an unnecessary "escalatory" threat since Russia is not facing any nuclear dangers from NATO or the west.

"And escalatory because it is clearly potentially putting at play forces that if there's a miscalculation could — could — make things much, much more dangerous," the official said.

Regarding whether U.S. nuclear forces have gone on a higher alert status in response, the senior official said "we do not talk about the specifics of our strategic deterrent posture."

"I would just tell you that we remain confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our allies, and our partners, and that includes in the strategic deterrent realm, and that is as far as I'm going to go on that question."

The increased nuclear danger comes as the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials would take place at the Belarusian border.

China's government has tacitly supported the Russian military operation against Ukraine by not condemning the military aggression and repeatedly announcing that Moscow had "legitimate security concerns" with Ukraine.

The Biden administration also shared U.S. intelligence with Chinese officials in the run-up the conflict in a failed bid to gain Beijing's support for pressure on Mr. Putin not to invade Ukraine.

Instead of helping the west, China's government shared the intelligence on Russian troop deployments with Moscow, highlighting the growing alliance between the two countries.

Ukraine developed a close arms relationship with China since it achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

China bought an unfinished aircraft carrier from Ukraine for \$20 million in the 1990s and turned it into the People's Liberation Army's first aircraft carrier.

Ukraine also has sold jets and aircraft engines to China, and provided design information that was incorporated into Chinese Y-series military transport and surveillance aircraft.

Former State Department policy official Miles Yu, who first disclosed the China-Ukraine nuclear pact, said the nation most likely to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine is Russia, another strategic partner of Beijing.

"In the hypothetical scenario of a Russian nuclear threat against Moscow's former satellite Ukraine, would China keep its pledge to confront Moscow with its nuclear weapons?" Mr. Yu stated.

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## **27. 'Blitz' Tactics Likely To Be Used in Any P.L.A. Attack on Taiwan, Experts Say**

South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), Feb. 26, Pg. 4 | Liu Zhen

BEIJING -- Chinese experts say Russia's rapid tactics in Ukraine are likely to be replicated in any People's Liberation Army attack on Taiwan.

There has been speculation that Beijing could seize the opportunity to take the self-ruled island while the attention of the United States and Europe is on Ukraine.

Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province and has never ruled out using force, if necessary, to return it to the fold.

The Russian "blitz" into Ukraine was also seen in 1968 when Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring", according to Shanghai-based commentator Shi Lao.

Any PLA attempt to take Taiwan would also have to be a very quick campaign, although the crossing of the Taiwan Strait – 100km at its narrowest point – would add extra difficulties.

In an article in 2018, retired PLA lieutenant general Wang Hongguang outlined a scenario for an operation against Taiwan based on a rapid, brief campaign.

"In short, there will be at most three days left for outsiders like the Americans or the Japanese to assist Taiwan ... otherwise they need not bother trying," said Wang, a former vice-commander of the Nanjing Military Region which included Taiwan and the East China Sea.

Wang said the PLA would first conduct three waves of air strikes with missiles, long-range rockets and air force bombers to target airports, naval facilities, air defence bases and radar and electronic positions.

Communications, power and transport hubs, bridges and tunnels, television and radio stations would all be included in the initial strikes, as well as a "decapitation" of the island's political and commands.

Ground forces would follow up with landings at multiple locations. At the same time, paratroopers would be dropped to in-depth rear locations and rapidly advance to lay siege to and seize the capital Taipei.

There are stark similarities to Wang's scenario and the invasion of Ukraine.

Short-range missiles were reported to be the Russians' main weapon. There were also reports of medium-range missiles, cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and sea-launched missiles from the Black Sea. Helicopters later

infiltrated at low altitude and paratroopers were reported to have landed in the outskirts of the capital Kyiv, as ground forces advanced on three fronts.

Military commentator Song Zhongping said the PLA must have factored the possible intervention of the US into its calculations for an operation in Taiwan.

"Russia used its nuclear deterrence to prevent the US and Nato from direct involvement before launching the blitz at Ukraine with conventional weapons. Nuclear is the key here," he said.

Comments by Russian President Vladimir Putin in a speech before launching his invasion were widely interpreted as a threat that he would use nuclear weapons if other countries came to Kyiv's aid.

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## **28. China says U.S. warship sailing in Taiwan Strait 'provocative'**

Reuters, Feb. 26 | Ben Blanchard and Tony Munroe

TAIPEI -- A U.S. warship sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Saturday, part of what the U.S. military calls routine activity but which China described as "provocative".

The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson was conducting a "routine" transit through international waters.

"The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," 7th Fleet spokesperson Nicholas Lingo said in a statement. "The United States military flies, sails, and operates anywhere international law allows."

The Eastern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army monitored the passage, which a spokesperson in a statement called a "provocative act."

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said the ship sailed in a northerly direction through the Strait, that its forces had monitored its passage and observed nothing out of the ordinary.

Taiwan is currently in a heightened state of alert due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, nervous that China may try to take advantage of the situation to make a move on the island though the government has reported no unusual Chinese manoeuvres.

Last year, U.S. naval ships transited the Strait roughly monthly. Saturday's sailing was the first since November.

China claims democratically ruled Taiwan as its own territory and has mounted repeated air force missions into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) over the past two years, provoking anger in Taipei.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said that on Saturday eight Chinese aircraft - six fighters and two anti-submarine aircraft - flew into its ADIZ, to the northeast of the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands at the top end of the South China Sea.

Beijing calls Taiwan the most sensitive and important issue in its relations with Washington.

Like most countries, the United States has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan but is its most important international backer and arms supplier.

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## **KOREAN PENINSULA**

## **29. N.K. missile launch aimed at gaining attention amid Ukraine crisis – defense minister**

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 28 | Not Attributed

SEOUL -- North Korea's ballistic missile launch this week appears aimed at demonstrating its policy line of "power for power" and grabbing global attention amid the armed conflict in Ukraine, South Korea's defense minister said Monday.

Suh Wook made the remarks during a hastily assembled meeting of top commanders, following Sunday's missile launch that the North claimed to be a test for developing a "reconnaissance satellite."

Pyongyang unveiled its policy principle of "power for power and good-will for good-will" during last year's key party congress, in what appears to be a call for Washington to show flexibility to move stalled nuclear talks forward.

"North Korea appears to have demonstrated its policy line of 'responding to power with power' to arouse international attention in the midst of the situation in Ukraine," Suh said.

"Our military should prepare against additional North Korea missile launches," he added.

Sunday's launch, the North's eighth show of force this year, came amid speculation that the North appears to be lower on the Joe Biden administration's policy priority list as Washington is preoccupied with the Ukraine crisis, the domestic fight against COVID-19 and other challenges.

The missile test also followed beefed-up efforts by Seoul and Washington to bolster combined defense against evolving North Korean missile threats.

Suh also commented on takeaways from the unfurling conflict in Ukraine, including Russia's "hybrid" tactics combining cyberwarfare, psychological operations and irregular battle maneuvers.

"Under such security conditions, we have to check our readiness posture and pore over (the Ukraine crisis) implications," the minister said.

In line with such efforts, the military unveiled a video during the meeting that included footage of a recent test-firing of a long-range surface-to-air missile (L-SAM) under development.

South Korea has been seeking to deploy the L-SAM by 2026 as part of the country's multilayered, low-tier missile defense program.

If deployed, the L-SAM interceptor would form a key part of South Korea's anti-missile program, including the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile and a medium-range surface-to-air missile (M-SAM).

Monday's meeting was attended by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Won In-choul and the top brass of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

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## **30. Moon calls for impenetrable defense posture**

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 28 | Kim Deok-hyun

SEOUL -- President Moon Jae-in called for a powerful defense posture Monday, saying peace can be achieved only based on strong defense, as the world is reeling from Russia's shocking invasion of Ukraine.

"The peace and prosperity we enjoy have been achieved on the foundation of strong security," Moon told a commencement and commissioning ceremony for the Korea Army Academy in Yeongcheon, North Gyeongsang Province.

Based on strong defense capabilities, South Korea has pushed for peace efforts on the Korean Peninsula and turned North Korea's nuclear crisis into a mode of dialogue, Moon said.

North Korea fired a ballistic missile Sunday, marking the North's eighth show of force this year.

"Recently, North Korea has been test-firing missiles one after another," Moon said. "We have superb missile capabilities and defense capabilities that will thoroughly prevent any threats."

The United States and other Western nations agreed on new sanctions aimed at isolating Russia's financial system as global condemnation grows over the invasion.

"As the international order fluctuates and conflicts between powers are exposed, the security environment is rapidly changing around the world," Moon said. "We must have the strength to protect ourselves in any circumstance."

Moon said South Korea has the "biggest security burden" in the world.

"For now, the top priority is to deter war between the South and the North, but from a broader and long-term point of view, the geopolitical situation of the Korean Peninsula itself represents a grave security environment," Moon said.

South Korea's military has beefed up its defense capabilities by successfully firing a submarine-launched ballistic missile and developing a homegrown supersonic fighter jet, Moon said.

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### **31. China vows cooperation with North Korea under 'new situation' – KCNA**

Agence France-Presse, Feb. 26 | Not Attributed

China's President Xi Jinping emphasised the importance of cooperation between Beijing and Pyongyang in an unspecified "new situation", North Korea's state media reported Saturday.

North Korea, officially known as the DPRK, carried out an unprecedented seven weapon tests in January -- including its most powerful missile since 2017 -- with negotiations with the United States at a standstill.

It paused testing during the Beijing Winter Olympics, with analysts saying the decision could have been made out of deference to China.

Beijing is Pyongyang's most important ally and economic benefactor, their relationship forged in the bloodshed of the Korean War in the 1950s.

In his message to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Xi said Beijing was ready to "develop the China-DPRK relations of friendship and cooperation" under a "new situation", the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

KCNA did not further elaborate on what the "new situation" entailed.

North Korea is reeling economically from a self-imposed coronavirus blockade, and restarted cross-border trade with Beijing last month.

China accounts for more than 90 percent of the isolated country's bilateral trade.

Pyongyang is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

But regardless, it has warned it could abandon its self-imposed moratorium and resume testing intercontinental ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons.

Some experts have warned that with the eyes of the world focussed on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, North Korea might take the opportunity to test-fire long-range missiles.

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### **32. Presidential candidates spar over missile defense, nuclear-sharing in TV debate**

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Feb. 25 | Lee Haye-ah

SEOUL -- The four main presidential candidates faced off Friday over a range of national security issues, including nuclear-sharing arrangements and the U.S.-led missile defense system, as they jostled for position during their fourth televised debate.

The two-hour debate was held under the theme of politics and featured candidates Lee Jae-myung of the ruling Democratic Party, Yoon Suk-yeol of the main opposition People Power Party, Ahn Cheol-soo of the centrist People's Party and Sim Sang-jeung of the progressive Justice Party.

Lee asked Yoon if he still hoped to redeploy tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula as stated early in his campaign, but the PPP candidate denied ever making such an argument.

The two front-runners have clashed repeatedly over national security issues, especially in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with Lee calling for creating the conditions conducive to peace and Yoon advocating for a "peace through strength" approach.

Ahn also disagreed with Yoon on the effectiveness of U.S. extended deterrence in responding to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, saying he believes South Korea should enter into a nuclear-sharing arrangement.

When asked by Sim if he sees the need for South Korea to join the U.S.-led missile defense system, which has long been viewed as a threat by neighboring countries, such as China and Russia, Yoon responded affirmatively.

"If supersonic and hypersonic missiles are developed, I believe a missile defense system between South Korea and the United States might be needed to respond," he said.

The candidates also discussed the DP's proposal for political reform, which centers on ensuring the political participation of minor parties and fostering national unity by revising the Constitution to change the single five-year presidential term to a renewable four-year term.

Ahn questioned the DP's sincerity in putting forth the proposal with only days to go until the March 9 election, saying the "key" is to pass it through a plenary meeting of DP lawmakers.

When asked by Sim if the possibility of a candidacy merger remained open between Ahn and Yoon, Ahn insisted it was over.

Yoon, meanwhile, was cautious to go into detail, saying "we are also working on it."

The possibility of a Yoon-Ahn merger has continued to hang over the race, as it could break the current tie in polls in favor of Yoon, with Lee and Yoon currently neck and neck at around 40 percent support each.

Friday's debate was the second to be hosted by the National Election Commission, the state election watchdog.

The third and final debate will be held on March 2 on the theme of social issues.

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## **INDO-PACIFIC**

### **33. Japan PM Opposes Sharing U.S. Nuclear Weapons After Abe Proposal**

Bloomberg News, Feb. 28 | Isabel Reynolds

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said sharing nuclear weapons with the U.S. in a way similar to NATO members would not be allowed under Japan's non-nuclear principles, pushing back against a predecessor who floated the idea.

An opposition lawmaker pressed Kishida on the idea in parliament after former premier Shinzo Abe told a TV show Sunday the concept should be discussed and there should be no taboos on such defense issues.

"From the perspective of maintaining our three non-nuclear principles, it could not be allowed," Kishida said. Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi told the same committee Japan wasn't thinking of revising its non-nuclear principles.

The disagreement between the premier and his former boss comes as Tokyo watches developments in the Ukraine and their consequences for East Asia with growing alarm. Japan for decades has campaigned for the elimination of nuclear weapons after its cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombs dropped in the final stages of World War Two.

A survey carried out by the Nikkei newspaper found that more than three quarters of respondents were concerned that failure to prevent a Russian invasion of Ukraine could embolden China to attack Taiwan. Japan sees neighboring Taiwan's security as closely linked to its own, and has a separate territorial dispute with Beijing.

Japan, the only country to suffer nuclear attacks, has officially maintained three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons outlined by then-Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967.

Hemmed in by a pacifist constitution, and beset by threats from North Korea and China, it nevertheless relies heavily on the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" for its security. Declassified documents have shown that the U.S. stored nuclear weapons in Okinawa before it reverted to Japanese control in 1972.

The issue is particularly sensitive for Kishida, who hails from Hiroshima, and has called nuclear disarmament his life's work. In 2016, he accompanied Barack Obama on the first visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial by a sitting U.S. president.

*--With assistance from Takashi Hirokawa*

#### RELATED STORIES:

Bloomberg News: [Japan Should Discuss NATO-Like Nuclear Weapons Sharing, Abe Says](#)

Kyodo News (Japan): [Ex-PM Abe says Japan should discuss nuclear sharing arrangement](#)

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### **34. Japan, U.S. confirm need to boost deterrence capabilities**

Kyodo News (Japan), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed

TOKYO -- The foreign ministers of Japan and the United States on Saturday condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and confirmed the need to enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the bilateral alliance, the Japanese government said.

In their telephone talks, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also agreed that the impact of the conflict "will not be limited to Europe," with Hayashi saying it could affect the Indo-Pacific region, where China is increasingly assertive.

The foreign ministers "strongly condemned" Russia for its attack on the East European nation that began Thursday, saying it "shakes the foundation of international order" and vowing to never tolerate attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force.

They "agreed on the need to appropriately deal with Russia's actions so as not to leave the wrong lesson," the ministry said in a statement following their 25-minute talks.

Describing the Russian attack as an "invasion," Hayashi told reporters that the act "violates Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, gravely violating the international law that bans use of force."

Hayashi said that Tokyo and Washington also confirmed to continue to cooperate on the promotion of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The talks came a day after Japan unveiled a set of tighter sanctions, including a freeze on assets held by three Russian banks and export controls on high-tech products such as semiconductors to military-linked groups, in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Blinken "thanked" Hayashi for the imposition of the sanctions on Russia as well as Japan's efforts to build a coalition to "amplify the joint impact" of Western nations' response to the invasion, the U.S. State Department said.

The new sanctions package, also including a suspension of visa issuance for certain Russian individuals and entities, followed softer initial measures announced by Japan after Russia's recognition of two pro-Moscow separatist regions in eastern Ukraine as independent, which paved the way for troop deployments as "peacekeeping" operations.

Hayashi and Blinken also reaffirmed that the two governments will continue to work with other Group of Seven nations on imposing further sanctions against Russia, the Japanese ministry said.

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## **IRAN**

### **35. Iran says three key issues remain unresolved in Vienna nuclear talks**

Reuters, Feb. 28 | Parisa Hafezi

Iran said on Monday that reviving a 2015 nuclear deal is possible if Western powers take a political decision to resolve three remaining issues, as indirect negotiations between Tehran and Washington enter a crucial stage.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman identified the remaining outstanding issues as: the extent to which sanctions would be rolled back, providing guarantees that the United States will not quit the pact again, and resolving questions over uranium traces found at several old but undeclared sites in Iran.

After 10 months of talks in Vienna, progress has been made toward the restoration of the pact to curb Tehran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief, which the United States abandoned in 2018. Both Tehran and Washington have cautioned that still there are some significant differences to overcome.

"Reaching a good deal is possible ... three key issues still remain to be resolved. The U.S. and European powers have not taken political decisions on these major issues," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh told a weekly news conference.

"We believe that we need an appropriate pathway to solve remaining issues in the areas of lifting sanctions, guarantees and political claims that have been levelled against our peaceful civilian nuclear programme," Khatibzadeh said.

Iran's lead nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani, who flew to Tehran last week for consultations with Iranian officials, "has returned to Vienna to pursue the negotiations with a clear agenda", Khatibzadeh said.

"The return to the nuclear deal will not be a one-day process, it will rather be a journey of many verifications on the part of the U.S."

Diplomats from parties involved in the negotiations have said they have entered a crucial stage, while Tehran rejects any "fabricated deadline" for the talks.

The 2015 deal between Iran and world powers limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium to make it harder for it to develop material that could be used for nuclear weapons, in return for a lifting of international sanctions against Tehran.

But in 2018, then-U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned the pact and reimposed sanctions that have devastated Iran's oil-reliant economy. In response, Tehran violated nuclear limits in the agreement.

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### **36. Iran to enrich uranium to 20% even after nuclear deal – nuclear chief**

Reuters, Feb. 25 | Not Attributed

DUBAI -- Iran will continue to enrich uranium to 20% purity even after sanctions on it are lifted and a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers is revived, Iranian news agencies quoted the country's nuclear chief as saying on Friday.

"(Uranium) enrichment ... continues with a maximum ceiling of 60%, which led Westerners to rush to negotiations, and it will continue with the lifting of sanctions by both 20% and 5%," the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Mohammad Eslami, was quoted by the semi-official news agency Fars as saying.

The 2015 deal restricts the purity to which Iran can enrich uranium to 3.67%, far below the roughly 90% that is weapons-grade or the 20% Iran reached before the deal. Iran is now enriching to various levels, the highest being around 60%.

Eslami did not elaborate or explain how 20% enrichment would be acceptable under the 2015 nuclear deal which Iran has been trying to revive through indirect talks with the United States.

Iranian officials had told Reuters earlier that Iran had agreed to suspend its 20% and 60% enrichment if an agreement is reached in the Vienna talks to salvage the 2015 pact Separately, a senior Iranian cleric said earlier that ending Iran's economic isolation by lifting banking and oil trade sanctions was Tehran's most important demand in talks with world powers in the Austrian capital Vienna.

Iran on Wednesday urged the West to be "realistic" in the talks, as its top negotiator returned to Tehran for what might be final consultations ahead of a possible accord following months of indirect talks with the United States.

"Our negotiators... do their best to ensure the nation's interests, and know that the final point is the lifting of all sanctions, especially on banking and trade," Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said at Friday prayers in Tehran.

"If these sanctions are not lifted, it is as if there were no talks," state media quoted him as saying.

The general content of sermons delivered at Friday prayers is set by the office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on Iran's nuclear policy and all other matters of state.

After 10 months of talks in Vienna, progress has been made toward the restoration of the pact to curb Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief, but both Tehran and Washington have cautioned that still there are some significant differences to overcome.

A majority of Iran's hardline-led parliament demanded in a letter last week that the United States should guarantee that they would not abandon a restored agreement. The assembly has not voted on the letter.

A senior Iranian official has told Reuters that Iran has shown flexibility by agreeing to "inherent guarantees" that the U.S. administration will not quit an agreement, as Washington says it is impossible for President Joe Biden to provide the legal assurances Iran has demanded.

Iran insists on the immediate removal of all sanctions imposed under former U.S. President Donald Trump in a verifiable process, including those imposed under terrorism or human rights measures.

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## **AIR FORCE**

### **37. Air Force Global Strike Command Team Visits Team Minot**

5th Bomb Wing Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Senior Airman Caleb S. Kimmell

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. -- General Anthony Cotton, Air Force Global Strike Command commander, and Chief Master Sergeant Melvina Smith, AFGSC command chief, visited here Thursday and Friday. While here, the command team toured the Base, hearing first-hand experiences from Airmen and families about their day-to-day support and impact for the nation's long-range strike and nuclear strategic deterrence mission.

With two wings on base, each independently supporting the B-52H Stratofortress and Minuteman III ICBM missions at Minot Air Force Base, the installation is the only one in the Department of Defense which hosts two components of the nation's nuclear triad.

Gen. Cotton and Chief Smith used their visit to discuss the importance of the mission Striker airmen support day in and out, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"Our strategic vision is composed of four lines of effort and we want to make it so the youngest airman and the oldest officer could understand it and succinctly apply that to their day-to-day support to the Striker mission," said Gen. Cotton.

Gen. Cotton and Chief Smith lead AFGSC, the United States Air Forces lead proponent for global strike capabilities which support Department of Defense and U.S. Strategic Command objectives. The AFGSC mission includes responsibility for the nation's intercontinental ballistic missile, bomber force, and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications.

They took time to discuss the command priorities with Airmen and families on base. Some of the topics included creating a foundation of people who take care of each other, ensuring Airmen remain prepared and ready, efforts underway for modernization of the bomber and ICBM fleets, and engaging with communities who support the Global Strike mission.

"Everyone here at Team Minot is collaborating to take care of our families and our military members," said Chief Smith. "We've allowed them to embed themselves within the units and organize events to allow them to come together and get that support they need."

Gen. Cotton and Chief Smith also took time to converse with airmen and leaders about their experiences in protecting and maintaining the nation's strategic force of the current generation taking the mantle from them to continue the mission for Global Strike Command, the Air Force and the Nation.

"I want to make absolutely sure that we are taking the steps to develop a 21st century Airman to take care of 21st century issues, utilizing 21st century weapons systems," said Gen. Cotton. "To be able to do that is talent management, and quality of life. Air Force Global Strike Command doesn't just represent the Air Force in long range strike, it represents the entire world."

Gen. Cotton and Chief Smith said today's leaders need to think of today's junior airmen and officers in terms of the leaders the Air Force needs in 2032 and work toward talent management initiatives which build toward that vision.

According to Gen. Cotton and Chief Smith, Minot AFB and the people who support the base remain key to ensuring the nation's defense requirements, now and into the future. When discussing the importance of the bomber fleet and strategic deterrence for the American people as well as America's allies and partners, Gen. Cotton stated, "Nobody else has strategic bomber capabilities. Nobody else has land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. It's Global Strike Command. It's incredibly important for our men and women to understand the role we play in the security of this nation and our allies and partners."

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### **38. Get to know your local Missile Alert Facility**

Wyoming Tribune-Eagle (Cheyenne, WY), Feb. 27, Pg. A1 | Will Carpenter

CHEYENNE -- In a seemingly aimless, but determined drive, the small tour bus takes highways and dirt roads out to a place so barren, there likely isn't another human being for miles.

The snow covers the ground and merges with the silver sky, while the cold air seems to penetrate the thick safety-grade windows, through which clouds of horned larks skip and dance out over vast plains like one dense organism.

But then there's something different: Two tan metal structures, fenced in and containing warning signs that advise approaching vehicles of something their drivers already know.

They have reached Alpha-01 Missile Alert Facility, a structure identical to 15 other facilities found throughout Wyoming. Each one supervises 10 missile silos, every one built to contain an intercontinental ballistic missile known as the LGM-30G Minuteman III.

The warhead on a Minuteman III is estimated to produce around 300-350 kilotons of energy. Though it detonates through a different process, that's 20 times more than the 15 kilotons of energy produced by "Little Boy," the U.S. nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan during World War II, killing 140,000 people.

#### *A rare opportunity*

It's rare that the media has the permission to tour a facility like this, but today is different. Normally, the only ones who travel through the heavily secured front gate are the members of the United States Air Force that live at Alpha-01 on and off throughout the year in a series of controlled deployments.

On Feb. 16, there were 15 airmen and women stationed at this location. One facility manager, one chef, four missileers and nine security officers, all of whom make Alpha-01 their home for seven days at a time, each with specific responsibilities.

The facility is unassuming, even underwhelming, but it houses the military personnel that are responsible for the United States' mission of land-based nuclear deterrence.

Nuclear deterrence provides a level of security that most Americans struggle to comprehend, even in times like these, when Russian President Vladimir Putin has launched an invasion of neighboring Ukraine and threatened the rest of the world with his country's nuclear arsenal.

Consider the varying levels of security an average person experiences in a day, from protecting themselves with a firearm to knowing that there's a local police force that will respond to any distress. Think bigger, then think bigger again, and still one might fail to understand how protected Americans really are by the nuclear triad, or the accumulation of all land, air and sea-based nuclear weaponry constantly on alert around the globe, at the ready.

"There is layer, upon layer, upon layer, upon layer, upon layer of security before they even reach our nation," Joseph Coslett, Public Affairs Office chief of operations, said while helping lead the tour of the facility. "Having something happen, even if it was clandestine, we have layer upon layer upon layer for stuff like that."

It's seems like a scary reality to occupy every day, but just by walking through the living quarters of the MAF, it's hard to tell there's anything grave at stake. Besides two heavily armored Humvees, equipped with ascending calibers of weaponry, it's almost like a college dormitory.

There's a living quarter, where off-shift airmen and women gather to watch TV, play video games and eat food made by services journeyman Nadia Carter, who works as the chef.

It may sound excessive, but having Carter's fresh cooking is a significant morale booster when those stationed at Alpha-01 could be required to eat MREs for every meal.

#### *Maintaining 50-year-old tech*

The MAF is self-sustaining, and if anything breaks or fails, Staff Sgt. Anthony Glaister, the facility manager, has to take care of it. A "Swiss Army knife" when it comes to responsibility, Glaister keeps operations running according to plan, from clearing snowdrifts to fixing plumbing.

Glaister's been stationed there since 2016, but his responsibilities have been particularly taxing recently.

The Alpha-01 facility, and others like it, are still largely functioning off of original infrastructure from the 1960s. There are plans to upgrade these facilities in the coming years, gutting them almost completely so the military personnel aren't regularly working to maintain 50-year-old equipment.

In one sense, these upgrades — to a new missile system known as Ground Based Strategic Deterrent — are well overdue.

"We've already pushed the limits of this for three generations, when it was only created for one," Coslett said. "There's been somebody on alert out in these fields for the last 50 years. There's never been a day we have not had somebody on alert."

This doesn't stop the facilities from running the way they should. Security operators, like Airman 1st Class Justin Smith, are on a 12-hour shift, constantly making rounds and responding to signals at the surrounding silos.

Smith had just returned from the field, stepping away from the Humvee to speak with the media on the importance of his role. It is Smith's responsibility to protect the people stationed at this facility, and the weight of his mission is constantly at the forefront of his mind.

"Security is very meticulous — it's nuclear, it's serious," Smith said. "You've got to know how to do everything to a T. There's checklists to follow. There's multiple guidelines and standards you need to know to achieve yours."

Because of security operators, everything looks normal topside. Where things begin to change, and the true purpose of the operation reveals itself, is when one crosses behind security doors and rides an elevator some 60 feet below surface, like descending a mineshaft.

At the bottom, behind doors designed several feet thick that are meant to withstand a nuclear blast, sit the missileers. They just might be in the safest location in the state — a spot designed similar to an egg safely suspended in a shoebox.

The inside of the command console looks eerily similar to any military office space. With khaki-colored walls, carpet and filing cabinets — there are even some papers held up by clothes pins, the old-fashioned way.

It's in this office, one as unassuming as the rest of the facility, that the missileers monitor the status of the United States' nuclear missiles. If they had to, in some extreme scenario, they are also the ones that turn the key to launch the missile.

This office is suspended in a grand circular bunker meant to withstand a nuclear blast. Should an incoming missile make contact and rattle the earth, the office would better absorb the blast and keep the missileers safe.

In this disaster scenario, the missileers, now the sole survivors at Alpha-01, would then eventually climb out of command center, open a hatch and ascend to the surface, which would certainly be flattened.

If this sounds like the revealing of classified information, it isn't. Prior to the media's entry, the area was swept clean. But yes, normally, there's restricted data circulating in this office, and it's heavily secure.

Residents can take a tour like this for themselves at the retired Quebec-01 Missile Alert Facility, which is now a Wyoming State Parks Historic Site, north of Cheyenne.

### *Protecting America and the world*

There's no "going rouge," as popular media likes to depict. There are so many checks and balances to launching a nuclear missile that it seems almost impossible to get a shot off. That being said, the entire process for one missile to launch, reach outer space and travel back down to a target across the world take about 20 minutes.

"If you guys know where we are, they know where we are," missileer 1st Lt. Linda Rivera Matsuo said. "This may be it. The person you're downstairs with maybe the last person you see, so get to know him well. Life is short."

Missileers spend a whole 24 hours underground, each normally serving a 12-hour shift. Matsuo is the Missile Atomic Group Commander, and on Feb. 16, she just wanted to get some sleep after a surprise 36-hour shift.

Being the group commander, Matsuo has to know everything there is to know, even outside her own responsibilities. At a moment's notice, she must recall all the information she has acquired over the past several days and form it into the decision she makes, should it become time to act.

The current policy of the United States is "second strike," a defensive stance meaning that no missile will be launched unless an enemy missile is already inbound. Matsuo, and the other missileers, understand their own impact at all times.

It isn't just a matter of protecting the American people, it's a matter of protecting the world.

"We will only go if we already know something's on the way, but Americans don't go down without a fight," Matsuo said. "So that's what we're here for, and that's what missileers are here for."

By the end of that week, the team stationed at Alpha-01 will have rotated out, and a new team like them will have moved in to assume their duties. In a month, they will return.

So is the life of the airmen and women of the 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

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### **39. Red Flag 22-1: Integrated mission planning is the first step to B-2 mission success**

509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Press Release

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, MO -- Red Flag is a large-scale exercise that offers the 393rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron an opportunity to enhance their integrated mission planning capabilities with the use of ever-evolving intelligence.

Red Flag is hosted multiple times a year at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, and includes a variety of units and airframes from across the Department of Defense, U.S. allies and partners.

This yearly exercise was created to prevent the aircraft casualties that occurred during the Vietnam War from happening again. One of the most critical lessons learned from the war was the need for integration between multiple airframes, such as bombers and fighters. This integration creates a dominant, multi-capable force that starts with a mission planning cell before the pilots even leave the runway.

"In the B-2 community, we say 'mission planning is our primary tactic' and our quality of mission planning is what sets us apart," said Lt. Col. Christopher Conant, 393rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron commander. "Preparing our mission with the best plan possible, with the best data possible, is important because that can reduce challenges and errors, as variables on the battlefield inevitably change. Our mission planning philosophy combines the tenants of flexibility with a holistic perspective on how to execute a joint air campaign."

The strategic implementation of air crew tactics and intelligence analysis allows for quality preparation that is a vital component to combat superiority.

"Intel plays a critical role early in the mission planning process," said Conant. "Initial assessments are what we base facts and assumptions on, to then build the plan. But, intel never stops. As the mission planning progresses, they are constantly updating and refining their products so we can adjust."

Red Flag trains our air crew and intelligence officers to mission plan with their counterparts from fellow Air Force units, which tests their integration capabilities on a grander platform within a stable environment. For the 393rd EBS, it is important to learn from other air crews and understand how their aircraft can assist and benefit the execution of the B-2 mission.

"Intel and operations go hand in hand," said Maj. Jonathan Waag, 509 Operation Support Squadron chief of intelligence. "Red Flag provides us the opportunity to practice our processes as Unit Level Intel and develop our analytical skills at the tactical level. The mission planning process at Red Flag allows us to network among the Intel community and learn from our collective experiences."

The 509th Bomb Wing prioritizes multi-aircraft integrations because it offers the most realistic and valuable training for the Airmen. The B-2 primarily integrates with their fellow low observable platforms, the F-35 and F-22. These integrations are typically conducted four to five times a year, one of the biggest collaborations being Red Flag. As these airframes have modernized, so have the mission planning tactics to optimize the new stealth capabilities.

Much like tactics and aircraft capabilities, the technology used by intelligence analysts has also improved with new variants of remotely piloted aircrafts, satellites and communication networks providing more timely and accurate information before, during and after mission flights.

"Intelligence tools and training are constantly evolving to meet the operational needs of the Air Force," said Waag. "Advancements in technology have increased both the quantity and quality of information that we can provide to our pilots to increase their lethality. As a community we are well equipped to provide the necessary intelligence to accomplish our mission.

As the most technologically advanced stealth bomber, the B-2 Spirit has more than a leg up on the aircraft used during the Vietnam War. Coupling its modern tactical capabilities with its updated data analysis tools and mission planning expertise, the B-2 Spirit and its' aircrew and intelligence officers make an extremely lethal team.

"Warfighting is a team sport, always has been and always will be," said Conant. "Integration exercises build our combat capabilities, and, serve to communicate to everyone (allies and potential adversaries) that we are getting better and ready to fight as a warfighting team...anytime, anywhere."

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#### **40. Missouri Airman joins rare group, flying 1,500 hours in B-2**

131st Bomb Wing, Feb. 25 | Airman 1st Class Whitney Erhart

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. -- Successfully completing 1,500 flight hours is an accomplishment few achieve and one to be remembered. Doing so in a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber is rarer still.

Lt. Col. Drew Irmischer, the 110th Bomb Squadron's director of operations, 131st Bomb Wing, became the 17th member of this elite community when he safely touched down in the stealth bomber Jan. 27.

"I think it's truly an honor just to be in the same category as some of the other really high-time B-2 pilots that I've looked up to throughout my career," he said. "It's been a great opportunity to be with the B-2 community, especially the 131st. I was excited. But the level of accomplishment didn't set in for a few days."

A milestone such as this is commendable throughout the pilot community.

"This accomplishment is one to be proud of in any B-2 pilot's career," said Col. Jared Kennish, the 131st Bomb Wing vice wing commander who has reached the same mark. "It demonstrates the dedication and commitment of the pilot and the Airmen on the ground who make the mission possible."

Irmischer began flying the B-1 Lancer bomber at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho. This is also where he got his call sign, "Lefty."

"While I was going through the mission qualification training, I was on a squadron ski trip, and I ended up breaking my left arm while snowboarding," he said. "Lefty stuck."

Irmischer flew the B-1 for three years and deployed after 9/11, flying combat missions in Afghanistan.

Irmischer started amassing flight hours in the revered airframe in 2004 when he transitioned to the B-2.

From there, he worked his way up through the B-2 community and eventually switched from active duty to the Missouri Air National Guard.

"When I joined the Guard in 2016, I was the 131st chief of safety for a few years," he said. "Then I went and flew for a commercial airline for about a year before coming back full time as the 110th director of operations."

Irmischer's active duty experience carried over to the Guard smoothly due to guidance from other Guard pilots and his familiarity with the B-2 community and aircraft.

"Being in the Guard and part of the 131st and the 110th has been my best experience in the military," he said. "The people, atmosphere and the culture of the 131st are much more conducive to my personality."

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#### **41. AFNWC civilian appointed to senior executive service position**

Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center Public Affairs, Feb. 25 | Leah Bryant

HANSCOM AFB, Mass. -- An Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center civilian was promoted to the Senior Executive Service during a virtual ceremony hosted here on Feb. 9.

Maj. Gen. Anthony Genatempo, AFNWC commander, promoted Scott Hardiman to his new SES position.

Hardiman is the director for the AFNWC Nuclear Command, Control and Communications (NC3) Integration Directorate. He is also dual-hatted as the Air Force program executive officer for NC3.

Previously, Hardiman served in the same positions in an acting capacity. Prior to that, he was both the AFNWC NC3 Integration deputy director and the NC3 PEO deputy.

"Professionally, I'm very much looking forward to seeing what the next step is for the NC3 weapon system as you continue to give our customers the capabilities they need," Genatempo said. "Personally, we met at the beginning of my career as a colonel. You have absolutely defined for me what a partner 'in the front office' should be. We were often on the same page and never afraid to tell each other when we weren't. It didn't happen very often, but when it did, it always resulted in something better. My heartfelt congratulations to you."

Hardiman has over 38 years of experience as both as an active duty officer and Department of the Air Force civilian employee.

"This promotion is symbolic of the work done by everyone in the NC3 Integration directorate," Hardiman remarked to the small audience in attendance and a virtual audience of about 180. "It's not about me. Instead, it is about the mission we have and an acknowledgement by senior leadership within the U.S. Air Force that it warrants the establishment of a Senior Executive Service position to carry the weight of what this directorate performs every day."

"This is really about the work all of you do, day in and day out, to guarantee our national security and I thank you all for that," he said.

For AFNWC, he directs the acquisition execution of a \$13.9-billion portfolio of Acquisition Categories (ACAT), non-ACAT, and sustainment programs. He is responsible for integrating the Air Force's NC3 Weapon System and leading over 400 Airmen, government civilians and support contractors. As the PEO for NC3, he reports directly to the Service Acquisition Executive and is the milestone decision authority for delegated ACAT II and all ACAT III programs in the NC3 portfolio.

Hardiman was commissioned in 1984 as an Air Force second lieutenant after graduating from the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, as a distinguished graduate. During his 22-year military career, he served in a number of program management, logistics, and higher headquarters positions.

He began his civilian government service in 2006 as the deputy director of the 851st Electronic Systems Group, Electronic Systems Center, Hanscom AFB, where he was responsible for a \$5-billion program providing next-generation airborne sensor and battle management capabilities. He then served in a number of positions over the years, including as a research fellow at the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California.

He assumed his current dual-hatted responsibilities in February.

Members of the SES are charged with leading the government and “producing results for the American people,” according to the Office of Personnel Management. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in about 75 federal agencies. The service covers managerial, supervisory and policy positions classified above GS-15.

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## **ARMY**

### **42. RCCTO leader explains hypersonic acquisition strategy**

InsideDefense.com, Feb. 25 | Ethan Sterenfeld

If the Army fields the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon on schedule next October, it will meet a target set by then-service Secretary Ryan McCarthy in 2019: develop and build the country's first hypersonic missile in a little more than four years.

This was an ambitious goal for an Army that has struggled in recent decades to field new weapon systems on any timeline at all, especially for technology that nobody could produce outside a scientific laboratory.

But so far, the program has stayed on track.

Success next year could validate the unconventional acquisition strategy taken by the Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office, which is responsible for the Army's development of a hypersonic glide body for the missile.

Novel acquisition practices, notably increased transparency and robust coordination between the government and all major contractors, have enabled the LRHW's success to date, Lt. Gen. Neil Thurgood, the RCCTO director, told Inside Defense in a Feb. 22 interview.

All the contractors on the program share a single master schedule and earned value management system, he said. This allows the government to maintain a close relationship with each individual company, but still hold the whole group to performance markers.

This strategy was built into the program from the beginning, when the Army made awards to six companies that would develop components of the glide body, Thurgood said.

“We got them all in a room, all the CEOs plus one and said, ‘Look, we want to do things a little bit differently, and it's going to make you uncomfortable initially,’” he said. “We believe that transparency equals speed.”

In return, the Army shared more public budget documents and future plans with contractors than it typically would have, which allowed for more frank discussions about timelines and requirements, Thurgood said.

"Stuff that is public domain information once it goes to Congress, sometimes we act like we can't share that," he said. "It's really [Freedom of Information Act]-able information. So, you can make it really hard to find out, or you can help people be successful on the team."

Transparency has also allowed the Army and RCCTO to tell the same message to industry, Congress, the other services and academia, which has given them greater credibility, according to Marcia Holmes, deputy director at RCCTO.

The Army plans to field three batteries of the LRHW, which is also known as Dark Eagle. The missile is a key part of the Army's future long-range fires portfolio, the top modernization priority as the service prepares for large-scale conflict.

Thurgood, Holmes and his Navy counterpart chair a two-hour meeting every week with the companies that lead the hypersonic missile program, Thurgood said. The Army presents its budgets and progress with whichever part of the program is on the agenda, and the company that makes that component must share its progress or challenges with everyone else.

The Army and Navy have agreed to share a hypersonic glide body for ground- and sea-launched missiles, to avoid creating redundant programs. The Army is responsible for the glide body, while the Navy will develop and buy two-stage rockets for the missiles.

Each company with a contract for the glide body must send someone with decision-making power to the weekly meeting, Thurgood said.

"The first time that one of them comes to the meeting and says, 'Hey, I need to come back to my company,' they don't ever come back," he said. None of the companies have tested this rule yet.

RCCTO has increased its visibility into the supply chain as well, talking directly to companies as far as five layers down from the prime contractors, according to the general.

"They just love that engagement," he said. "They're making a subset of a component, maybe some build-out box, some cable. They don't really understand the big picture, where it fits into the weapon system and why it's important that they're not a minute late."

Flat organizational structures are the norm for RCCTO, which also manages many of the Army's directed-energy and hybrid vehicle efforts, Thurgood said. The hypersonic development program continues that practice and brings it to partners in industry and across the military.

Just as there are regular meetings with contractor decision-makers on the hypersonic missile program, there is a group of three-stars from different services and the Pentagon that meet to discuss the program, according to Thurgood.

The three-star group meets every three months, and the meetings are dedicated to hashing out decisions, he said.

RCCTO has created higher-level groups for more significant decisions, with four-star generals, service undersecretaries and corporate C-suite executives, Thurgood said. When it is time to get higher-level approval, the office already knows who to call.

This structure for efficient decision-making has allowed the program to maintain its focus on rapid development without sacrificing flexibility in the design, according to the general. Some participating companies have had their scope of work change repeatedly, and that has required efficient contract adjustments.

Transparency and flexibility requirements were not written into the contracts the government made with contractors, he said.

"What we have is a group of industry partners who recognize the focused mission that we started with for our nation," Thurgood said. "They recognize that it's up to them to do it, and us as a partnership to do it."

RCCTO has decided to use a similar acquisition strategy for its directed-energy programs, which involve a slightly more developed industrial base, Thurgood said. These practices might work for other new technologies, at least at the office's rapid prototyping stage.

Rather than create a firm requirements document now, the Army and Navy have created a list of desired characteristics, he said. There will be trade-offs during prototyping, as the military learns what industry can build.

Army Futures Command has championed this approach for other modernization programs, including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle replacement.

Some requirements have already been set -- for example, a C-17 cargo plane must be able to transport all components of the finished missiles and their ground equipment. But it would have been impossible to set every requirement before any missiles were actually built, according to Thurgood.

A set of requirements will come out of the desired characteristics and the lessons from the prototype phase, and companies will have to meet them for production contracts, the general said.

To make sure there would be real competition in the future for these programs, the components of the missile were split into their own contracts, Thurgood said. In a typical program, there would be a single prime contractor who deals directly with the government, or just a couple large components the government competes and buys directly.

Six companies won contracts, mostly in the form of other transaction agreements, for the glide body: Dynetics, General Atomics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, i3 and Raytheon. Lockheed has since acquired i3's hypersonics portfolio.

"In an emerging industrial base, the way you keep competition is in the major components," Thurgood said. "So instead of awarding a glide body contract to one and then letting them have a dominant market . . . what we did is we broke it up into component parts."

The thermal protection system, a coating on the glide body that allows it to travel at hypersonic speeds without melting or exploding, is its own component that the government buys directly from a contractor, according to Thurgood.

That coating is provided to the glide body manufacturer as government-furnished equipment. The glide body, in turn, is provided to the missile integrator as government-furnished equipment.

Fundamental technology for the glide body comes from Sandia National Laboratories, which has worked with Dynetics to develop a production process, he said.

The military will retain ownership of the technical data package, and the Army will be able to provide it to other companies for future competitions, a RCCTO spokeswoman told Inside Defense after the interview.

Behind the transparency and the later requirements-writing is the recognition that not everything will work perfectly, especially in the first missiles, Thurgood said. The Army must determine what qualifies as the minimum viable product.

A priority technology, such as hypersonics, must take some risks, and that requires a greater tolerance for failure along the way, according to the general.

“We need to move much, much quicker, and part of that means it doesn’t have to be perfect,” he said. “We need to prove that it can do it -- or not do it -- and recognize that not everything will work, and some things will work.”

Industry appreciates this attitude, because it matches the risks that private businesses often take, Thurgood said.

“They want this kind of transparency, to be able to go fast, use their best and brightest, and use the technology, balanced against risk,” he added.

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## **CONGRESS**

### **43. Top Republican defense voice in the Senate set to retire this year**

Defense News Online, Feb. 25 | Leo Shane III and Joe Gould

Jim Inhofe, the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee and the top Republican defense voice in the Senate, announced on Thursday that he will retire from Congress at the end of the year.

The move comes with almost four years left in Inhofe’s current Senate term and could leave a significant leadership void in the Senate GOP’s military caucus.

Inhofe, 87, told The Oklahoman in an interview that he and his wife, Kay, “have decided that we need to have time together.” Her health has been deteriorating in recent years.

Inhofe has been the top Republican on the Armed Services Committee since 2018, serving in both the ranking member role and as chairman for two years. He succeeded longtime-Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., in that role.

Under Oklahoma law, Inhofe had to announce his retirement before March 1 to trigger a special election to fill the Senate seat later this year.

The former Tulsa mayor and Army veteran has represented Oklahoma in Congress since 1987, first in the House of Representatives and in the Senate since 1994.

Inhofe has been a staunch supporter of bigger military budgets and increased military end strength, and a critic of defense cutbacks in recent Democratic presidential administrations. More recently, he has pushed for the United States to provide more military assistance to foreign allies, particularly Ukraine.

He was also a vocal advocate for the 2018 National Defense Strategy that prioritized Russia and China, and would often wield a paper copy in hearings to make points about the country’s defense spending needs.

During Donald Trump’s presidency, Inhofe worked to balance support for the Republican commander-in-chief with pressure to raise defense budgets higher than the White House wanted. He also publicly struggled to counter Trump’s plans to slash America’s troop presence in Europe.

Though Trump endorsed his reelection in 2020, the relationship fractured soon after, when Congress overrode Trump’s veto of the annual defense policy bill, with Inhofe defying Trump on the vote.

The second-ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee is Roger Wicker of Mississippi. Whoever succeeds Inhofe in the leadership role could become chairman of the powerful military affairs committee next year if Republicans take the majority in the Senate after this fall’s elections.

Inhofe told The Oklahoman that he wanted to work on one last annual defense authorization bill before leaving Congress, predicting that this year's will be difficult. He also endorsed his chief of staff, Luke Holland, in the upcoming special election to serve out the remainder of his Senate term, which ends in 2026.

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## **COMMENTARY**

### **44. The Ukraine crisis is now a nuclear crisis**

#### ***Russian President Vladimir Putin just put his nuclear forces on alert***

Washington Post Online ("Monkey Cage" Blog), Feb. 27 | Caitlin Talmadge

Russia's publicly announced nuclear alert has turned the Ukraine war from a crisis involving nuclear powers to an actual nuclear crisis.

With the caveat that we do not have many details about what the Russian alert entails, it is nevertheless a clear sign that President Vladimir Putin does not believe that the conventional military campaign in Ukraine is achieving the political outcomes he wants.

Putin has turned to nuclear weapons because they offer another way to increase pressure on both Ukraine and its international backers to come to the settlement that Russia wants regarding Ukraine's status. Yet his decision raises serious risks of both deliberate and inadvertent nuclear escalation.

This is a scary moment, but it's not unprecedented or that surprising. Here is why.

#### *Nuclear signals like this are not new*

Putin has explicitly signaled from the beginning of the Ukraine war that he might turn to Russia's nuclear arsenal if outside powers interfered with his campaign or were perceived to be threatening Russia itself.

In fact, Putin's initial nuclear threat likely was intended as a shield to keep the West out of Russia's conventional operations. This highlights what international relations scholars call the stability-instability paradox. The danger of nuclear war may keep nuclear powers from fighting all-out because they fear it would escalate. However, precisely because all-out war would be so mutually damaging, the likelihood of conventional war or even limited nuclear use can increase.

Amid reports of Russia's lagging conventional invasion, Putin may now believe that climbing up to the next rung on the so-called escalation ladder is the only way to achieve the coercive effect he wants.

Such a move fits with his decision to announce the alert so publicly — rather than keeping it secret, as nuclear matters usually are — to ensure that the world gets the message and other nations have to respond.

Putin's approach is not new. Countries often rely on their nuclear arsenals to compensate for inferiority with conventional weapons as shown by Pakistan, North Korea, and NATO's threats to escalate during the Cold War. The idea is to deter conventional attack or prevent conventional defeat through threats of nuclear first use. The world has even seen episodes of explicit signals that nuclear weapons could be used, as Putin has done, by states losing conventional battles in the past: Pakistan versus India in 2001-2002, for example, and Israel versus the Arab coalition in 1973.

#### *There are real escalation risks — both intentional and unintentional*

Putin's alert raises two types of risks that the conflict might escalate into a nuclear conflict: deliberate and inadvertent.

First, the deliberate nuclear escalation risk comes from the possibility that Putin might actually use nuclear weapons, particularly tactical (short-range) nuclear weapons, to achieve his military objectives in Ukraine. Again, this is a major reason countries develop such weapons in the first place — to achieve what they think conventional forces cannot.

It is the same reason that the odds of Russian attacks against civilians have increased in the last day or two. From Putin's standpoint, nuclear threats are likely just another escalatory lever to force the political outcome Russia wants.

Putin might also turn to medium-range nuclear weapons to coerce neighbors in Europe who are seeking to support Ukraine militarily, diplomatically, or politically. Of course, doing the latter against any NATO ally would be extremely escalatory and invoke U.S. commitments to defend its NATO allies under Article V of NATO's founding treaty.

Second, raising the alert status of nuclear weapons inherently raises the likelihood of their use — and this is what generates inadvertent nuclear escalation risk. Details are sparse, but we could expect the readiness of Russia's nuclear forces to now be heightened, and the command and control arrangements governing use of nuclear weapons to possibly be loosened, meaning they could be launched more easily.

Whether Russia has actually practiced these operations and how safely they can be conducted remain unclear. Risks of accidents and unauthorized use could increase. Countries sometimes undertake dangerous measures to signal their readiness to use nuclear weapons, as China did in 1969 when it fueled its rudimentary nuclear weapons in a lengthy border crisis versus the Soviets.

Furthermore, Russia's alert could prompt counter-reactions in the United States, France and Britain. If they alert their forces as well, the chances of misperception — including Russian misperception of an impending nuclear attack — heighten further. Much depends on whether Russia is alerting its strategic nuclear forces, which would focus on protecting the regime from attack on Russian soil, or its theater forces, which would be oriented toward influencing the military and political situation on the continent.

Worryingly, this is happening in a time of deep distrust and mutual suspicion, in which ambiguous signals from one country are likely to be viewed in the worst possible light by its opponents. This is precisely the sort of environment in which inadvertent nuclear escalation becomes most likely.

In the fog of war, countries may shoot first and ask questions later. This is how the Soviets ended up mistakenly shooting down a Korean civilian airliner in 1983 during a period of heightened nuclear tension with the United States, and why the Iranians did the same thing in the aftermath of the U.S. strike on Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani in early 2020.

*Putin is a personalist dictator — and that has its own risks*

Adding to both the deliberate and inadvertent escalation dangers is Putin's status as a personalist dictator. As Jessica L.P. Weeks and Jeff D. Colgan explained here at TMC, these autocrats have few constraints on decision-making authority and are very unlikely to get candid information from advisers. Putin, an aging leader by Russian standards, likely views the current crisis as threatening not only his foreign policy goals but also his domestic political prospects at home, including his personal survival and freedom.

Putin may also want the world to worry that he is just enough of a madman to lash out when his back is against the wall. Again, this is a tactic leaders have tried before, including Khrushchev in the Berlin Crises of 1958 and 1961, and President Richard Nixon when he attempted to pressure the Soviets over Vietnam in 1969. This approach did not work well for these leaders — but they were all far more constrained than Putin.

This institutional and personal context may make Putin more risk-acceptant — that is, more willing to gamble on dangerous nuclear threats to save his regime — than other leaders. It also likely makes him more paranoid. These tendencies again reinforce the escalatory dangers stemming from Putin's recent decision.

--Caitlin Talmadge (@ProfTalmadge) is associate professor of security studies in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She is the author of "The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes" (Cornell University Press, 2015)

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#### **45. How Should the U.S. Respond to Putin's Nuclear Provocation?**

***Putin's order to raise Russia's nuclear-alert status is aimed as much at a domestic audience as it is at the West***

The Atlantic Online, Feb. 27 | Tom Nichols

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russia's strategic nuclear forces to raise their alert status. (Specifically, he has ordered Russia's "strategic deterrence forces" to "transition to special regime of combat duty.")

If Russia's alerts look anything like ours, this means that the crews and institutions that control strategic missiles, submarines, and bombers will be told to make preparedness a higher priority. They will cancel leaves, conduct inspections, check their communications, and so on, and their intelligence organizations will devote more time and attention than usual to monitoring for indications of possible launches against Russia.

In this heightened state of alert, it is easier to make mistakes yet there is less time to correct them. This is not yet a direct threat to the United States, but it is a signal from Putin, and a gamble.

I had expected that Putin might resort to raising the nuclear-alert status if the invasion of Ukraine went poorly, but I am surprised that he reached for this measure so soon.

And the invasion is, indeed, going poorly for Putin. The Ukrainians did not greet the Russians as liberators. Russian military performance has been worse, and Ukrainian military performance has been better, than many observers (including me) might have expected. Russia still has plenty of time to start bringing down a lot more force on Ukraine, but that will begin a bloodbath and Putin will have to admit that his earlier confidence in a quick victory was unwarranted.

Putin might also be rattled by the scale of the protests erupting in Russia itself. The Russian authorities have already jailed many hundreds of people, and at some point, even Putin must realize that he can't arrest everyone (as much as he'd probably like to do so).

This all suggests that Putin's order—conducted on television and captured on video—is a measure aimed as much at a domestic Russian audience as it is at the West. He may be hoping to produce a kind of Cold War rallying-around-the-flag among the Russian people. Or, at the least, to increase the sense that protest during a nuclear crisis is even more traitorous than usual.

Had Putin wanted to send a message solely to NATO, he could have merely given the order to the Russian chain of command, and Western intelligence and defense sources would have picked it up immediately. We know what such an order sounds like and what kind of activity would follow it.

In fact, that's exactly what we did in 1973, when the Nixon administration increased U.S. nuclear readiness during the Yom Kippur War. We made no announcement, but we sent the alert orders in the clear, where we knew Moscow could hear them. Our public silence allowed for a certain amount of ambiguity, which we hoped would induce even more caution in the Kremlin.

Putin, however, gave a short speech before issuing the official order to Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov (who were wearing the Russian equivalent of daily battle-dress uniforms rather than formal military dress). Like all his statements since the Ukraine crisis began, Putin's preamble sounded

like it was cribbed from a Soviet leadership speech circa 1975. He griped about economic sanctions, which have clearly gotten his attention, and he accused “the leading NATO nations”—an old Soviet formulation that always means the United States, sometimes along with the United Kingdom and Germany—of directing “aggressive statements” at Russia.

If Putin was signaling his own people, however, the fact remains that those forces now on higher alert are readying for combat with the United States and the rest of NATO. The missiles and bombers are pointed at us, not the people of Moscow. Putin is playing an insanely dangerous game here. He’s holding a weak hand and yet threatening to go all in. This is yet more evidence that years of isolation, in which his only contact is with sycophants and security guards, have taken its toll on his mental state.

What should the U.S. do?

For now, the sensible, and confident, American answer should be to do nothing. This might seem counterintuitive: The Russians have gone to higher alert, and it would seem only prudent to answer this with a reciprocal raising of U.S. alert status. But that Cold War reaction would, I suspect, exactly what Putin wants. He’s in a jam and he’s trying to look strong, and part of the way he can do that is to turn his hare-brained scheme in Ukraine into a gigantic Russian-American confrontation. Putin would like nothing better than to take everyone’s mind off Ukraine and focus us all on a game of nuclear chicken.

We should not take this bait. There’s no good strategic reason to give Putin what he wants, and we should hope that President Biden will pointedly ignore this obvious provocation.

*--Tom Nichols is a contributing writer at The Atlantic and the author of its newsletter Peacefield*

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#### **46. With his war going slowly, Vladimir Putin raises the nuclear stakes *Why Russian nuclear forces have been put on a higher state of alertness***

The Economist Online (UK), Feb. 27 | Editorial

As Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine in the early hours of February 24th, he warned the West to stay out of it. “Whoever tries to hinder us... should know that Russia’s response...will lead you to such consequences that you have never encountered in your history,” he said. It was interpreted as a barely veiled threat to use nuclear weapons. On February 27th, several days into his war, and without much to show for the fighting so far, Mr Putin removed the veil entirely.

At a televised meeting with Sergei Shoigu, his defence minister, who looked taken aback, and the chief of the general staff, General Valery Gerasimov, Mr Putin accused the West of “unfriendly economic actions”. He was referring to the heavy sanctions announced in recent days, which threaten to batter Russia’s economy, as well as “aggressive statements” about Russia. “Therefore I order the minister of defence and the chief of the general staff to transfer the deterrence forces...to a special mode of combat duty.” In effect, it suggests that Russian nuclear weapons are moving to higher readiness.

This does not mean Mr Putin is preparing a nuclear strike. “Announcing it means that it is primarily a political message designed to impress us,” says Bruno Tertrais, an expert on nuclear deterrence at the Foundation for Strategic Research, a think-tank in Paris. “If he was getting ready to use nuclear weapons he would not [say so first].” Mr Putin’s aim is probably to deter the West from offering further support to Ukraine, which has so far fiercely resisted Russian ground assaults on several targets including Kyiv, the capital, and on February 27th Kharkiv, the second-largest city.

In recent days that support has been increasing. On February 25th Britain held a conference with more than 25 countries, including America and Canada, at which they pledged to continue sending ammunition, anti-tank weapons

and other arms to Ukraine. A day later even Germany, which had previously refused to send lethal aid, and had blocked German-made weapons from being sent by others, changed its mind.

It said it would send 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles “as quickly as possible”. It also allowed the Netherlands and Estonia to send rocket-propelled grenade launchers and howitzers respectively. The next day it went even further, announcing a huge expansion in defence spending, with a special fund of €100bn (\$112bn). In addition to stanching the flow of such things to Ukraine, Mr Putin may also hope to stamp out any Western debates over the idea of a no-fly zone over parts of Ukraine.

His threat amounts to releasing the safety catch on a firearm. The reference to “special mode of combat duty” probably refers to the command and control of Russian nuclear forces. In peacetime, the system is thought to be incapable of transmitting launch orders, as if its circuits are disconnected, says Pavel Podvig, an expert on Russian nuclear forces at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, a think-tank in Geneva. In moments of crisis Russian officials can “bring the system into a working condition, connecting the wires”, says Mr Podvig, “so if a launch order is issued it can go through”.

Once that happens, he says, the system is designed to allow a launch to occur even if Mr Putin is incapacitated—though that requires detecting a nuclear detonation on Russian soil. In addition to all that, “combat duty” might also trigger other preparations, such as nuclear-armed submarines leaving port or weapons being loaded onto bombers—things that would be visible to America and its allies through satellites and other means.

Russia is estimated to have 1,588 deployed nuclear warheads and 2,889 in reserve (America has 1,644 and 1,964 respectively). Its “deterrence forces” are not just nuclear ones, though. Russia considers strategic deterrence to span nuclear and conventional forces, including missiles such as the ground-launched Iskander), sea-launched Kalibr and air-launched Kh-101 and Kinzhal. Some of these missiles are dual-capable, which means that they can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. Many have been spotted in recent weeks. The Kinzhal was seen under a Russian warplane in Kaliningrad on February 8th and Iskanders are thought to have been used in the first wave of missile strikes on Ukraine.

Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary-general of NATO, said that Mr Putin’s move was “dangerous rhetoric”. The alliance includes three nuclear powers—America, Britain and France—although France does not participate in joint nuclear planning and its forces are not formally assigned to NATO. In addition to their strategic forces, America also deploys “non-strategic” (sometimes called tactical) nuclear weapons to Europe, which have lower explosive yields. These can be carried by Belgian, German, Italian, Dutch and Turkish jets, the idea being to ensure a wider range of allies have a stake in nuclear deterrence.

Western nuclear forces do not need to go on higher alert, Mr Tertrais thinks. “I see no reason for a tit-for-tat,” he says. “Quite the contrary: we must appear cool-headed and show that he [Mr Putin] is the one losing his temper.” But the risks of misperception and misunderstanding are higher in wartime, and Mr Putin’s willingness to gamble has been proven to be greater than many assumed. Jon Wolfsthal of Global Zero, an advocacy group, and a former arms-control official in the Obama administration, urges America’s chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, the country’s top military officer, to remain in regular contact with General Gerasimov—and to remind him, and his colleagues, that any resort to nuclear weapons “makes them personally accountable under the laws of war”.

Mr Putin himself seems accountable to no one. In the 1950s Thomas Schelling, an economist and nuclear strategist, pointed out that the most credible threats were not those that promised an action with certainty, but left something to chance. “The threat is not quite of the form ‘I may or may not, according as I choose,’” noted Schelling, “but... ‘I may or may not, and even I can’t be altogether sure.’” Mr Putin has gambled heavily. Now he is raising the stakes.

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#### **47. A hurting stalemate? The risks of nuclear weapon use in the Ukraine crisis**

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Feb. 27 | Francesca Giovannini

Nuclear experts are trained to think the unthinkable. So, here is an unthinkable scenario that might actually happen in real life:

The battle over Ukraine drags on. From both the European Union and the United States, fresh weapons and other supplies continue to enter into Ukraine and allow the Ukrainian forces to fight on. The battle reaches what conflict resolution expert William Zartman calls “a hurting stalemate” situation. The balance of forces on the ground is not completely or perfectly symmetrical, but what was once considered a completely disproportioned asymmetry of forces has been gradually re-equilibrated, in favor of the Ukrainian forces.

The crisis becomes a war of endurance.

Theories of international relations tell us the defenders have a strategic advantage. They know the terrain in which they fight, and above all they have an absolute resolve to repulse the attacker. What news outlets report largely confirms these theoretical arguments. The extraordinary competence of the Ukrainian military is further strengthened by an unprecedented level of civilian mobilization and resistance.

Meanwhile, Russian forces meet considerable challenges in re-supplying their forward-deployed troops. The army has visibly underperformed. No strategic objective has been achieved. And for the first time since the beginning of the conflict, the Russian media acknowledge the country’s first casualties. As the situation endures, Russian troop morale wanes. Fighting becomes sloppy, casualties continue to climb on the Russian side.

Generally, in a situation of hurting stalemate, according to Zartman, the costs of continuing the struggle exceed (oftentimes greatly exceed) the benefits to be gained. Yet, it is reasonable to assume that for Putin, losing the war with Ukraine is a non-option. He has claimed Ukraine is an indivisible part of the Russian identity and territory. In addition, with two-thirds of Russia’s entire military forces on the ground, losing a war against what is perceived as a much weaker military would inflict major reputational costs to the Russian Federation and to Putin.

Neither might he be willing to accept a negotiated solution that leaves the current regime in power. The costs that Putin has been already willing to pay for his invasion of Ukraine have been astronomical. Settling for a half-baked victory seems very unlikely. For the costs of the invasion to be worth it, Putin needs a decisive victory.

The question of what “winning” means for Putin comes into play.

What options does Putin have? A decision by Putin to use tactical nuclear weapons seems, perhaps, no longer completely far-fetched. In fact, he ordered Russia’s nuclear forces to a higher alert status on Sunday, although it was unclear what the order meant in practical terms. The land- and submarine-based nuclear missiles of Russia and the United States are generally thought to be kept at high readiness at all times.

Today, as I write this article, a scenario that leads Russia to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine seems improbable. Like many others, I make three assumptions: that Russia has a strong interest in not destroying Ukraine, because Putin wants to occupy it; that even though Putin is a thug, he is not a crazy enough thug to break a taboo against the use of nuclear weapons in war, a taboo that has held for 75 years; and that there are plenty of other options that the Russians can exercise in subduing Ukraine.

But perhaps those assumptions should be questioned.

First, the assumption that Putin wants to avoid destroying Ukraine hardly stands the test of reality. While it was true that in the first phase of the conflict the Russians took measures to reduce civilian costs and infrastructure destruction, in the last 24 hours, Russian tactics have shown a clear change in targeting and pace. The targeting of residential buildings, gas pipelines, and energy stations is indicative of how much the Russians now feel the urgency of time and the fear that Ukrainian resistance is coalescing. The longer the conflict drags on, the more the Russians will have

to escalate to break the “resolve” of the Ukrainians. Ultimately, having a decisive victory might matter more to Putin than the preservation of infrastructure. And if Putin’s goal is to make Ukraine a buffer zone between Russia and the West, limiting damage on Ukraine soil might ultimately count little in Putin’s mind.

As regards the second assumption: How much crazier would Putin need to be, to break the so-called “nuclear taboo”? It seems to me that he has been willing to break the taboo regarding national sovereignty more than once. While I don’t think he will take the decision of using tactical nuclear weapons lightly, I also don’t believe that the fear of breaking a precedent (real or imaginary) is something that would constrain him. It is interesting also to note that Putin has repeatedly referred to nuclear weapons during this crisis. On Sunday, he ordered his country’s nuclear forces on high alert in what he said was a response to aggressive statements from Western countries. In the speech that announced the invasion of Ukraine, Putin claimed that “Ukraine was on the path to acquiring nuclear weapons.” No proof exists of course to support such a claim, but it is interesting to note how preeminent the nuclear argument plays in Putin’s thinking. More important, the Russians apparently are considering a retaliatory measure to push back against the West’s support of Ukraine; it would include Russia leaving the New START nuclear arms control agreement, which caps the deployed nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia—a move implied on Saturday by former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, currently deputy head of Russia’s Security Council.

Finally, we know the Russians still have plenty of conventional and non-nuclear strategic options. They have not deployed their full cyber capabilities. More tanks are being sent in. Use of swarm drones and other “exotic” weapons might also be in the planning phase. And several of my colleagues at the Belfer Center have pointed out, Russia has enough fire power to destroy Ukrainian cities without having to resort to nuclear weapons.

In addition, as this mad war rages on, windows for diplomacy and negotiations might appear along the way. One seems to be opening tomorrow, with talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations set to begin in Belarus.

What makes the use of tactical nuclear weapons plausible (although not likely) to me is their unequivocal messaging value. The use of one or more tactical nuclear weapons would be an unmissable attempt by Putin to break the unity of the West, and to test the resolve of some NATO countries. It would also signal once and for all his willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve his political and strategic goals.

I don’t claim this is a likely scenario, but I do worry.

I have celebrated the military victories of the fierce and proud Ukrainians. I cried over the images showing on TV. I gasped in reading the messages of President Zelensky confirming over and over his unshakable will to stay and fight with the Ukrainian people until the end. But a more ominous scenario is emerging and with it a catastrophic dilemma for both President Zelensky and the West. The longer he and the West resist, the more they might involuntarily push Putin to consider further escalations, including to the nuclear threshold. Should Zelensky surrender and leave, hoping to appease Russia? Or should he continue to fight with his people, with increasing help from the West, to defend their right to live freely? Is the fight for freedom worth the price of a possible nuclear attack?

This is an existential dilemma without a perfect solution, one that nobody should ever face. It’s a dilemma that could haunt us all soon, unless sanity is restored by renewed diplomacy.

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#### **48. Putin’s Nuclear Threat Shatters a Security Shield**

All eyes are on the conventional war unfolding in Ukraine. But a very different kind of conflict looms over the conflict. Before invading, Putin staged nuclear weapons drills around Russia's border with Ukraine. In case anyone missed the point, his speech justifying the invasion reminded listeners that his country remained "one of the most powerful nuclear powers."

Worse, this rant went hand in hand with a sinister warning: "Whoever tries to hinder us, and even more so, to create threats to our country," he declared, would suffer "consequences that you have never encountered in your history." Next came his announcement that Russia's nuclear forces had been put on a "high alert."

Many Western strategists have interpreted all this as a threat to prod the Ukrainians to surrender or intimidate the Europeans.

Whatever his motives, Putin is using nuclear deterrence as cover for a massive conventional military offensive. This is an ominous turn of events. To the extent this has ever worked in the nuclear age, it did so by forcing adversaries to adopt cautious, non-confrontational positions. But understanding how doctrines of deterrence developed during the Cold War underscores the degree to which we are in uncharted waters.

Most accounts of nuclear strategy begin with the U.S. dropping atomic bombs on Japan in 1945. In the weeks and months that followed, a group of scholars at Yale wrote essays on nuclear warfare they collected in a short book titled "The Absolute Weapon."

The most influential piece of the bunch came from military thinker Bernard Brodie. In the space of a few paragraphs, he laid out the mind-bending implications of the bomb for military strategy. His essay is still worth reading.

Brodie pointed out that "if the atomic bomb can be used without fear of substantial retaliation in kind, it will clearly encourage aggression." The only way to counteract this, he argued, was "to make it as certain as possible that the aggressor who uses the bomb will have it used against him."

Writing at the end of the worst war in world history, Brodie acknowledged that "the possibility of irresponsible or desperate men again becoming rulers of powerful states cannot ... be ruled out in the future." But it was possible, he averred, that such leaders and their military supporters could be disabused of the idea "that aggression will be cheap."

Brodie concluded with these oft-quoted lines: "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose."

The argument found few takers at first. Other doctrines found favor instead. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, for example, advanced the doctrine of "massive retaliation," where conventional attacks could be met by a disproportionate nuclear response.

Others, like Henry Kissinger, thought there was a space for "limited" nuclear war, where tactical nukes might coexist with conventional weaponry. Still others thought it possible to launch a pre-emptive "first strike" that destroyed an adversary's entire nuclear arsenal.

Brodie had little patience for such thinking. In 1951, he moved to the RAND Corporation, where he expanded the idea first proposed in his seminal essay. Other civilian strategists joined him there: the political scientist Albert Wohlstetter; the economist Thomas Schelling; polymath, game theorist and provocateur Herman Kahn, and many others.

These thinkers began to debate the nuances of nuclear strategy with the fervor of medieval scholastics. RAND was their monastery, and their deliberations gave rise to the rudiments of modern nuclear strategy.

They proceeded as technological advances made a successful first strike increasingly impossible: Newly commissioned submarines could lurk undetected, firing the retaliatory second strike; missiles waiting in subterranean silos could do the same.

These developments nudged these thinkers toward a revolutionary conclusion: If both sides realized that a first strike would inevitably trigger a devastating second strike in return, neither side would pre-emptively use nuclear weapons. Instead, a “stable balance of terror” would prevail. In turn, this would deter conventional conflict as well out of fear it might spiral into a nuclear exchange.

The subtleties of these doctrines defy easy summary, particularly because they beget counterintuitive corollaries. For example, some RAND theorists maintained that government-sponsored efforts to survive a potential nuclear war — building civil defense shelters, for example — were a bad idea, because the Soviets would assume the Americans intended to survive a nuclear exchange. This in turn could be misinterpreted to mean we meant to launch a pre-emptive attack.

All of this might have remained a macabre intellectual exercise, but Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, himself a devotee of the RAND way, put these ideas into practice in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. They became known as “assured destruction” or, eventually, “mutually assured destruction,” or MAD.

This was the basic theory of deterrence that remained operative, with some modifications, until the end of the Cold War. As Brodie anticipated, MAD scrambles conventional understandings of strategic advantage and deterrence.

For example, when it became apparent that the Soviets had developed an impregnable second-strike capacity, McNamara publicly acknowledged this as a welcome development. Why? Because by doing so, the Soviet Union now knew that we knew that they possessed a second-strike option. The balance of terror had been achieved.

This generated an eerie stability in Europe, with a sharply defined line separating two sides, each armed to the teeth with conventional and nuclear weapons. But they would not fight. Instead, the superpowers would fight conventional wars by proxy elsewhere in the world.

In 1981, the nuclear strategist Kenneth Waltz observed: “Never since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 ... have great powers enjoyed a longer period of peace than we have known since the Second World War. One can scarcely believe that the presence of nuclear weapons does not greatly help to explain this happy condition.”

A decade later, though, the Cold War was over. There was much debate in strategic circles about whether deterrence would work in a messy, multipolar world. Some, like Waltz, believed that it would. “With nuclear weapons,” he wrote, “it’s been proven without exception that whoever gets nuclear weapons behaves with caution and moderation.”

A recent review of nuclear strategy has described this point of view as the “easy deterrence” school of thought. But there is an alternative — and dissenting — theory of nuclear deterrence, one rooted in a recognition that, well, leaders don’t always behave rationally.

Albert Wohlstetter, one of the original crew at RAND, put this well back in 1958. He acknowledged that many people, including some of his colleagues, believed that the “stability of the thermonuclear balance ... would make aggression irrational or even insane.” But, he argued, “the balance is in fact precarious.”

These words are worth remembering as we contemplate Putin’s alarming rhetoric. The world no longer operates within the carefully constructed scaffolding of deterrence fashioned during the Cold War. That was already too hazardous by half, leading to a number of close calls.

We now confront a challenge of a different order entirely, where a leader driven by grievance and pride is using nuclear deterrence to fight a land war in Europe. In the process, Putin has turned the old doctrines upside down. What formerly was a means of maintaining the status quo has become a threat to destroy it.

If this continues much longer, the old logic of nuclear deterrence may be gone for good. But the terror? Not so much.

--Stephen Mihm, a professor of history at the University of Georgia, is a contributor to Bloomberg Opinion

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#### **49. Russia's Ukraine War Heightens Urgency Around Biden's Nuclear Weapons Strategy**

***With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, prospects for U.S. nuclear disarmament look bleak. The Biden administration was already cutting corners on its policy***

TheIntercept.com, Feb. 25 | Sara Sirota

As the week began, nonproliferation advocates weren't optimistic that President Joe Biden would stand by his early commitments to "reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy." He might reverse former President Donald Trump's decisions to pursue a nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile or to retain the B83 gravity bomb, the most destructive weapon in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, they thought. He might roll back Trump's policy allowing a nuclear response to "significant non-nuclear strategic attacks" or even consider a coveted "no first use" policy that Biden had shown interest in as vice president. But prospects that he would do the heavier lifting and halt Northrop Grumman's contract to replace the intercontinental ballistic missile system — considered one of the most dangerous and unnecessary weapons in the nuclear arsenal — were practically nonexistent. Combined with multiple other weapons programs, the brand-new ICBM system puts the U.S. in its largest nuclear modernization effort since the Cold War.

Now that Russia has invaded Ukraine in what could amount to the worst conflict in Europe since World War II, the prognosis looks even more grim, and the urgency for prudence much greater. Russia is armed with a trove of nuclear weapons, spreading fear to concerned observers about the prospect of an escalation involving the most destructive arms on the planet. During a televised address Wednesday night, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a stark warning that anyone who interferes "will face consequences greater than any you have faced in history" — which some experts have interpreted as a reference to nuclear weapons. Allen Hester of the Friends Committee on National Legislation told The Intercept on Thursday that Russia is "very much using their nuclear arsenal as a shield to pursue conventional warfare in the region," adding that it's crucial nevertheless to keep the lines of communication open.

There will now likely be heightened pressure on Biden, who is yet to approve his final nuclear weapons strategy, to continue Trump's expansionist course. Stephen Young of the Union of Concerned Scientists warned that hawks in the administration will try to convince Biden to keep the cruise missile and gravity bomb that his predecessor endorsed. "People will see it, they will claim it's a sign of weakness if the U.S. cancels anything right now," he told The Intercept. Hester said Biden may also be less willing to adopt a "no first use" policy, especially if fearful European allies, who've already lobbied against it, urge Biden again not to make major reforms. And, in what Hester described as a worst-case scenario, the president could decide to increase spending on cyber operations and other non-nuclear capabilities, then frame the relative change as a reduction in nuclear weapon reliance without cutting the arsenal at all.

Biden will weigh his options as he considers the draft Nuclear Posture Review that, prior to the crisis in Ukraine, was expected early this year. The NPR is a public document that each president since Bill Clinton has released to declare their policy on nuclear weapons. According to Hester, the draft is currently sitting on the president's desk awaiting approval and any changes that he may deem necessary. Young said Defense Department officials have told him that the strategy's rollout will be delayed until after the crisis in Ukraine settles. The White House and Pentagon did not reply to requests for comment.

Nuclear policy expert Joe Cirincione of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft told *The Intercept* that the war on Ukraine, and Americans' tendency to immediately react by "bringing down the hammer," shows why Biden should pull back his NPR and consider a more restrained approach. He especially warned about the administration repackaging the same old maximalist policies under new lingo like "integrated deterrence" that can "create a slipper[y] slope where conventional conflict can escalate quickly and seamlessly to cyber war and nuclear war."

"It is completely inadequate for the task ahead of us," Cirincione said of the draft review, arguing: "If Biden issues the NPR the Pentagon wrote, he will not just be accepting obsolete Cold War doctrines and weapons, he will be blessing them. All his officials will be required to embrace these weapons and strategies as the Democratic view. Members of Congress will be kneecapped, unable to oppose these new weapons no matter what the cost."

Skeptics of nuclear weapons are already at a disadvantage. In 2010, after President Barack Obama successfully negotiated the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to limit the number of deployed ICBMs and other weapons, disarmament activists hoped that he would continue his 2009 pledge "to seek the peace and the security of a world without nuclear weapons." But according to Cirincione, Obama faced so much wrath from Republicans and the nuclear-industrial complex, as well as a demanding Putin, that he turned away from plans to reduce arms further and allowed research for a new ICBM program, known as the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, to proceed. The weapon, whose development was greenlighted in the final months of Trump's presidency, is slated to cost \$264 billion through 2075 and begin replacing the current system in the late 2020s.

Similar forces have come for Biden. Last year, for example, the White House had selected Leonor Tomero, a longtime congressional staffer known for questioning excessive weapons buildup, to oversee the NPR, leading to a revolt by the defense establishment. In the Senate, Nebraska Republican Deb Fischer reportedly threatened to obstruct confirmations of nominees if Tomero stayed. The Department of Defense eliminated her position in September, calling the move a reorganization.

Another impediment to restraint arises from claims that nuclear weapon programs result in jobs and economic development in some lawmakers' home states. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., who has outsize influence over the military budget as chair of the Appropriations Committee's defense panel, has reiterated his support for the new ICBM system, which will partially be based in Montana. (Nonproliferation advocates like Global Zero's Emma Claire Foley argue that the public could be better served by directing the new weapon's funds toward programs like Medicare expansion.)

And the two most powerful Republicans on the Senate and House Armed Services committees — Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., and Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala. — have sought to shut down assessment of whether the new weapon system is necessary. Last month the two criticized the Defense Department for contracting with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to assess whether the current ICBM system, known as the Minuteman III, could remain viable as an alternative to its replacement. Rogers spokesperson Justine Sanders told Bloomberg that the review was redundant because the Obama administration had already examined other options, a common argument that proponents of the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent use. But that prior assessment, which is classified, was likely grounded in assumptions that the size of the force and deterrence needs would not change, Matt Korda of the Federation of American Scientists told *The Intercept*.

The contract began with the premise that the U.S. would continue to have an ICBM force rather than consider the possibility of eliminating the missiles, James Acton, co-director of Carnegie's nuclear policy program, told *The Intercept*. ICBMs carry "inherent risks in a crisis in the sense that because [leaders] have a 'use them or lose them' mentality around these weapons, because they're framed as sitting ducks, essentially, in the event of a nuclear war, the pressure on the president to use them in a crisis is very high," Hester explained.

The weapons also serve as "nuclear sponges," meaning that "they're there to absorb the enemy's nuclear missiles and sacrifice those communities in the Midwest who house these missiles in the name of saving ... larger-population coastal cities," he added.

Despite resistance from Inhofe and Rogers, the Carnegie study was nowhere near the thorough technical evaluation sought by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and 19 other Democratic lawmakers last year. According to Acton, it was never meant to be: “Our study was entirely unclassified, and precisely because the NPR is coming out relatively soon, it was also a fairly short study. So our study was not, could not be, it was never intended to be a detailed, technically informed feasibility assessment of different options.”

Politico reported last month that the Biden administration decided to ignore the 20 Democrats’ request for an in-depth analysis of whether the Minuteman III could continue serving into the future. The Intercept has also learned that the Pentagon appears to have used a bogus excuse to justify why it didn’t seek out such an evaluation.

During one of Carnegie’s virtual workshops, held January 6, a Biden political appointee claimed that JASON, the Pentagon’s go-to independent scientific advisory group, had neither the time nor contracting mechanism to conduct the requested analysis, attendee Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, told The Intercept. He said the appointee, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Richard Johnson, was speaking from prepared remarks — suggesting that the justification came from more senior policymakers. The Defense Department declined to comment on Johnson’s remarks.

An email sent after the workshop and shared with The Intercept suggests that Johnson’s claim was untrue. According to the email, his comments prompted another attendee to email Ellen Williams, the chair of JASON and a physics professor at the University of Maryland, to ask whether the group had the capacity to conduct the evaluation. Williams replied that JASON indeed had the contracting means in place. The name of the original sender was redacted, but Kimball referred to him as a former member of the Obama administration.

“JASON does and has had mechanisms to contract with DoD – for instance we did studies for DOD [acquisition and sustainment office] both of the last two summers, and are now discussing topics for next summer with DOD [research and engineering office],” Williams wrote in her reply. “I don’t recall any conversation with them about a study, and don’t know when or whether they might have been in touch with us.” She did not respond to a request for comment from The Intercept.

Gordon Long, JASON program office director at the Mitre Corp., which manages the group, declined to say whether the organization discussed the possibility of an ICBM review with the Pentagon. However, he told The Intercept in an email that Mitre has a contract with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense to provide JASON with logistical support that the Pentagon can use to order studies.

The absence of the in-depth technical assessment calls into question the completion of the draft nuclear strategy, which was already concerning to nonproliferation experts. “The Nuclear Posture Review, by going ahead with the ICBM without doing studies, contributes to this sort of mindless nuclear buildup without thoughts about where it leads,” Cirincione said. “It’s not balanced by an equally strong, you might say, disarmament plan that talks about how we get out of this — and without that, you’re basically throwing nuclear fuel on the fire.”

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## **50. Is the United States Ready for the Third Nuclear Age?**

***The most pronounced component of this emerging nuclear context is the impact on U.S. deterrence and stability thinking driven by rapid and in some cases novel technological change***

National Interest Online, Feb. 26 | Andrew Futter

In the next few weeks, the Biden administration is likely to release both a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and a Missile Defense Review (MDR). These two documents are the chance for President Joe Biden and his national security team to “put their stamp” publicly on how they intend to approach issues of nuclear deterrence and national security policy. All previous NPRs and MDRs have marked an important moment in the evolution of U.S. nuclear thinking (each president has released an NPR since 1994 and an MDR since 2010), but the nuclear environment confronting the United States and the wider global nuclear order today will be quite different than what we have seen before.

This is because we are in a world far removed from 1994 when the Clinton administration sought to reorient U.S. nuclear policy toward the challenges of a post-Cold War “Second Nuclear Age,” a reorientation that was broadly followed by Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and, to a lesser extent, Donald Trump in the years that followed. But today we stand on the cusp of a different nuclear world where the challenges to the United States and the global nuclear order are changing and diversifying. We can think of this as the start of a “Third Nuclear Age.”

The move into a Third Nuclear Age does not necessarily mean that everything that the United States has done in the last three-quarters of a century to deter nuclear use against the homeland, allies, or forces based overseas is wrong or defunct, but rather that the locus of the nuclear threat has altered. Much as the attention of U.S. policymakers shifted from nuclear war and arms racing with the Soviet Union to the dangers posed by regional and non-state actors in the 1990s and 2000s, today we are witnessing another transition to a world of disruptive technological change, nuclear great power competition, and challenges to the very foundation of the U.S.-led nuclear order. The response will require a concerted shift away from three decades spent “tailoring” U.S. deterrence efforts to the perceived threats posed by “rogue states” such as North Korea by pursuing limited missile defenses, precision counterforce options, and “counter-proliferation,” towards a renewed focus on strategic deterrence both above and below the nuclear threshold against major nuclear-armed adversaries and great powers. Balancing these deterrence pressures will not be easy.

Perhaps the most pronounced component of this emerging nuclear context is the impact on U.S. deterrence and stability thinking driven by rapid and in some cases novel technological change. Of course, the impact and risk of technological innovation by adversaries has always played a role in U.S. nuclear thinking, and for most of the nuclear era the United States has been at the forefront of military technological innovation, but today this is different.

This is because it is not just the “exotic” nuclear delivery systems such as hypersonic, orbital, or nuclear-powered missiles being developed by Russia, China, and others that matter, but rather the more subtle emergence of a suite of non-nuclear and in some cases non-kinetic capabilities that can be used by U.S. adversaries for strategic missions (such as very accurate ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles for conventional counterforce attacks, increasingly capable defenses, kinetic and non-kinetic anti-satellite/counterspace operations, advances in anti-submarine warfare, and left of launch attacks on missiles and nuclear command and control using computer network operations). All of which are increasingly taking advantage of improvements in remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and autonomous platforms.

These strategic non-nuclear weapons (SNNW) are being developed by U.S. competitors—in many cases as a direct challenge to regional conventional deterrence architectures ultimately underpinned by U.S. nuclear guarantees. The development of SNNW is creating two interlinked sets of nuclear risks: first, that a U.S. adversary will view strategic non-nuclear weapons as more usable than nuclear weapons and threaten their use for coercion or to take greater risks in order to achieve some type of perceived advantage in a crisis; and second, that these systems become entangled in unforeseen ways which leads to rapid unintended escalation from the conventional to the nuclear level. A good example of this might be a “cyber” attack on a U.S. satellite or a command-and-control facility designed to degrade a particular tactical capability that is interpreted—incorrectly—as a precursor to a pre-emptive disarming strike because the “target” is used for both missions. Concurrently, a greater reliance on U.S. non-nuclear weaponry for strategic missions—including deterrence—may lower the threshold for nuclear use by U.S. adversaries, and at best, undermine nuclear arms control and stability.

Technological change is happening at the same time as—and is in many ways reflective of—a transition from an era of U.S. global predominance and unipolarity to a system of great power multipolarity and nuclear competition. One likely offshoot is the return of nuclear weapons, strategic posturing, and nuclear rhetoric to statecraft in a way reminiscent of the Cold War, with a concurrent likelihood of proliferation and possibly arms racing in both nuclear and strategic non-nuclear weaponry. Indeed, we have already seen the announcement of a suite of Russian strategic weapons systems ostensibly designed to overcome any future U.S. missile defense capability and a growing concern about the possibility of a rapid expansion of the Chinese long-range nuclear missile force for the same reason.

Such moves, of course, reflect the perceived deterrence requirements by adversaries to achieve “stability,” but also the expanding political aspirations of Russia and China—and, to a lesser extent, India—to (re)shape their immediate security contexts. Consequently, these moves also have implications for both strategic deterrence and perceived regional imbalances in conventional forces and by implication for U.S. extended deterrence frameworks. We can see this playing out most acutely through recent events in Ukraine, but also reflected by increased competition in Northeast Asia and by a rising India seeking to balance the competing interests of other major powers in the subcontinent. To some extent, this return of great power competition was recognized by the Trump administration, but it will be more complex than just nuclear threats and involve competition across a number of levels including strategic non-nuclear weapons.

The final piece of the nuclear puzzle is that the Third Nuclear Age is likely to be characterized by a fissure in the nuclear order between those broadly wedded to the existing “orthodox” mechanisms of arms control and nuclear disarmament, and those demanding a different and more radical approach. We can most conspicuously see this in the agreement of the Nuclear Ban Treaty in 2017, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. For a generation, global society has acquiesced to an “incremental approach” to nuclear disarmament centered on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and parallel advances in nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. But patience is wearing thin. While the Ban Treaty almost certainly won't force the United States or the eight other nuclear-armed states to disarm any time soon, it is nevertheless symbolic of the view held by many outside the elite nuclear club that a nuclear order based on the efficacy of nuclear weapons for deterrence, and one that has effectively been fashioned and led by the United States, may be unsustainable in the longer term. This, in turn, raises awkward political questions about the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense and deterrence posture, and might potentially further increase the interest in using advanced conventional capabilities for various deterrence missions instead.

The most likely outcome of the NPR and MDR documents is a certain amount of business as usual: a commitment to maintain a safe and secure nuclear force, continued development of homeland and theater missile defenses, and perhaps a pledge to work towards stability and arms control with major strategic competitors. There will also almost certainly be reference to “great power competition,” “new deterrence challenges,” and perhaps “novel technologies.” But the question is whether this will go far enough to meet the demands of a rapidly changing, and some would say deteriorating global nuclear order.

Ultimately, the Third Nuclear Age will be about more than nuclear threats and nuclear deterrence, it will also involve engaging with a growing range of strategic non-nuclear capabilities and missions (both in terms of threats posed to the United States and as capabilities for the United States to deploy); challenges to regional nuclear stability in the Euro-Atlantic, Asia-Pacific, and South Asia; and a broader push back against the U.S.-led system of global nuclear governance and non-proliferation. In the longer term, it is not inconceivable that the Third Nuclear Age may also represent a gradual shift away from the United States as the major player in global nuclear politics; a position it has occupied since 1945.

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## 51. Ukraine Leads the World

Vladimir Putin's Ukraine invasion isn't going according to his script, and for that the world owes a great debt to the heroic people of that besieged country of 41 million. Their resistance against fearsome odds is an inspiration and has awakened the world to the menace of the Kremlin autocrat. Ukraine deserves more support to raise the costs of war for Mr. Putin with arms, the toughest sanctions, and global ostracism.

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Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky is proving to be the man for the moment as he rallies his country and the world to resist the invasion. "I need ammunition, not a ride," Mr. Zelensky said, in a line for the ages, in response to a U.S. offer to help him leave Kyiv to escape a possible assassination.

His leadership has put to shame the New York Times op-ed last week that ran under the headline, "The Comedian-Turned-President Is Seriously in Over His Head." His pleas on behalf of Europe's principles have helped to persuade European leaders that Ukraine's fight is also theirs.

The state of the battlefield is confusing as always in war, but the main news so far is the success of the Ukrainian resistance. Russia still doesn't appear to control a major city, and on Sunday Ukrainian forces repelled an attempt to take Kharkiv, the second-largest city. This operation was supposed to be a quick Russian march to Kyiv followed by a frightened surrender and the installation of a puppet government. Most Western analysts predicted the same.

They underestimated the tenacity of Ukrainians. The sight on TV and social media of Ukrainian civilians preparing to defend their cities is something to behold. Men with desk jobs are grabbing rifles, and teachers are making Molotov cocktails. This is a lesson in the price of freedom that ought to instruct Westerners offended by "microaggressions." Real aggression is a tank rolling down your street.

But Ukrainians shouldn't have to fight urban battles with bombs made in their kitchens, and Europe and the U.S. are finally sending the weapons to Ukrainians that should have been provided long ago. The U.S. is providing some \$350 million more in military aid, and the Biden Administration is asking Congress for another \$6.4 billion for humanitarian and military assistance. Congress should approve the request this week.

Even the Germans are stepping up, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz saying Berlin will provide 1,000 antitank weapons and 500 Stinger missiles. The Netherlands is chipping in 200 Stingers and 50 Panzerfaust 3 antitank weapons with 400 rockets. Sweden is sending antitank weapons, and many other countries are also contributing.

Former Ukraine Defense Minister Andriy Zagorodnyuk tells us there's an urgent need for bulletproof vests and helmets. The U.S. can also provide communications gear like tactical radios that will help small groups of Ukrainians carry out operations against Russian troops. As the war continues, the U.S. and NATO will need to develop means of supply from havens in Poland and other border nations. Air drops shouldn't be ruled out.

Europe, the U.S. and Japan are also strengthening sanctions in a meaningful way. The weekend decision to ban select Russian banks from the Swift financial clearinghouse is a positive step, though it looks like it will still exempt energy transactions. That is an unfortunate bow to the dependence of Western Europe on Russian natural gas. It will diminish the impact of the Swift sanction because energy exports are Mr. Putin's main financial lifeline.

Much of the world is also increasingly isolating Russia and Russians from travel and commerce. Sports leagues are refusing to compete in Russia, companies are refusing to do business, and Europe and Canada have closed off their airspace to Russian airlines. These may seem like symbolic gestures, but they send a message to the Russian people that their ruler is taking them down a blind alley.

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Despite the good news, Ukraine's position remains perilous. Russian forces are still besieging several cities, including Kyiv. Mr. Putin is ruthless, as he showed in a Chechnya campaign that reduced cities to rubble. He could do the same in Ukraine if he feels defeat would jeopardize his political control inside Russia.

On Sunday Mr. Putin put his nuclear forces on high alert in response to what he called threatening comments from NATO leaders. But no one is threatening Russia. It's tempting to dismiss this as more of Mr. Putin's intimidating talk, except the Russian's public statements have been erratic and extreme.

The threats shouldn't stop the growing support for Ukrainian resistance. The stakes of this war are very high, including for American interests. Mr. Putin is trying to restore Greater Russia and make himself the dominant European state and a global power. He wants a new world disorder.

If he succeeds in Ukraine, breaking NATO will be his next ambition. The people of Ukraine are showing a too complacent West what it means to fight for freedom.

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## **52. We must stand with Ukrainians**

Washington Post, Feb. 28, Pg. A22 | Editorial

Five Days after Vladimir Putin launched his war on Ukraine, it is apparent that things are not going the overconfident Russian president's way. Russia has so far failed to take any of Ukraine's major cities, disable its military communications or decapitate the government. The Russian Ministry of Defense's own extended battle report on Sunday admitted for the first time to Russian dead and wounded - but claimed no major victories. In video of a meeting with Mr. Putin, Russia's top two military chiefs looked stricken as he ordered them to place his nation's nuclear forces into a "special mode of combat duty."

The main reasons for this situation - ones that offer signs of hope and yet are fraught with danger - are the resistance of Ukraine's army, bolstered by civilian volunteers, and by the inspirational leadership of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Yet Mr. Putin must also be perplexed by the unified support for Ukraine from the United States, the European Union, Japan, Australia and more. Democracies which waffled over tough sanctions and military aid only a couple days ago announced them Saturday and Sunday with defiant certitude: expulsion of Russian banks from the SWIFT payments system and blockage of Russian central bank reserves; lethal weapons shipments to Ukraine; ouster of Russian airlines from European airspace. BP will disinvest from Russia's state oil company; the E.U. will bar Russian propaganda's TV outlets.

In a dramatic speech to Germany's parliament, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that Germany will not only arm Ukraine's forces, but rearm its own, committing to spend more than the NATO minimum of 2 percent of its economic output on defense. Mr. Scholz urged a shift from Russian energy supplies to other sources. These are extraordinary changes in Germany's postwar foreign and security posture, but Mr. Scholz - correctly and courageously - said Mr. Putin's war is "a turning point in history" to which Germany must swiftly adapt. The applause that greeted Mr. Scholz's words was the sound of a mature democracy, Europe's richest and largest, dealing a strategic defeat to the Kremlin's decades-long effort at co-opting it.

Mr. Putin interprets the West's firm response as evidence of hostility to Russia, not proof that he made a bad bet on democratic decline and disarray. Issuing his nuclear order, he cited the West's "aggressive statements." The practical effect of this alert remains unclear; the Biden administration rightly both condemned it and expressed confidence in the United States' deterrent capability. However, the blunting of Russia's initial military thrust might increase Mr. Putin's desperation and prompt him to try to break Ukraine's will through increased and even less discriminate shelling, rocket and missile fire.

The next step for the United States is for Congress to move quickly on a bipartisan aid plan when it returns this week. The White House is requesting \$6 billion, though independent estimates suggest Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs call for around \$10 billion. As they deliberate, lawmakers should consider these data from a new Washington Post-ABC News poll: Sixty-seven percent of American adults favor sanctions against Russia. More than half of adults said they would support sanctions even if it meant higher energy prices. Between the resistance of the Ukrainians and the unity of the West, Mr. Putin appears baffled. Congress should add to his troubles.

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### **53. Taking NATO's Article V Seriously**

Wall Street Journal, Feb. 26, Pg. A16 | Editorial

Vladimir Putin's likely conquest of Ukraine raises an uncomfortable question: Could Russia next attack a member of NATO? The alliance had better prepare for the possibility because the Russian dictator has all but promised to test it.

"The United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power," President Biden said Thursday. "There is no doubt -- no doubt that the United States and every NATO ally will meet our Article V commitments, which says that an attack on one is an attack on all."

It's good Mr. Biden made that clear about the NATO pledge to defend any member under attack. But the U.S. and Europe also warned Mr. Putin about invading Ukraine, yet they did little to deter him and still haven't delivered the "massive consequences" they promised if he did invade. Mr. Putin might consider Mr. Biden's words Thursday as a challenge to break NATO, especially if he suffers little for his Ukraine slaughter.

NATO nations held a virtual summit on Friday and decided to activate its response force for the first time. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that "thousands of troops" would be deployed to reassure frontline states, including troops from France, Germany and the U.S. More than 100 planes and 120 ships have also already been deployed.

Yet if Russian forces moved today on the Baltic states or even Poland, it's unclear whether NATO could repel them. The U.S. has ordered more than 12,000 troops to Europe this month, bringing the total to nearly 100,000. But American deployments are spread around the Continent. While NATO has a rotational forward presence in the Baltic states and Poland, most forces are far from the eastern front.

More forward deployments, with permanent troops and munitions, are essential. The small Baltic states near Russia are the most likely Putin target given their strategic position, ethnic Russian minorities and smaller military forces. There's also the risk of hybrid attacks to undermine the democratic governments in Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia.

The West will have to prepare for the worst, especially given Mr. Putin's remarks that he doesn't want NATO forces in any frontline states on Russia's periphery. Non-NATO nations Finland and Sweden took part in Friday's NATO summit, and Russia's foreign ministry warned the countries would "face some military and political consequences" if they pursued membership. Those threats are all the more reason for them to join the alliance.

Mr. Putin staged a cyberattack against Estonia in 2007, with almost no repercussions. What kind of Russian attack would trigger an Article V intervention? Mr. Putin understands that if he did attack a NATO member and the alliance failed to respond, NATO is effectively dead. Western leaders have to expect that he'll conclude the reward is worth the risk.

The Ukraine invasion has triggered revisionists to say NATO should never have expanded after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the best argument for expansion was that the alliance would be useful someday if Russia threw up a modern Napoleon Bonaparte bent on rebuilding the empire. Someone like Vladimir Putin. Does anyone think that Mr. Putin wouldn't have already moved on the Baltics if they weren't members of NATO?

The alliance will survive this new threat only if its nations take their obligations seriously. Angela Merkel, the former German Chancellor, on Friday condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine "in the strongest terms" and called it "a profound turning point in European history." Now she tells us. No one did more than Mrs. Merkel to make Europe and NATO vulnerable to Russia with her energy policies and failure to spend more on defense.

European members in particular will have to rearm, and start immediately. Once Mr. Putin sets up his puppet state in Ukraine, and moves his forces to NATO's borders, the Russian will look for the right moment to expose it as an alliance in name only. He'll succeed unless NATO learns the lesson of Ukraine.

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## **STATE-RUN MEDIA**

### **54. Putin orders "special duty regime" in Russia's deterrence forces**

TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

In response to aggressive statements in the West Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued orders to introduce what he described as a "special duty regime" in Russia's deterrence forces.

"Top officials in NATO's leading countries have been making aggressive statements against our country. For this reason, I give orders to the defense minister and chief of the General Staff to introduce a special combat duty regime in the Russian army's deterrence forces," Putin said at a meeting with Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov in the Kremlin on Sunday.

Putin stressed that the Western countries were also taking unfriendly actions against Russia in the economic sphere.

"I am referring to the illegitimate sanctions, which are very well-known to everybody," he added.

The meeting took place against a backdrop of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which Moscow began in response to a request for assistance from the leaders of the Donbass republics.

#### *Strategic deterrence forces*

The strategic deterrence forces' task is to deter aggression against Russia and its allies, and also to defeat an aggressor in a war by using various types of weapons, including nuclear ones. The deterrence forces incorporate the Strategic Offensive Force (SOF) and Strategic Defensive Force (SDF). The strategic nuclear potential constitutes the backbone of the SOF, armed with intercontinental missiles and aircraft, including high accuracy long-range weapons. The strategic nuclear potential includes the Strategic Missile Force. The SOF also includes the strategic conventional dual-purpose force - strategic and long-range bombers and also submarines, surface ships and naval missile-carrying naval aircraft carrying high-accuracy long-range weapons.

The SDF's key components are combat-ready forces and means of the aerospace defense, such as the missile attack warning system, the system for monitoring outer space and the missile defense, space defense and air defense.

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### **55. Sanctions may interrupt dialogue on strategic stability, Medvedev says**

TASS (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed

Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev noted that sanctions may serve as an excuse to interrupt dialogue on strategic stability and to exit the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START Treaty).

"There is also good news. The sanctions may become a wonderful excuse to finally review all ties with those states that introduced them," he wrote on his official VKontakte page.

"Among other things, in order to interrupt dialogue on strategic stability. Actually, it is possible to renounce anything, including the New Start Treaty that I concluded with [Barack] Obama and V. V. Putin extended with the current US leader," Medvedev added.

Russia and the US signed the New START Treaty in 2010. On February 3, 2021, the Russian foreign ministry and the US embassy exchanged notes on the completion of domestic procedures to enforce the New START five-year extension agreement.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a televised address on Thursday morning that in response to a request by the heads of the Donbass republics he had made a decision to carry out a special military operation in order to protect people "who have been suffering from abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." The Russian leader stressed that Moscow had no plans of occupying Ukrainian territories.

Russia's Defense Ministry reported later on Thursday that Russian troops were not delivering strikes against Ukrainian cities. It emphasized that Ukrainian military infrastructure was being destroyed by precision weapons.

A number of countries announced severe sanctions against Russia. The EU introduced financial and technological sectoral restrictions against Russia's 64 key structures, including the presidential administration, the Defense Ministry, the Foreign Intelligence Service and other state organizations as well as companies in military-industrial, energy, aircraft industry and financial spheres. The countries also blacklisted political leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and others.

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#### **56. It would be US 'golden dream' to have nuclear weapons in Ukraine – diplomat**

TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the emergence of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would be a "golden dream" for Washington.

"The US deployed its nuclear weapons on the territory of European countries. It's not France and the UK that have their own nuclear weapons. This is Italy and many other countries that possess the US nuclear weapons but they do not have access to them. The US controls them there. It was a golden dream that it would appear in Ukraine," she said in an interview with Vladimir Solovyov on the Rossiya-1 television channel.

According to Zakharova, this "unbridled and absolutely uncontrolled conduct of the Anglo-Saxon pseudo gurus" will cover not only Russia, but also everyone who will somehow "get in their way". "They didn't believe us then. That was ten years ago. China is now facing this on all fronts," Zakharova concluded.

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#### **57. Kiev Aims to Create Ballistic Missiles Able of Reaching Urals – Rogozin**

Sputnik News (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- Kiev wants to create ballistic missile systems that have the ability to strike far into the Russian territory and Ukraine has the potential for this, Dmitry Rogozin, head of the Roscosmos state corporation Roscosmos state corporation, said on Saturday.

"They [Ukraine] have legendary factories in Dnepropetrovsk, Yuzhnoye Design Bureau and Yuzhmashzavod. There is enormous potential there. Now their goal is to create own ballistic systems, which will have a real ability to strike our territory," Rogozin told the Soloviev Live YouTube show.

He noted that increasing the range of the Grom complex already operating in Ukraine will not be a problem for any team of engineers.

"This is a real threat to Russia right up to the Urals," he said.

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#### **58. Russia doesn't want Ukraine to develop 'dirty bomb' – Russian envoy to UN**

Interfax (Russia), Feb. 26 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- The Russian and Ukrainian military have agreed to jointly ensure security of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, while Russia does not want Ukraine to develop a "dirty bomb," Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya said.

"An agreement has been reached with servicemen of Ukraine's separate security battalion of the nuclear power plant to jointly ensure the security of the power units and the confinement facility of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant," Nebenzya said at a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

"We do not want Ukraine to develop a 'dirty bomb,'" the Russian ambassador said.

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#### **59. Kiev regime's leaders to be inevitably punished – Russian Defense Ministry**

*The civilian population is not at risk, the Defense Ministry said*

TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- The Kiev regime's ringleaders and their minions will be tracked down and inevitably and properly punished, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told a news briefing on Sunday.

"All faces, voices, telephones, whereabouts, IP-addresses and messages among all Ukrainian Nazis, who are responsible for humiliation and torture of our comrades are being identified and put on record. The same concerns the ringleaders of the Kiev regime and their minions, who call for torture of Russian soldiers in violation of the prisoners-of-war treatment convention. All of you will be tracked down and inevitably and properly punished," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 24 said in an early morning televised address he had launched a special military operation in Ukraine in response to a request for help from the leaders of the Donbass republics. He stressed that Moscow had no plans for an occupation of Ukrainian territories. The sole purpose is the country's demilitarization and denazification. The Russian Defense Ministry has said that its forces are not attacking cities, key military infrastructures being its main targets. The civilian population is not at risk, the Defense Ministry said.

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#### **60. Kremlin Spokesman Refers Question on Special Channel With US to Defense Ministry**

Sputnik News (Russia), Feb. 28 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov redirected the question on a possible special communication channel between the Russian military and the Pentagon to the Ministry of Defense.

Politico has reported, citing sources, that the Pentagon wants to establish a channel, like the one that was set up in Syria in 2015, to communicate with Russia on the situation in Ukraine.

"Such a channel did function quite well during the operation in Syria when our soldiers were carrying out their combat duty not far from one another. It was efficient. As for the details, I do not have them and I suggest asking this question at the defense ministry," Peskov told reporters.

## **61. Belarus will agree to host nuclear arms, if Poland or Lithuania do so – Lukashenko**

TASS (Russia), Feb. 27 | Not Attributed

Minsk will address Russia with an invitation to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus, if the United States deploys them in Poland and Lithuania, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said on Sunday.

"I had a conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday. He starting asking questions about the referendum, but in the context of the deployment of nuclear weapons. I am acquainted with him, and I said: "Emmanuel, if it were necessary to deploy nuclear weapons, we would be able to do so under the current Constitution. There are no hindrances to us in this respect... If the United States, or France, which is a nuclear power too, moves nuclear weapons to Poland or to Lithuania close to our borders, I will be unable to do the same on my own. I do not have any such weapons. But I will tell President Vladimir Putin I would like to have back the nuclear weapons that I had agreed to give away without any preconditions," Lukashenko said after voting in a referendum on the revised Constitution.

He also remarked that plans for the protection of Belarus had been drafted and there was an understanding of what extra military hardware would be necessary in the near future.

"Putin and I will reach an agreement and we will redeploy extra weapons capable of inflicting a damage serious enough to cause the Poles and Lithuanians lose the wish to go to war with us," Lukashenko added.

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## **62. US distorts China's neutral stance, 'uses Ukraine crisis to sow discord between China, Russia'**

Global Times (China), Feb. 26, Pg. 2 | Yang Sheng and Xu Yelu

The US has tried very hard to distort China's neutral stance of calling for dialogue on the Ukraine crisis, with the US State Department asking China to "pressure Russia" to respect the principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and even accusing China of "using Russia to create a new world order."

China on Thursday said the US, a country which launched a series of wars and military interventions that trample on other countries' sovereignty, has no qualification to accuse others on the matter.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying made the remarks at Thursday's routine press conference as she had received many questions on Russia's latest military operations and the China-Russia ties from the media due to the US continually raising odd questions to target China.

Chinese analysts said the US, by distorting China's neutral stance, is trying to make China look embarrassed, but Washington is the one that should be ashamed as it has done nothing to prevent conflict but only strained the situation, when others were trying to mediate the crisis.

On Wednesday, Ned Price, spokesperson of the US Department of State, claimed that every responsible country should pressure Russia, to "incentivize, to advocate for Vladimir Putin to back down, for the Russian Federation to deescalate [the crisis]," while accusing China of being inconsistent with words and deeds.

"When it comes to respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity, I'm afraid the US is in no position to tell China off," Hua said, noting that just about 20 years ago, the Chinese embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was hit by NATO bombing, which killed three Chinese journalists and injured many more. NATO still owes the Chinese people a debt of blood, she said.

"Even today, China still faces a realistic threat from the US, flanked by its several allies as they wantonly and grossly meddle in China's domestic affairs and undermine China's sovereignty and security on issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan. China remains the only permanent member of the UN Security Council that has yet to realize complete national reunification," Hua noted.

It is because of all these that China consistently and firmly upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and basic norms governing international relations, firmly safeguards its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, and firmly defends international equity and justice, Hua said,

If we look at the US, during its nearly 250 years of history, there were only 20 years when it was not conducting military operations overseas. The pretexts it used can be democracy or human rights or simply a test tube of laundry powder or even fake news, Hua said, noting such a country's understanding of respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity is definitely different from China's.

Cui Heng, an assistant research fellow at the Center for Russian Studies of East China Normal University, told the Global Times on Thursday that the US has long been "trying to sow discord between China and Russia. This time the US just wants to use the crisis to embarrass China by making trouble between China and Russia. However, the principle was first damaged by the US."

The principle of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity was established after World War II with the cost of tens of millions lives, Cui said. "But it seems the US has already forgotten it was the US that broke the principle first in the Kosovo War, the Iraq War and other wars. These made the principle exist in name only. The principle had already been damaged many times by the US."

The US is still trying to distort China's position of neutrality, and "Washington, as the creator of a bad precedent in breaking the principle, wants to blame China for the mistake the US itself has made," Cui said.

#### *New international order?*

Price also said that "you will have to ask the PRC (People's Republic of China) whether they have used their own considerable influence with the Russian Federation to that end. Of course, we've all read the 5,000-word joint communiqué, and we can glean our own conclusions from that."

"I don't believe Russia would be too pleased to hear that," Hua said. Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and an independent major power. It is fully capable of formulating and implementing its diplomatic strategy independently based on its judgment and national interests, she said.

She also noted China has no interest in the friend-or-enemy dichotomous Cold War thinking and the patchwork of so-called allies and small cliques, and has no intention to follow such a path.

On the China-Russia joint statement signed earlier this year, "I suggest the US read it carefully," Hua said, as China and Russia strengthening strategic communication and coordination is firmly safeguarding the United Nations-driven international architecture and the international laws-based world order, which is exactly what a responsible act should look like.

Wang Yiwei, director of the institute of international affairs at the Renmin University of China, told the Global Times on Thursday, "The US does not only want to impose sanctions on Russia but also wants to drag China [into the crisis]. At the NATO summit to be held in Madrid in June, when NATO needs to formulate a strategic action plan in 2030, the US also wants to turn China into NATO's main enemy after Russia."

"The fact is that these European countries are not willing to make more enemies. They cannot even deal with Russia, how can they deal with China and Russia at the same time? But the US just wants Europe to obey and serve its big-power competition strategy, and this just proves that the US does not respect the opinions of its allies," Wang said.

For the China-Russia-US triangular relations, the sanctions that the West imposed on Russia are like "a test," said observers, because these sanctions could also happen to China in the future if the Chinese mainland is forced to solve the Taiwan question by non-peaceful means.

A Beijing-based expert who asked for anonymity said comparing the Ukraine crisis to the Taiwan question is not correct because Taiwan is not a country and the one-China principle is universally recognized by the international community. Even the US dares not abandon it openly. So even if China is forced to reunify Taiwan by force, China should not receive the same criticism that Russia has received now.

Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said China is way more connected with the world than Russia as China is the biggest and most energetic market and key supplier in many fields, and China-US trade ties are way more intertwined than US-Russia trade. So imposing sanctions on China in the future is unimaginable and extremely difficult for the US.

How the world order would change is a question, but one thing is for sure: That with the big headache in Europe, the US does not have any more resources to build its anti-China Indo-Pacific Strategy, said Chinese analysts.

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### **63. Alert! Abe's remarks are unlocking Japan's militarism**

Global Times Online (China), Feb. 28 | Editorial

Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe said on Sunday that Japan should consider a nuclear-weapons sharing agreement with the US in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine. He took some NATO member states as example, saying that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement enables the US to keep its nuclear weapons in Europe under its custody. He claimed that "we should not put a taboo on discussions about the reality we face," in spite of Japan's participation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the three principles of no producing, no possessing or not allowing nuclear arms on its territory. Despite the obscurity of his words, Abe's intention is clear: He wants to move toward the pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Abe's remarks are not just a whim. Such intention has been stirring for quite a long time among right-wing Japanese politicians. Abe himself, for example, said in May 2002, when he was serving as deputy chief cabinet secretary, that it was "not necessarily unconstitutional" for Japan to use small tactical nuclear weapons to defend itself. In 2014, when he was the then Japanese prime minister, Japan was caught in a serious scandal over 640 kilograms of plutonium that it "failed to report." Furthermore, Ichiro Ozawa, then leader of Japan's opposition Liberal Party, also claimed that Japan could make a large number of nuclear weapons "overnight" to curb China.

It is not only ironic, but also a huge real risk, that a group of people in the only country in the world that was bombed by atomic bombs would call for an invitation to the culprit to deploy nuclear weapons in their own territory. Japanese right-wing politicians are more fanatical about nuclear weapons than in any other country in the world, and today, they have evolved into a perverted psychology that borders on distortion. The shame of the defeated country and the desire for revenge, though always suppressed, have constantly lurked in their blood, eager to break free from the shackles.

What's even more alarming is the fact that Japan has some manufacturing capability for nuclear weapons. Japan is a highly industrialized country with one of the world's top large-scale computer systems and the ability to simulate nuclear tests. As previously reported in Japanese media, Japan holds 47 tons of plutonium at home and abroad, which, in terms of quantity alone, could produce about 6,000 nuclear bombs. Moreover, Japan has considerable capabilities in nuclear carrier development, not only in developing the solid-fuel rockets that could be used to carry a

warhead, but its F-15 and other warplanes can also carry nuclear bombs after modifications, which are all open secrets. When serving as US vice president, Joe Biden said in 2016 that "Japan has the capability to acquire nuclear weapons virtually overnight" and as a US nuclear expert once said, Japan was "little more than a screwdriver away from a nuclear weapon."

As soon as Japanese right-wing's madness is combined with its national capabilities, the consequences will be devastating. This would, to a large extent, mean a total change in the nature of Japan as a nation, a complete release of its military capabilities, and perhaps an escape of militarism from the cage that has trapped it for nearly 80 years. Then, the fear of nuclear terrorism would be emerging in East Asia. At that moment, the nuclear balance in Asia will be completely broken, and the geopolitical situation will face a major alteration. No Asia-Pacific country will be able to make itself better.

This is a major loophole in the world's nuclear non-proliferation regime and it has not been fixed because of Washington's connivance and even complaisance. The US is aware of the right-wing movement in Japan but it sees the country as the most important lever to counterbalance China in East Asia. As a result, using Japan to contain China is gradually becoming a priority for Washington. This has allowed Japanese right-wing politicians to see an opening and make the best of it to loosen the strategic strings that have tied them up for nearly 80 years, with nuclear capability likely to be their ultimate goal. At that point, Japan's nuclear warheads could be aimed at East Asian countries like China, the US or any other country.

Therefore, Abe's relevant statement must not be treated as "personal remarks" and let off easily. It should be something that everyone in the international community condemns and opposes whenever it comes to light. This is a major issue of right and wrong to maintain the international system and security pattern and it cannot be watered down in any way.

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## TWEETS OF NOTE

Twitter, Feb. 25-28

**U.S. Strategic Command, @US\_Stratcom:** "#AnytimeAnywhere[.] Adm. John Aquilino, @INDOPACOM commander, talked regional security and the strategic importance of a #FreeAndOpenIndoPacific during an all-call gathering at Andersen @USAirForce Base. A #B52 long-range bomber, in Guam for a #BTF mission, looms in the background. [\[Link to photos\]](#)" (2/25, 1609)

**House Armed Services Committee Republicans, @HASCRepublicans:** [*Replying to @JimInhofe tweet from 2/27, 1400*] "'Agree with my good friend @jiminhofe. This is not the time to be shedding capabilities or weakening US nuclear declaratory policy. Doing so would embolden adversaries and divide allies.' — Ranking Member @RepMikeRogersAL" (2/27, 1400)

**Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), @JimInhofe:** [*Replying to @AP tweet from 2/27*] "Reports that Putin has placed Russia's nuclear forces on higher alert is a stark reminder of why we need a strong, effective deterrent to meet the growing threats facing the U.S. and our allies. The upcoming Nuclear Posture Review cannot ignore this reality." (2/27, 1216)

**Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), @SenatorFischer:** "Facing heroic Ukrainian resistance and growing US, NATO, EU unity to impose costs on Russia for his unjustified and unprovoked war, Putin is resorting to the unthinkable, nuclear intimidation. This is why our nation maintains a nuclear deterrent & NATO remains a nuclear alliance." (2/27, 1133)

**Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE), @SenatorFischer:** "Nuclear escalation is unthinkable to Americans but our adversaries don't see it that way. That's why every day, the men and women of @US\_Stratcom work tirelessly to deter these threats – as they say: 'Peace is our profession...' [\[Link to photo\]](#)" (2/27, 1133)

**U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, @INDOPACOM:** "@INDOPACOM DPRK Missile Launch Statement: "We are aware of the #DPRK's ballistic missile launch & are consulting closely with the Republic of Korea (ROK) & Japan, as well as other regional allies and partners." Read More  [Link]" (2/26, 2246)

**509th Bomb Wing, @Whiteman\_AFB:** "What makes us superior...our exceptional planning! Check our recent story on how integrated mission planning is the first step to B-2 mission success! [\[Link to press release\]](#)" (2/25, 1658)

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**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, @jensstoltenberg:** "I just spoke with President @ZelenskyyUa & commended him for the bravery of the people & armed forces of #Ukraine. #NATO Allies are stepping up support with air-defence missiles, anti-tank weapons, as well as humanitarian & financial aid." (2/28, 0315)

**Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists Hans Kristensen, @nukestrat:** "A B-52 (61-0018) with callsign ANGER12 has taken off from RAF Fairfield. [\[Link to illustration of flight path\]](#)" (2/28, 0103)

**Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists Hans Kristensen, @nukestrat:** "The B-52 is heading southwest. Could potentially be on its way to a mission over the Mediterranean. [\[Link to illustration of flight path\]](#)" (2/28, 0122)

**Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists Hans Kristensen, @nukestrat:** "A second B-52 (60-0044) with callsign ANGER11 is now visible off Portugal. [\[Link to illustration of flight path\]](#)" (2/28, 0148)

**Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, @McFaul:** "No one thought Putin would annex Crimea. He did. People didnt believe the data when they saw that Putin had intervened in our elections in 2016. Few predicted his Syrian intervention in 2015. & just a week ago, many said that he would never launch this invasion. But he did. 1!" (2/28, 0022)

**Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, @McFaul:** "This week, Putin hinted at using nuclear weapons. My instinct was to say that its a bluff. But remember this past history. 2!"(2/28, 0022)

**Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, @McFaul:** "The people who know Putin the best -- people I know in Russia -- are worried about his recent nuclear statement. The people who know him the least are saying it's cheap talk." (2/27, 1642)

**Aircraft Spots, @AircraftSpots:** "While the situation in Ukraine unfolds, USAF B-52H Stratofortress bombers deployed to Guam, continue to fly power projection missions in the South China Sea & East China Sea." (2/27, 1438)

**Financial Times Moscow Bureau Chief Max Seddon, @maxseddon:** [\[Replying to @ilya\\_shepelin tweet with video from 2/27\]](#) "Russian state TV: 'Our submarines alone can launch more than 500 nuclear warheads, which guarantees the destruction of the US and NATO for good measure. The principle is: why do we need the world if Russia won't be in it?'" (2/27, 1353)

**Financial Times Moscow Bureau Chief Max Seddon, @maxseddon:** "Putin is meeting defense minister Shoigu and chief of general staff Gerasimov in the Kremlin. "He says western sanctions are 'illegitimate' and has ordered to place Russia's deterrence – i.e. nuclear – forces on 'a special regime of duty,' per @tass\_agency" (2/27, 0710)

**Financial Times Moscow Bureau Chief Max Seddon, @maxseddon:** "Putin: 'Western countries aren't only taking unfriendly economic actions against our country, but leaders of major Nato countries are making aggressive

statements about our country. So I order to move Russia's deterrence forces to a special regime of duty.' [\[Link to video\]](#)" (2/27, 0710)

**Financial Times Moscow Bureau Chief Max Seddon, @maxseddon:** "This isn't the first time this week Shoigu has looked visibly uncomfortable at the orders he's taking from Putin" (2/27, 0731)

**Director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies Jeffrey Lewis, @ArmsControlWonk:** "Given that I have been critical of @US\_Stratcom's social media presence in the past, I want to point out that during this crisis they have been completely professional and that deserves our praise." (2/27, 1135)

**CBS News Intelligence and National Security Reporter Olivia Gazis, @Olivia\_Gazis:** "STRATCOM: 'We saw Mr. Putin's statement on his nuclear forces. STRATCOM remains at an appropriate posture and remains ready should the president call upon us.' Via @CBSDavidMartin" (2/27, 1121)

**Defense One Senior Pentagon Correspondent Tara Copp, @TaraCopp:** "On #Russia putting #nuclear forces on high alert: Senior defense official will not say if US has responded in kind, but says 'We remain confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our allies and our partners and that includes in the strategic deterrent realm.' #Ukraine" (2/27, 0910)

**Defense One Senior Pentagon Correspondent Tara Copp, @TaraCopp:** "Putin's announcement 'puts in play forces ... that if there's a miscalculation, could make things much, much more dangerous,' senior defense official says #Russia #Ukraine" (2/27, 0912)

**Defense One Senior Pentagon Correspondent Tara Copp, @TaraCopp:** "@SecDef learned of heightened nuclear alert through Putin's announcement, Defense Secretary Austin was in regular scheduled meeting w/ @thejointstaff @US\_EUCOM ... no direct comms from #Russia to US #Ukraine in advance of announcement - Senior Defense Official" (2/27, 0953)

**Washington Post National Security Reporter Paul Sonne, @PaulSonne:** "The threat of using nuclear weapons is very consistent with Russian military doctrine. It is unsurprising that Putin would turn to this in this situation as a way to try to temper the response of the West." (2/27, 0746)

**Washington Post National Security Reporter Paul Sonne, @PaulSonne:** "Let's just say the men and women of Omaha, home to U.S. Strategic Command, are probably getting an extra coffee this morning." (2/27, 0804)

**Harvard Kennedy School's Managing the Atom Project Visiting Fellow Heather Williams, @heatherwilly:** "Putin putting nuclear weapons on high alert is his way of telling us just how important Ukraine is to him. Also, sadly, probably portends a (non-nuclear) escalation in Russian attacks on Ukraine. This is pure nuclear bullying and irresponsibly risky." (2/27, 0757)

**The Guardian Moscow Correspondent Andrew Roth, @Andrew\_\_Roth:** "Putin goes full madman theory, putting his nuclear deterrence forces on high alert in response to NATO countries 'aggressive statements' following Russia's wholesale invasion of Ukraine. It's all a bluff until it isn't." (2/27, 0727)

**Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba, @DmytroKuleba:** "Russian propaganda has gone off the rails and speculates Ukraine might be preparing to drop a 'dirty bomb' on the Russian territory. This is a sick fake. Ukraine doesn't have nuclear weapons, doesn't conduct any work to create/acquire them. We are a responsible member of the NPT." (2/26, 0707)

**Norwich University, @norwichnews:** "SUMMIT SLATED: #norwichuniversity's Peace and War Summit will scrutinize challenges deriving from Russia. Guests include Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the Embassy of Georgia to the U.S. Giorgi Tsikolia ... [[Link to event info](#)]" (2/25, 0951)

**Norwich University, @norwichnews:** "... and @usarmy and @usarmy Brig Gen. John W. Weidner, deputy director, plans and policy, @US\_Stratcom." (2/25, 0952)

[RETURN TO TOP](#)

"Documentation was received from employees of Ukrainian biological laboratories on the urgent destruction of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases on Feb. 24."

DoD Comment: we cannot confirm whether or not Ukraine destroyed their own disease/pathogen collections, but if the order is true, it makes sense - given Russia's demonstrated irresponsible and dangerous behavior in Ukraine, specifically with regard to the Nuclear Power Plant at Zaporizhzhia. An intentional or accidental strike by Russia directed at Ukraine's laboratories could result in the release of disease samples, putting both Ukrainians and Russians at risk.

"The defence ministry said the work had been commissioned by the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency and involved collecting strains of dangerous microorganisms and exporting them to the United States, as well as studying potential pathogens specific to a given region to use as biological weapons."

DoD Comment: Sadly, the Russians continue to try and justify their illegal invasion of Ukraine by falsely claiming the US is developing biological weapons in Ukraine. This is pure Russian disinformation. The DoD CTR program does NOT: collect strains of micro-organisms; export them to the United States, or develop biological weapons. Almost all countries have collections of disease samples and pathogens, including Russia and China, which they study for public health and disease diagnostic purposes. The DoD CTR program enables partner countries to conduct safe and peaceful public health and disease diagnostic efforts to identify disease burdens at the source - before they become pandemics. Russia was once a DoD CTR partner, and fully cooperated with the DoD CTR program, to ensure biosecurity and biosafety protocols were implemented in Russia. In 2014, Russia terminated this cooperative effort and have thus tried to turn a peaceful and cooperative effort into something falsely nefarious. Since 2005, the DoD CTR program has assisted the Ukrainian government in converting former Soviet biological weapons (BW) research facilities to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and reduce the threats posed by dangerous pathogens, whether they are naturally-occurring, accidental, or intentional. Unlike other countries, the DoD CTR program works in a responsible and transparent way to ensure our foreign partners have the tools necessary to prevent a COVID-19 like pandemic.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**To:**  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 12:17:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Media Query - Russian Foreign Ministry Allegation\\_030922.docx](#)

Please find DTRA's response attached.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 11:48 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

We are finalizing the DTRA response and will get it to you soonest. As a note, our PA shops have also be in coordination.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:32 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6) they asked for no suspense, but I think we should shoot for NLT Thursday afternoon.

Hopefully the answer is short and a negative response.

V/r

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:51 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

Received. What is the suspense for this?!

(b)(6)

Deputy Chief of Staff  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:45 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

This media query came into OSD. Can you please generate a statement that we can run through (b)(6) or approval.

V/r

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 1:06 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

Subject: FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

Good afternoon,

(b)(5)

Thank you.

v/r,

(b)(6)

DOD Spokesman, Defense Press Operations

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Pentagon, Room 2D961

E-mail: (b)(6)  
Desk:  
DSN:  
Mobile:

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:24 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <<mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil>> >; OSD  
Pentagon PA List DPO ATL <osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil  
<<mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil>> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(5)

With (b)(6) on leave, adding her team.

(b)(6)

Department of Defense Spokesman

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

1400 Defense Pentagon (2D961), Washington, DC 20301-1400

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:20 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(5)

From: (b)(6)  
<mai

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:12 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<m

Subject: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the  
identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained  
within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web  
browser.

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Hey guys,

(b)(5)



(b)(6)

National Security Correspondent  
Washington D.C.

Thomson Reuters

Mobi (b)(6)

Emai

Cauti

Twitt



This e-mail is for the sole use of the intended recipient and contains information that may be privileged and/or confidential. If you are not an intended recipient, please notify the sender by return e-mail and delete this e-mail and any attachments. Certain required legal entity disclosures can be accessed on our website:

Caution-<https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en/resources/disclosures.html>

### **Russian Allegations of BW Use in Ukraine**

#### ***Has the United States planned biological weapons attacks in the Donbas?***

- No. This is exactly the kind of disinformation operation we've seen repeatedly from the Russians. As we have noted, Russia for weeks has been trying to create a pre-text for their invasion of Ukraine, which is now underway Russian officials, Russian state media, and their proxies plant false stories through numerous vectors. Any one of these could be elevated as Russia flails to try to justify its premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine.
- Russia is using statements from high-level officials as well as disinformation and propaganda outlets to intentionally spread outright falsehoods to attempt to create a pretext for military action.
- The United States assesses that Russia maintains an offensive biological weapons program and is in violation of its obligations to the Biological Weapons Convention. Russia inherited an offensive biological weapons program from the Soviet Union and has never fully acknowledged whether all items were destroyed or diverted for peaceful purposes.
- The United States completed disposal of its biological and toxin weapons before the December 1975 deadline and continues to submit extremely comprehensive and transparent Confidence Building Measure reports to the Biological Weapons Convention each year.

#### ***Russian Maj. Gen. Koranshenko claims that Russia uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the United States that was destroyed on February 24. Is this true?***

- This is Russian propaganda and total nonsense. This is not the first time or the first country Russia has invented this type of false claim against, and they have been debunked conclusively and repeatedly over many years.
- As we've said all along, Russia will invent false pretexts to justify their horrific actions in Ukraine.

#### ***Does Ukraine have military biological laboratories?***

- Russia's accusations about peaceful Ukrainian military biological laboratories and activities near Russia's borders are absolutely false. Ukraine is in full compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).
- The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense runs ten biodefense laboratories throughout the country to counter biological threats throughout the country.
- Ukraine owns and operates their own laboratory infrastructure, with help from the United States, the World Health Organization, the European Union, and other countries and international organizations who provide biosafety and biosecurity training to detect and diagnose disease burdens endemic to the country of Ukraine.
- It is Russia, not Ukraine, that has an active biological weapons program and is in violation of the BWC.

***IF RAISED: Why does the Department of Defense fund laboratories in Ukraine?***

- DoD does not own or operate biological laboratories in Ukraine. Ukraine owns and operates their own labs and associated infrastructure. DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program provides training and equipment for Ukrainian owned and operated biological facilities to reduce biological threats of all types to reduce the risk of disease out-breaks that may cause pandemics.
- CTR worked cooperatively and peacefully with the government of Ukraine to increase biosecurity and biosafety at many sites to ensure diseases do not pose a risk to the people of Ukraine or the region.
- Historically, the CTR program was a Congressionally-mandated program designed to secure and clean up the mess of legacy Soviet biological weapons programs. This included work in Russia. This peaceful work continues today and has evolved to ensure our foreign partners have the tools available to detect and diagnose disease burdens early on to prevent pandemics.
- These efforts also support broader public and veterinary health goals, such as monitoring the spread of COVID-19.

***IF RAISED: What did the United States do with the material from the former Soviet BW program?***

- At the request of many former Soviet Union countries, to include Ukraine and Russia, the United States eliminated or secured stockpiles of dangerous pathogens from the legacy Soviet biological weapons research and development enterprise.
- Russia accepted CTR support for many years. Their cooperation ended in 2014, and their disinformation campaigns against CTR started only after these projects ended.

***IF RAISED: Why do the laboratories in Ukraine contain samples of anthrax, plague, and other dangerous agents?***

- These and other pathogens are studied in veterinary and public health research laboratories around the world to improve early detection and diagnostic capabilities to contain and prevent outbreaks of diseases.
- These pathogens are readily found in the environment of Ukraine.
- DoD encourages Ukraine and all partners not to store any biological materials beyond what is required to perform diagnostics.

***IF RAISED: How much did the United States invest in these facilities in Ukraine?***

- The United States, through DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction program, invested approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005.

***IF RAISED: In Cases of Biological Weapons Use or Threat of Biological Weapons Use***

- The United States is aware of reports of alleged use of biological weapons and is seeking additional information.
- The use of any biological weapon is totally unacceptable. The United States is continuously reviewing and assessing this situation closely and will respond to circumstances, as appropriate.
- The United States has been clear through our words and our actions that we will seek to deter and prevent the development and use of biological weapons.

***IF RAISED: If Biological Weapons use is confirmed***

- The international community must speak with one voice in condemning the use of biological weapons. The United States is reviewing this matter and

will respond appropriately. The United States has a number of tools at our disposal, and we are reviewing our options.

## **BACKGROUND**

Russia has been engaging in a disinformation campaign alleging that Ukraine is planning on using biological weapons (BW) provided by the United States. There are concerns that Russia may make public accusations of BW use as a pretext to escalate military activity in Ukraine. In late December 2021 and early January 2022, Russian-controlled separatists and the Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Ukraine is planning to use botulinum toxin provided by the United States. Additionally, Russia continues to engage in a disinformation campaign against U.S. supported biological laboratories. On March 6, 2022, Russian Major General Konashenko claimed that Russia uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the United States that was destroyed on February 24, 2022 when Russia launched its invasion in Ukraine. The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program has assisted the Ukrainian government since 2005 in converting former Soviet biological weapons (BW) research facilities to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and reduce the threats posed by dangerous pathogens, whether they are naturally-occurring, accidental, or intentional. CTR has worked with 46 facilities in Ukraine.

Drafted: AVC/CBW Emily Rosenblum/AVC/VPO John Herzberg 202-746-5855

Approved:

Cleared:

AVC/CBW: Laura Gross (ok)

EUR/Press S Pulivarti ()

T: V Sanchez ()

P: N Klinger ()

D: M Thomi ()

NSC/Press: S Savett ()

ISN/BPS: Chris Park ()

L: Alexandra Perina ()

SPOX: JT Ice ()

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{USA\}  
**Sent:** Wed, 9 Mar 2022 11:28:28 -0400  
**To:** DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Directors;DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Deputy Directors;DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Chiefs of Staff;DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA LNOs  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DAG Team  
**Subject:** USG Messages on Bio Labs in Ukraine (CUI)  
**Attachments:** Break Glass\_UKR\_Final DTRA\_Pol\_NCB\_20220301.docx, AVC Press Guidance Russian Allegations of BW Use 3.7.2022\_DTRA edits.docx, smime.p7s

All,

(U) Russia, China, and their proxies are all aggressively pushing a disinformation message that the DoD CTR program built U.S. offensive biological weapons labs in Ukraine and elsewhere, and Russia is using this false allegation as one of their justifications for their invasion of Ukraine.

(U) As you know, the CTR program does not build WMD programs. Rather we dismantle those programs and we help our partners build their capability to secure dangerous materials and to detect and interdict WMD trafficking and outbreaks of dangerous diseases.

(CUI) DTRA CT is monitoring the daily flow of Russian disinformation and we are working with DTRA SI-PA and DTRA OI's Information Operations Fusion Cell (IOFC) to provide factual information on CTR activities and to help dispel the disinformation.

(U) If you find yourself in a situation where you are asked to comment on CTR activities in Ukraine, you are welcome to direct those queries to PA and CT. If that is not an option in the situation, we offer the attached messaging products -- one from DoD and one from the State Department -- to help you respond or help inform your customers or partners.

(U) If you have five minutes, we also offer the video linked below, in which a State Department representative to a recent Biological Weapons Convention meeting made a good statement in response to the disinformation.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/828150/us-government-responds-false-allegations-targeted-dod-ctr-program>

(CUI) Please let us know if you have any questions. CT's lead for messaging and countering this disinformation is (b)(6)

(b)(6)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:**

(b)(6)

**Sent:**

Thu, 10 Mar 2022 13:57:20 -0400

**To:**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

**Subject:**

RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

**Attachments:**

smime.p7s

ALCON,

I just spoke with CRS to obtain some clarity, as their inquiry below was admittedly informal/broad. They are refining their request to be more specific and will send it over to us ASAP. Leg Affairs will push their revised request back out as soon as we receive it.

Best,

(b)(6)

National Security Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency ( \* @ )

Tel: (b)(6)

Mo:

E-m:

E-m:

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

-----Original Message-----

**From:**

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:40 PM

**To:**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Pope,

**Subject:** RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

Thanks (b)(6)

The question from CRS wasn't limited to BTRP. Do we have any other insight into the scope of the request - e.g. time frame or if this should be limited to Bio? Atropine doesn't really have any BTRP-related application; this is more associated with treatments against nerve agents and pesticide

poisoning.

v/r,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:13 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

+ BTRP

(b)(6) we can answer this pretty easy.

BTRP, please get rolling on this one. 21 March is the suspense. TMT tasker forthcoming.

Thanks, (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 11:52 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

(b)(6)

We received the below RFI from the Congressional Research Service re: CTR funds in Ukraine. Will get this plugged into TMT later today, but wanted to make sure you could get chopping on it. She's flexible on response time, but I'll put in a suspense of 21 March.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

Hi, (b)(6)

I am wondering if you could please provide any information you can right now on what CTR funds are being used for to assist Ukraine. In particular, are we sending over atropine?! (my question) Thanks, I realize a more robust accounting will have to wait for later. I would just like to add in the CTR/DTRA role into our summaries of security assistance if possible.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Specialist in Nonproliferation  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division  
Congressional Research Service  
Library of Congress  
7-7745 office

(b)(6)

-----  
"This information is intended only for the congressional addressee or other individual to whom it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, retransmission, dissemination or other use of this information is only at the discretion of the intended recipient. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from any computer."

ALCON,

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Best,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

National Security Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (☒☒☒)

Tel: (b)(6)  
Mob  
E-ma  
E-ma

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

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From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:40 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT  
(USA) (b)(6)  
Subject: RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

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v/r,  
(b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:13 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)  
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(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

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(b)(6)

Specialist in Nonproliferation  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division  
Congressional Research Service  
Library of Congress  
7-7745 office

(b)(6)

-----  
"This information is intended only for the congressional addressee or other individual to whom it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, retransmission, dissemination or other use of this information is only at the discretion of the intended recipient. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from any computer."

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 13:57:20 -0400

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:**

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

**Attachments:** smime.p7s

ALCON,

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Best,

(b)(6)

National Security Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (☞☞☞)

Tel: (b)(6)

Mob

E-m

E-m

Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:40 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Pope,

Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

Subject: RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

Thanks (b)(6)

The question from CRS wasn't limited to BTRP. Do we have any other insight into the scope of the request - e.g. time frame or if this should be limited to Bio? Atropine doesn't really have any BTRP-related application; this is more associated with treatments against nerve agents and pesticide poisoning.

v/r,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 12:13 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

+ BTRP

(b)(6) we can answer this pretty easy.

BTRP, please get rolling on this one. 21 March is the suspense. TMT tasker forthcoming.

Thanks (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<stephen.a.minton-smur.civ@nra.nmci>

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 11:52 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: CRS RFI: Ukraine / CTR funds

(b)(6)

We received the below RFI from the Congressional Research Service re: CTR funds in Ukraine. Will get this plugged into TMT later today, but wanted to make sure you could get chopping on it. She's flexible on response time, but I'll put in a suspense of 21 March.

Thanks (b)(6)

Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

From:

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM

To:

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

Hi

(b)(6)

I am wondering if you could please provide any information you can right now on what CTR funds are being used for to assist Ukraine. In particular, are we sending over atropine?! (my question) Thanks, I realize a more robust accounting will have to wait for later. I would just like to add in the CTR/DTRA role into our summaries of security assistance if possible.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Specialist in Nonproliferation  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division  
Congressional Research Service  
Library of Congress  
7-7745 office

(b)(6)

-----  
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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 29 Mar 2022 14:08:52 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Poisoning Article  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thanks for sharing this (b)(6)

It underscores the fears that many have about whether Russia will employ larger scale CW or BW attacks on the Ukrainian population. I personally doubt they will do a large scale attack, but they'll take advantage of the war to do trial and test runs consisting of smaller scale assassination attempts, using novel pathogens or chemical agents.

And speaking of Bioweapons, as you all know Russia has gone to great lengths to spread misinformation about DTRA-funded CTR programs helping other countries improve biosecurity and biosafety at their laboratories. What you may not know is that they've been doing this for a long time (as far back as the fifties, though primarily in the last decade); Ukraine is just the latest iteration.

If you don't know much about biological weapons, I recommend reading [this article](#) for a primer. It's not long, and covers the history, current affairs, regulations, technical limitations, and identification. Ditto [this article](#), if you want to get smart on Chemical Weapons, especially vis-à-vis Russia.

And ironically, while Russia denies it and many debate whether it's true, the State Department last year changed their unclassified assessment of Russia's bioweapons capabilities, stating for the first time that "The United States assesses that the Russian Federation (Russia) maintains an offensive BW program and is in violation of its obligation under Articles I and II of the BWC." State Dept. Spokesman Ned Price reaffirmed this in a [March 9th press release](#) when addressing Russian claims about Ukrainian bioweapons.

The U.S. recently [sanctioned three entities](#) within Russia that are allegedly tied to this bioweapons program.

Don't count China out of this disinformation campaign either: in addition to hundreds of [unilateral accusations](#), China issued a [joint statement with Russia](#) late last year and [again](#) in February claiming the U.S. DoD maintains "... over 200 US biological laboratories are deployed outside its national territory, which function in opaque and non-transparent manner, ... caus[ing] serious concerns and questions among the international community over its compliance with the BWC." China continues this behavior, with [statements such as this](#) from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman: "The US has 336 labs in 30 countries under its control, including 26 in Ukraine alone. It should give a full account of its biological military activities at home and abroad and subject itself to multilateral verification."

The frustrating part of all of this, purely from an international law and norms perspective, is that their activities on all fronts (I didn't even get into nuclear- that's a whole separate novel) are [undermining treaties on weapons of mass destruction](#).

In lighter biological security news, an Ebola-esque virus Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic fever was detected in a traveler who just arrived in the U.K.. Luckily it was detected and they are isolated, and nobody has figured out how to weaponized CCHF just yet.

In not-so-light nuclear news, it appears that North Korea may be preparing to test another weapon...

(b)(6)

National Security Legislative Liaison  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (🇺🇸🇬🇧🇩🇪)

Tel: (b)(6)  
Mob  
E-m  
E-m

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

**From** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 29, 2022 11:35 AM

**To** (b)(6)  
W  
RE

**Subject:** Poisoning Article

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/roman-abramovich-and-ukrainian-peace-negotiators-suffer-symptoms-of-suspected-poisoning-11648480493>

V/R,

(b)(6)

DTRA Legislative Affairs

Email: (b)(6)  
Phone

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 9 Mar 2022 16:09:37 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Got it. As it turns out I was told that I have to send this via a formal tasking system. So, it will take a little longer, but I'm starting the ball rolling!

(b)(6)

Tel (b)(6)  
E-m (b)(6)

Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:42 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Ukraine

When you/they can. I realize everyone is extremely busy.

If a deadline pops up, I will let you know.

THANK YOU!

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:41 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine

(b)(6) Nice to hear from you. I asked the ones who have been in Leg Affairs for longer than I to make sure we answer by the book. When do you need this by?

Best,

(b)(6)

Tel: (b)(6)  
E-m  
<ma

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

From: (b)(6)  
>  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

Hi (b)(6)

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Thanks,

(b)(6)

Specialist in Nonproliferation  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Congressional Research Service

Library of Congress

7-7745 office

(b)(6)

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<(b)(6)>

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Library of Congress

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(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 12:45:25 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you- please let me know how/if I can help!

(b)(6)

Tel: (b)(6)  
E-m (b)(6)

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 11:45 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine

Yeah, March 21 sounds good.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 11:34 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine

Thanks (b)(6) I asked her and the answer was "When you/they can. I realize everyone is extremely busy. If a deadline pops up, I will let you know."

Sooooo.... there you have it. Perhaps we can request by COB next Friday or OOB Monday the 21st? What do you recommend?

(b)(6)

Tel: (b)(6)  
E-m (b)(6)

-----  
Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 4:01 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(6)  
Subject: RE: Ukraine

(b)(6)

I'll plug it into TMT for formal tasking, but can you first circle back with (b)(6) at CRS on her deadline? If it's anything shorter than a week, might be tough.

V/r,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 3:09 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)  
<m

Subject: RE: Ukraine

Roger.

(b)(6) what is the formal process to task out a question like this? This is my first go-around and would very much appreciate any guidance you can offer!

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Tel: (b)(6)  
E-m  
<ma

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(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:45 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)  
<m>

Subject: RE: Ukraine

(b)(6)

I believe this will have to go through a more formal process. We will have to task it out.

(b)(6)

LTC LaTisha Phillips

Chief, Legislative Affairs

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) 571-616-5027

(C) 703-731-6292

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:40 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)  
<n

Subject: FW: Ukraine

Ma'am, (b)(6)

I received the request below from CRS- Are we allowed to reply directly or does this need to go through a more comprehensive clearance process?

Best,

(b)(6)

Tel: (b)(6)

E-mail (b)(6)  
<mailto:  
<mailto:

-----

Please consider your impact on the environment before printing this email.

From: (b)(6)  
>

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

Hi, (b)(6)

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Thanks,

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Specialist in Nonproliferation

Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Congressional Research Service

Library of Congress

7-7745 office

(b)(6)

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Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 4:01 PM

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Cc: (b)(6)

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V/r,

[redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From [redacted]

[redacted]

Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 3:09 PM

To [redacted]

[redacted]

Cc [redacted]  
<m

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Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

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<m

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From: (b)(6)  
>

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:50 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Ukraine

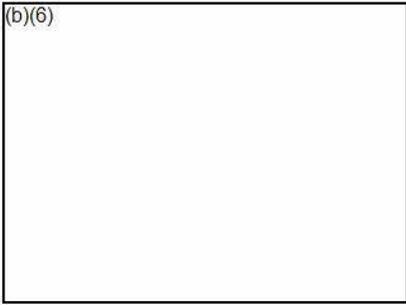
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Specialist in Nonproliferation

Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Congressional Research Service

Library of Congress

7-7745 office

(b)(6)

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**Cc:**

**Subject:**

RE: Ukraine

**Attachments:**

smime.p7s

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(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)  
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Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

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Specialist in Nonproliferation

Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Congressional Research Service

Library of Congress

7-7745 office

(b)(6)

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**From:**  
**To:**  
**Cc:**

(b)(6)

**Subject:**

RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

**Date:**

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 12:17:44 PM

**Attachments:**

Media Query - Russian Foreign Ministry Allegation\_030922.docx

Please find DTRA's response attached.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 11:48 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

We are finalizing the DTRA response and will get it to you soonest. As a note, our PA shops have also be in coordination.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:32 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6) they asked for no suspense, but I think we should shoot for NLT Thursday afternoon.

Hopefully the answer is short and a negative response.

V/r

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:51 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

Received. What is the suspense for this?!

(b)(6)

Deputy Chief of Staff  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<john.a.oman.mil@mail.mil>

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:45 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

This media query came into OSD. Can you please generate a statement that we can run through (b)(6) for approval.

V/r

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 1:06 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

Subject: FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

Good afternoon,

I am covering down for (b)(6) while she's in class, and received this inquiry below. Thought is maybe DTRA has lines on this issue, but I don't have DTRA POCs and since this is a biological weapons discussion thought maybe you could assist?

Query: The Russian foreign ministry said today (and their defense ministry earlier this week) that Ukraine has been developing biological weapons at 30 different sites in a programme financed by the United States (specifically DoD). Want to make sure we send over DoD comment on it to our colleagues, I assume rejecting the assertion like before.

This is the main line from Foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova: "Documentation was received from employees of Ukrainian biological laboratories on the urgent destruction of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases on Feb. 24."

The defence ministry said the work had been commissioned by the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency and involved collecting strains of dangerous microorganisms and exporting them to the United States, as well as studying potential pathogens specific to a given region to use as biological weapons.

Think you could help me with this?

Thank you.

v/r,

(b)(6)

DOD Spokesman, Defense Press Operations

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Pentagon, Room 2D961

E-mail: (b)(6)  
Desk:  
DSN:  
Mobile:

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:24 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <<mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil>> >; OSD  
Pentagon PA List DPO ATL <osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil  
<<mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil>> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

I'm all but certain DTRA has lines on this. I took a similar query last week while on duty, and Jessica forwarded it over to her DTRA people, who I think answered directly.

With (b)(6) on leave, adding her team.

(b)(6)

Department of Defense Spokesman

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

1400 Defense Pentagon (2D961), Washington, DC 20301-1400

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:20 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

(-Reporters and + (b)(6) )

Have at it, gentlemen!

From: (b)(6)  
<mail  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:12 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<m  
Subject: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the  
identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained  
within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web  
browser.

---

Hey guys,

(b)(5)

(b)(6)

National Security Correspondent  
Washington D.C.

Thomson Reuters

Mobile

(b)(6)

Email:

Caution

Twitter

This e-mail is for the sole use of the intended recipient and contains information that may be privileged and/or confidential. If you are not an intended recipient, please notify the sender by return e-mail and delete this e-mail and any attachments. Certain required legal entity disclosures can be accessed on our website:

Caution-<https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en/resources/disclosures.html>

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

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Page 0527 of 2455

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Page 0532 of 2455

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(b)(5)

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Page 0544 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:06:11 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** 20220310 Talking Points on Russian Disinformation on Ukrainian Biological Activities\_final\_v2.docx.pdf, Fact Sheet The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program - Biological Threat Reduction Program Activities in Ukraine.pdf, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

(b)(5)

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

(b)(5)

Page 0547 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0548 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

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Page 0549 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0550 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0551 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0552 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

William Burns

But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

<n  
(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<n  
(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact

we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

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By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mobi

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**To:** (b)(6)  
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(b)(6)

(b)(5)

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mob

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

(b)(5)

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight. As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves, against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the

United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for

the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's

something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is

in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

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From (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Des: (b)(6)

Mob

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<ma

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi

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Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM  
To: (b)(6)

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Desk (b)(6)  
Mobi

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:04:44 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

We did receive an inquiry from the Washington Journal. Interview conducted yesterday. When I get the transcript I will share with the group.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)

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US

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

et. al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight. As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves, against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me. like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here. I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in

those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

William Burns

But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)  
<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mob (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

//

By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

A rectangular box with a black border, containing the text "(b)(6)" in the top-left corner. The rest of the box is empty, indicating a redacted signature.

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC  
Desk: (703) 571-2335  
Mobile: (571) 232-3699

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Iannone, Olivia F CTR OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)

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OSI

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

thanks so much!

ALCON, as promised, please find attached the final DoD SPOX TPs and Fact Sheet (posted on defense.gov). CWMD Policy is in lockstep with OSD PA, RUE Policy, NSC, State, USUN, and others to ensure that our messaging is consistent. Please do let me know if you are receiving media/congressional inquiries related to USG CWMD assistance to Ukraine (or other partners)-it would be extremely helpful to have broad awareness of the questions being asked and responses being provided.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

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But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in

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They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

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Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you. Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

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sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk

(b)(6)

Mobi

From

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To:

(b)(6)

<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

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MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

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Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

(b)(6)

Mobil

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:04:44 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(C)(b)(6)

(C)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
CIV (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

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So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves. against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

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So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

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I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

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So this is a classic move by the Russians.

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Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

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Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

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Thank you. Senator Rubio.

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Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

William Burns

But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

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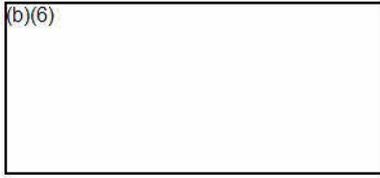
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(b)(6)



Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk

Mobi

(b)(6)



**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:04:44 -0400  
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**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

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Best,

(b)(6)

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Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)

(C)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

**To:** (b)(6)  
CIV  
USS  
OSI

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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(b)(6)

Thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To

(b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mob (b)(6)

From (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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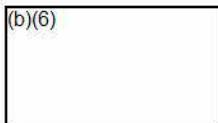
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Mobil: (b)(6)

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Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

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From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)  
CIV  
US  
OS

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

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(b)(5)

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Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

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Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

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In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you. Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

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Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to

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From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)  
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(b)(6)

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One more link:

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Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil

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Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

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I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
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From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

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Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:04:44 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

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Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

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Chief, Legislative Affairs  
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Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
CIV (b)(6)

(b)(6)

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Desk: (b)(6)

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I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this

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Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

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From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
<n

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mob

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

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VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

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Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mobi

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:10:37 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC  
Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
(O) (b)(6)  
(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O)(b)(6)

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-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)  
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OS

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

Mobile:

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

et. al.,

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from last week:

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Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves. against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically

the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons

that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the

material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

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From: Iannone, Olivia F CTR OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

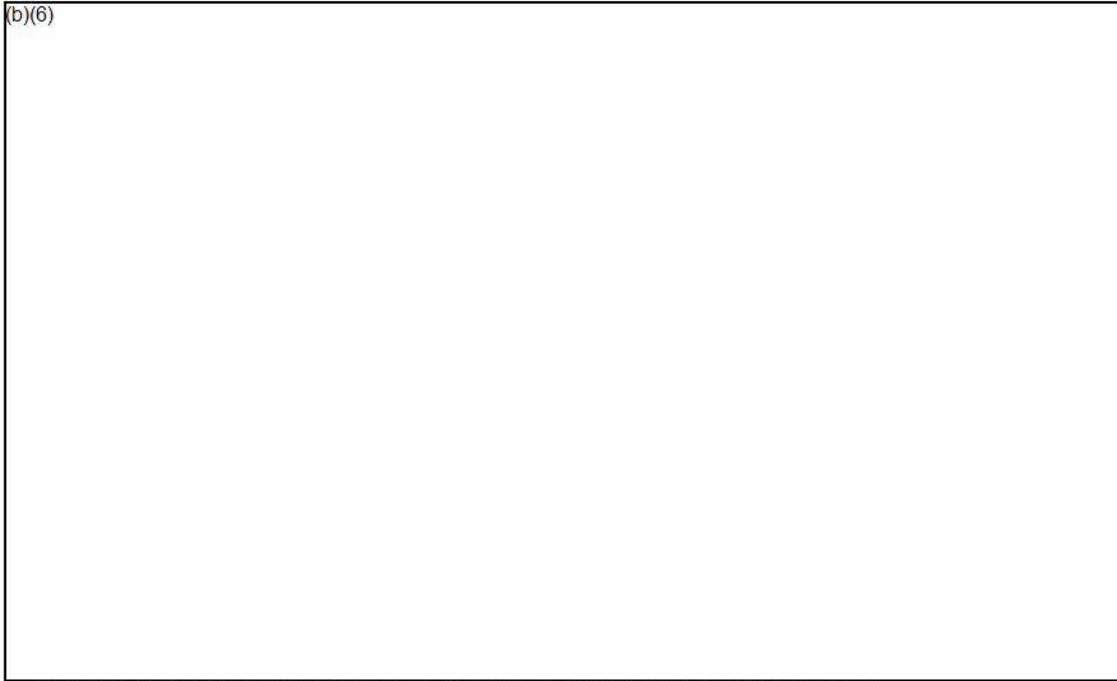
Desk (b)(6)  
Mob

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

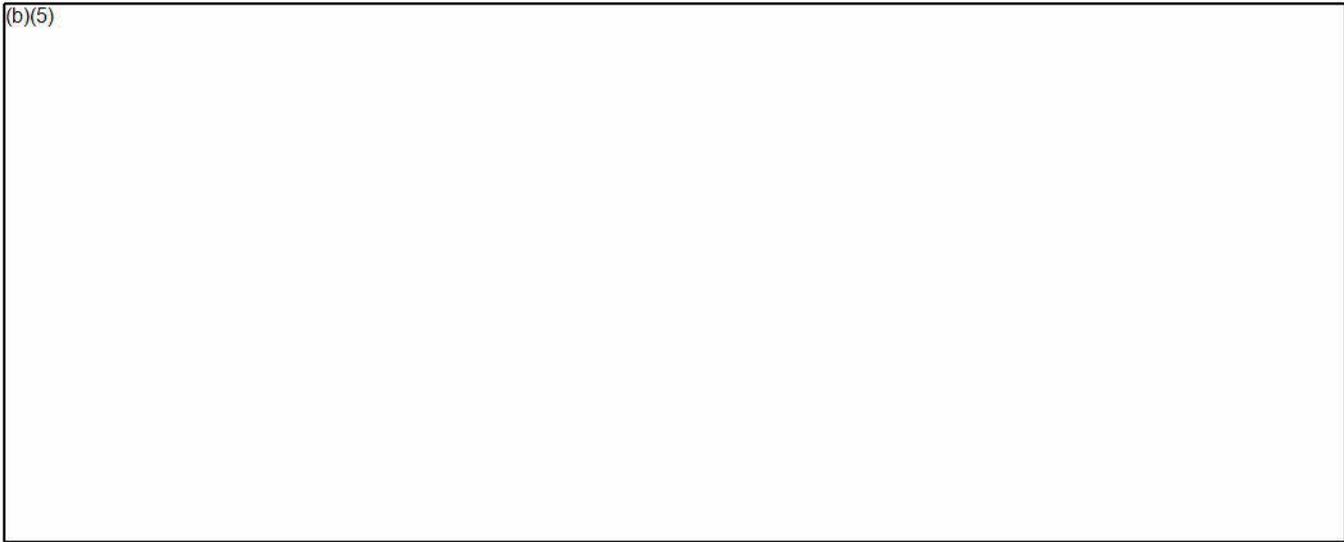
To (b)(6)

(b)(6)



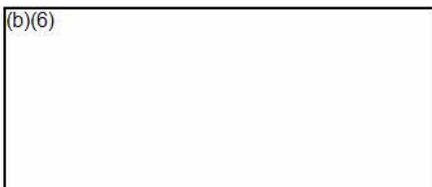
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Happy Friday!

(b)(6)



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Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

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Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM  
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(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

(b)(6)

Mobi:

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)  
(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

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Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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(C (b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)  
CIV  
US  
OS

(b)(6)

(USA) <neal.ellsworth@socom.mil>

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

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Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

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Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you

know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

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From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

Mobile:

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)  
<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

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Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:10:37 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O)(b)(6)  
(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

We did receive an inquiry from the Washington Journal. Interview conducted yesterday. When I get the transcript I will share with the group.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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(C)

-----Original Message-----

From (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To (b)(6)  
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US  
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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight. As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves, against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

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So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I

hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

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(b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

(b)(6)

Mobil

From

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To:

(b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

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**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:10:37 -0400  
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**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC  
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Mobile: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM  
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Here is the transcript.

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Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
(O) (b)(6)  
(C) (b)(6)

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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
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Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

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Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

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Chief, Legislative Affairs  
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(O)(b)(6)  
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From: (b)(6)

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Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

et. al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing

from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves. against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically

the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons

that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the

material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

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give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've

talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

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But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: Iannone, Olivia F CTR OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

//

By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)

(C)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<olivia.f.iannone.ctr@mail.mil>

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

We did receive an inquiry from the Washington Journal. Interview conducted yesterday. When I get the transcript I will share with the group.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O (b)(6)  
(C (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)  
CIV  
USS  
OSI

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

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Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

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space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

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From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)  
<mailto: >

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:

Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<ma

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

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//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

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Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobi: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:10:37 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<latisha.w.phillips.mil@mail.mil>

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)

(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<olivia.fiannone.ctr@mail.mil>

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O)(b)(6)  
(C)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)  
CI  
US  
OS

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves. against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

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Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

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So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

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Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I

hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

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Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these

reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is

losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't

think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

William Burns

But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

[Redacted]

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

[Redacted]

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

[Redacted]

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile

[Redacted]

From (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

(b)(6)

[Redacted]

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

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(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mob

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:09:04 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** WSJ Dr. Pope.docx, smime.p7s

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O (b)(6)  
(C (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)  
(C) [Redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)

CIV

US

OS

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

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Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been

involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

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But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)  
<m

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Des (b)(6)

Mob

From (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(5)

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mob

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

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By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil:

**Transcript: Wall Street Journal Engagement- Sharon Weinberger interviews Dr. Robert Pope**

**Q: There have been some outrageous allegations in recent days regarding the Ukraine Invasion. I thought it would be a good time to talk about the BTRP program in Ukraine, the history and where the program is now. Could you talk about the current state of work in Ukraine up until the state of the war?**

- A. We have worked with Ukraine in this mission area since 2005, fundamentally trying to make their public health network and vet health network of laboratories and epidemiology more successful at what they do. The work CTR was doing at the time, leading up to the invasion was all about that, we were continuing to help provide upgrades to various public and animal health laboratories so the scientists had the equipment and training and facility they needed to be able to do the same diseases diagnosis and reporting that any other country does.

**Q: What are the numbers of biological sites in Ukraine...the number that DTRA and the pentagon is doing work with?**

- A. You see a lot of different numbers because it depends on what you count. A lot of the work we've done are at the small diagnostic sites. Where all you have are samples coming in and safely packaged and transferred to the diagnostic labs. If you start counting things like that, the numbers get pretty big. If you don't count those, looking at my list here, 8 major disease diagnostic labs. We've done work at the regional level and pathogen collection at the diagnostic sites.

**Q: Can you describe what the ongoing work of DTRA is with these diagnostic sites, things you are working on with the Ukrainians and what the overall goal is?**

- A. The goal is like I said, the ability for Ukraine to have a public health laboratory network that meets international health regulations and standards set by the WHO to be able to detect outbreaks and dangerous diseases so the world can react and respond before we have a global pandemic. And we work similarly on the vet side because so many animal diseases (inaudible) like ebola or covid can jump from animal to human. Being able to work on both side of that one health spectrum gives that complete early detection and reporting that the whole world benefits from. We most recently were finishing up construction and renovation at the laboratories and continuing to training personnel and sponsor biosurveillance studies to better characterize the kinds of diseases that are endemic to Ukraine.

**Q: What was the status of the construction and renovation....where were these?**

- A: For the safety of the Ukrainians working in those labs, I don't want to say specifically which ones these are right now. Russian propaganda comes back to target them. Can we side step that one? (yes)

**Q: Is there an annual conference in Ukraine sponsored by DTRA/CTR for researchers?**

A: There are a number of conferences that CTR sponsors around the world, I don't remember which one we held most recently in Ukraine. Typically if we are sponsoring a conference, it's bringing researchers together who work in bio-surveillance studies to share what they have learned together. By bringing them together in that region, you are able to share the data and results across international boundaries. Diseases don't respect those boundaries and those technicians need to understand what's going on on the other side of the border as well.

**Q: How much of a concern do you have with the security of the lab in the state of the war?**

A. Generally we work with our partners like Ukraine to build these labs and train the people who work in them to to work in a very safe way. The samples they are collecting for this work stay safely in the lab don't infect the technicians or get out into the community. I would say when a conflict starts, electrical power isn't stable, buildings may be damaged, then the risk of accidental releases is present. Last week the Who made the statement that THEY had reached out to Ukraine and suggested they neutralize their pathogen strain collection and destroy everything so it won't accidentally leak out as part of this conflict.

**Q: Has that been done or is DTRA advising that?**

A: I can't say it has been done, I hope the government of Ukraine followed that recommendation.

**Q: Are DTRA personnel still in touch with counterparts in Ukraine?**

A: We are in touch with people who have a working relationship with DTRA. For example, we still have some personnel that work for us at the embassy and we check on them every day for safety, most days we are able to reach them. There are some contract support on the ground, we aren't talking directly to them but are talking to their contract heads and understanding their situation. We've got minimal contact with the gov of Ukraine due to bigger issues they are dealing with right now.

**Q: What do you make of the outrageous claims?**

A: They are absolutely that, they are outrageous claims. It's absolutely not what the CTR program does. We were created 30 years ago to eliminate WMD, and Russia knows that. We sanitized and dismantled their facilities at Stepnagorsk and Voz island to destroy weaponized anthrax and we destroy programs like that. Worked with them on a number of other programs with them directly up to 2014, destroying missiles, bombers, submarines, chemical weapons arsenals...They know what they do, we destroy WMD. If you look anywhere else in the world where we are active, you see the work we are doing for the health and safety of the people. I'm in Cameroon right now, one of the places I went today was the public health emergency operation center we built a couple years ago and commissioned just in time to use it for COVID. They have a single point to monitor what's now 6 outbreaks of COVID and a number of other diseases. This is the work we do in the world and Russia knows that, so the claims remain preposterous.

**Q: What milestones can you share from DTRA over the past 5 years?**

A: What we've done in the past 4 to 5 years has been an extension of what we started there since the beginning of 2005. We were able to work with ministries of health and agriculture, to take a decrepit and unsafe soviet system they inherited and make it meet world class international health standards for their laboratorians to safely do the work they do diagnosing disease in Ukraine. Every time we finished a lab that got them on that step, shut down an unsafe lab, those were considered milestones for us.

**Q: Why did this work take more than 15 years? Why can it not be done in 2-3 years?**

A: A few reasons...one is the physical speed of construction and renovation takes time. Putting a building on contract, going through the construction process and all the certifications required and transferring to the host nation for use can take 3-4 years for just that one project. As we work with any partner nation, we are looking at a baseline assessment of their health system, talking to them what are mutual goals are, U.S. goals, host nation goals, and as we work in that area, we train people, we have success in projects, we go off and find the next project in line that makes sense for both us and the partner to do together, so that's why you see it taking so long.

**Q: What is the annual expenditure of the work in Ukraine?**

A: don't have that.

**Q: In terms of the release of pathogens you worried about with the conflict in Ukraine, which ones worry you the most? Is anthrax a concern?**

A: There are a number of diseases that circulate in Ukraine, anthrax is one of them, African swine fever is another, these circulate in the country so as the field epidemiologists are collecting samples and sending up through the laboratory networks for diagnosis those are the kind of things that end of stored in the labs. Since they are Ukraine labs and not U.S. labs, I can't say specifically what pathogens are there but they will be collections of the diseases that are endemic to the country.

**Q: It must be bizarre for you knowing the work DTRA has done and seeing the claims...I mean how do you react?**

A: Sadly we've seen this in a slow simmer since Russia invaded Crimean peninsula in 2014 and ramping it up since then and only recently largely played in the local, regional press close to Russia. Since Russia ceased being a cooperative partner with the CTR program and started taking their aggressive actions in Ukraine, they have also decided to create this narrative and has recently exploded. I'm not happy at all.

**Q: It's surprising to me that it's had traction in each parts of the U.S. Has it made the U.S. rounds in media before?**

A: I haven't seen it in U.S. sites until recently, but recognizing that Russia comes from the soviet lineage of 70 years of honed expertise in propaganda and disinformation. They understand the psychology of their audiences they understand the kinds of outrageous claims that resonate. They have found a claim that activates some audiences here in the U.S. that believe bad things about their government.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

A: Not at this time, Sharon, it sounds like you've talked to the right people that know our work well and you are building an accurate and positive picture of our work.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 15:09:04 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Attachments:** WSJ Dr. Pope.docx, smime.p7s

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
(O) (b)(6)  
(C) (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
<olivia.f.iannone.ctr@mail.mil>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC  
Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobile (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

We did receive an inquiry from the Washington Journal. Interview conducted yesterday. When I get the transcript I will share with the group.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)  
(C) [Redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

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Thanks so much!

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

Olivia

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mobi

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you. Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there

are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves, against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I

think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that

there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you, Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you. Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous

because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

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We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

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From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk:  
Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

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Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE'S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil:

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

//

By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

**From:** (b)(6)  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:10:39 PM

Thank you again!

v/r,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobile

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:09 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

Here is the transcript.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O) (b)(6)

(C)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:05 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

Thank you very much. I look forward to reading the transcript!

Best,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:03 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

We did receive an inquiry from the Washington Journal. Interview conducted yesterday. When I get the transcript I will share with the group.

(b)(6)

Chief, Legislative Affairs  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(O)(b)(6)

(C)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:57 PM

To: (b)(6)

CIV

US

OS

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Thanks so much!

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)  
Mobil (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:15 AM  
To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

(b)(6) et. al.,

I wanted to share the relevant CB exchanges during the Senate IC hearing from last week:

From Senate Intelligence Committee's Annual Threat Briefing on 03/10

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Thank you all for being here. I'll direct this to you, Director Haines, but anybody who wants to answer it can do so as I think we've learned from from all this. The best way to combat this information is to transparency.

So I want to walk through some component pieces of a particular topic involving labs and Ukraine and then allow you to expand or anyone to expand that could provide greater insight. As you're all aware where Russia has been laying out this argument for the for a number of months now about how there are these labs in Ukraine that are developing chemical and biological weapons that the US is involved that they've discovered it. And they've been making that argument for a period of time and it's the argument they usually make before they use that kind of stuff themselves, against someone. So let me just start with a question the component pieces and then sort of allow you to expand more on on the important part of it.

There is a difference between a biological research facility and a biological weapons research facility. Correct?

Avril Haines

Correct.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. Does Ukraine have any biological weapons research facilities?

Avril Haines

No, let me be clear, we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons which have been some of the basically the the propaganda that Russia is putting out.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Okay. So they do have the biological research facilities, what is our government's role in their biological research programs?

Avril Haines

So as I understand it, Ukraine operates about over a dozen essentially Bio Labs and what they are involved in is Ukraine's bio defense in their public health response, and that's essentially what they're intended to do. And I think that the US government provides assistance and or at least has in the past provide assistance, really, in the context of bio safety, which is something that we've done globally with a variety of different countries.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

I guess that's the important component. Well, how do we define bio safety or bio defense? Is it the ability to have antidotes or responses if someone were to use an agent against you? Have you ever had an outbreak?

Well, what exactly is that?

Avril Haines

Yeah, I mean, I, I will quickly get out of my area of expertise, but I'll give you sort of a generic answer that I understand. So it is essentially for bio defense you and think about things like medical countermeasures, for example, things that that will help you to address a pandemic, that is an outbreak in your country, things along those lines, things that prevent spreading of pandemics and other health issues, things along those lines and the kinds of biosafety pieces that you would be providing assistance for things like making sure that as you're producing medical countermeasures, that you're taking appropriate precautions that you're letting the medical community international know notifying, when appropriate. So that's the kind of assistance but I again just, you know, want to be absolutely clear that we do not believe that Ukraine is pursuing biological or nuclear weapons that we've seen no evidence of that. And frankly, this influence campaign is completely consistent with long standing Russian efforts to accuse the United States of sponsoring bio weapons work in former Soviet Union.

So this is a classic move by the Russians.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

So I think the one thing that's piqued a lot of people's interest, and I hope we can address is a secretary Assistant Secretary Nuland said a couple of days ago in response to my question and another hearing. This is a quote the US government is concerned about preventing any of these research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach and quote, so people will hear that and say, well, that means that there must be something in these labs, it's very dangerous, they possess pathogens or something that must be very dangerous. Look, we're all coming off the trauma of COVID-19 the possibility that there might have been an accident or a leak out of a lab there that that we still don't know the answer to. And so it's in that context that people read that statement or hear it and say, Okay, sounds to me, like they have labs.

These labs are working on dangerous things, and the Russian and we're worried that it's going to get out of the laboratory. How should people assess that statement? Why are we so concerned? And again, I mean, I'm, I know maybe I'm asking you some questions that regard, medicine and biology and research and so forth.

But it's really important for this effort to understand what exactly is in these labs that were so worried about them? getting their hands on?

Avril Haines

Sure. I mean, I think medical facilities that I've certainly been in even as a child, done research, you know, in high school type of thing in college, I all have equipment or, you know, sort of pathogens or other things, that you have to have restrictions around because you want to make sure that they're being treated and handled appropriately. And I think that's the kind of thing that probably, Victoria Nuland was describing and thinking about in the context of that we have to be, you know, concerned in the same way that we have to be concerned about, Enerhodar, the nuclear power plant or, you know, other facilities that when they're seized, and if they're seized, that there may be damaged on or theft, and they may in fact, misuse some of the material that's there. That's not intended for weapons purposes, but nevertheless can be used in dangerous ways or that can create challenges for the local populations.

Thanks.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Senator Rubio, thank you for raising this. I think we've seen some of these reports that this may be another area where Russia is trying to offer a false flag. Signal and really appreciate your your your line of questioning.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Thank you. Director Haines following up on the chairman's leadership here. Before I begin my questioning, I just want to personally thank you for working with the Chairman and me and other members of this Committee on the cybersecurity field. We very much valued and appreciated your support, which was critical.

Director Burns, you have always shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking. We all read about the Russian Defense Ministry publicly accused saying Ukraine of possibly planning a false flag chemical weapon attack. What do you make of that? Does that signal that Putin intends to launch a chemical or biological weapon attack on the Ukrainians?

William Burns

Well, thanks very much, Senator. I mean, I think it underscores the concern that all of us need to focus on those kinds of issues whether it's the potential for a use of chemical weapons either as a false flag operation or against Ukrainians. This is something as all of you know very well is very much a part of Russia's playbook. They've used those weapons against their own citizens.

They've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere. So it's something we take very seriously. And it's one of the reasons as as director Haines said earlier, that I am convinced that our efforts at selective declassification, to preempt those kinds of false flag efforts in the creation of false narratives have been so important. In all the years I spent as a career diplomat I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians.

In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression, built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information where that I think Putin is losing.

Later in the hearing

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

I know we're going to close session but I think a couple members want at least ask one more question. I want to on my one point is simply reemphasize what Senator Rubio's line of questioning would be about things that are already floating in the internet, around the possibilities of bio tools being used, and I think Director Haines did most of this effort, but I do think in the public session, you know, Director Burns, if if you could address this and clearly there is a difference between bio research centers and bio weapons centers, anything you can do to help clarify some of the things that are already floating because I'm a fear I'm fearful that this could be the new direction of a Russian false flag operation.

William Burns

Or the first thing I'd say Senator is, you know, unlike Russia, which does have chemical and weapons and has used them and does do biological weapons research and has for years, Ukraine has neither and second as director Haines said, you know, in any public health system around the world, there's going to be, you know, worked in the interests of wider public health to you know, ensure that we have a grip on issues like that, but that's in no way threatening, you know, that's not something that can be weaponized in the way that the Russians have clearly demonstrated by their own actions against, you know, their citizens and people outside their country, their willingness to use, and when you couple that with their, you know, demonstrated willingness to create false flag operations and try to create the impression that somehow Ukrainians are responsible for this, that should give us all, you know, pretty serious reason for concern about their propaganda.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)

Thank you. Senator Rubio.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Just to follow up on kind of trying to put it in perspective so people are saying, you know, Secretary, new Assistant Secretary noon said there's these facilities there. And there's something in those facilities that's dangerous because we're afraid that Russians will get a hold of it. Now, I understand that there's a difference between a bio weapons facility and one that's doing research. A bio research facility is a totally different thing than a bio weapon facility.

Because you could have samples of a deadly or you no serious pathogen, but that doesn't mean you could weaponize it or that you're working on weaponizing it but people ask themselves, if there's these facilities there and there's a lot that play here, I mean, there was a lot we should and this is none of you but a long time ago, this should have been acknowledged like there are yes, there are these labs. This is what they do. Because a lot of these fact checkers just don't even mention labs because it's they don't even exist. They do they exist all over the world.

There's city there's labs like that right here. So the what I think got some people fired up is when she said we're worried that the Russians will get a hold of these facilities because that implies that there's something in those facilities that's very dangerous. So I don't know if you could shed some light on how it can how there can be things in the lab that are dangerous, but they not be weapons labs.

William Burns

Yeah, all I would all I would say, Senator, is that you know that the danger here it seems to me is the capacity the Russians have developed and that they've used in the past and they're, you know, interest in crying trying to create false narratives here as well. To the best of my knowledge, well, you have to be careful about you know, any of those substances you've you've talked about what you see in public health or research systems around the world for civilian purposes, why you have to be careful about that. That is in no way akin to the kind of threats that would be posed by you know, weapons research and development or weapons facilities.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Yeah, I just think that the answer is what picked a lot of people's and look they're they're latching on to it is my point. This is what the I think there's been such a good job done at defeating them in the information space, but this is one where they seem to have latched on. I don't I don't think anyone believes per se that there's some very serious attack or even a fake one that they've that that we're gonna they're gonna convince American public that the Ukrainians are behind it, but it's the confusion around it that I worry about debilitating the debate and allowing them to deflect it. I do want to ask you and particular director Burns because you have been involved with Russia issues for a very long time.

So I think as much as anyone involved today in this issue, you've had an opportunity to watch Putin through the years I suppose, and does it this whole thing about we're gonna they're having negotiations or parent negotiations today in Turkey with the foreign ministers. It's my view that this is negotiation. So it's just another tool in his toolbox. What is your view of why he continues to agree to these talks and put these talks forward?

We know they're not resulting in anything. In fact, he's violating whatever they even nominally agreed to.

William Burns

But I mean, I think Senator years is a fair assumption that this these sometimes just use tactically as well. You know, I think the the core issue here is that President Putin does not have a sustainable endgame in Ukraine right now. So the question is, is he simply going to continue to double down and grind down Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population or at some point, does he recognize that reality? That he doesn't have a sustainable end game?

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 9:36 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

One more link:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2963333/senior-defense-official-holds-an-off-camera-press-briefing/>

Have a great weekend!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk: (b)(6)

Mobil

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:49 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

FYSA the latest from DoD SPOX and PA:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2963280/russia-and-china-falsely-accusing-use-of-biological-weapons-against-russians-sa/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>

I'm still waiting on the final DoD SPOX TPs, but I will make sure to share that as well.

Happy Friday!

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)

Mobi

From (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 4:01 PM

To (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: INFO: Ukraine Current Events and CWMD Posture Hearing Prep

All,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak today. As mentioned, please find attached the transcript from U/S Nuland's SFRC testimony this week. Her answer to Sen Rubio's question on Ukraine having CBW has gotten a lot of media attention.

//

MARCO RUBIO: I only have a minute left. Let me ask you, does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?

VICTORIA NULAND: Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of. So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach.

MARCO RUBIO: I'm sure you're aware that the Russian propaganda groups are already putting out there all kinds of information about how they've uncovered a plot by the Ukrainians to release biological weapons in the country, and with NATO's coordination. If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or -- or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100 percent it would be the Russians that would be behind it?

//

By COB I should be able to share NSC-cleared press points and fact sheet on DoD CTR Program biological threat reduction activities in Ukraine (the current hot topic for Russian and Chinese disinformation). I'll also look out for the transcript from Mr. Kirby's background briefing today.

Finally, confirming that the HASC EUCOM Posture Hearing will take place on 16 MAR. I will push the transcript out to the group as soon as it's available!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor, Cooperative Threat Reduction | Barbaricum LLC

Desk (b)(6)  
Mobi

**Question for the Record Submitted by  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
March 1, 2022**

**Question 1:**

Does the U.S. have threat reduction sites (labs, etc.) in Ukraine? If so, what measures is the State Department taking to counter possible Russian disinformation about those sites?

**Answer 1:**

No, the United States does not own or operate any threat reduction sites within Ukraine. The Ukrainians own and operate their own laboratories and associated infrastructure. We have, however, supported Ukraine through our Cooperative Threat Reduction work. Specifically, the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, via its implementers within the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), has worked with 44 facilities in Ukraine to help elevate the ability of their domestic public health and research laboratories to prevent, detect, and mitigate the spread of infectious disease threats whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberate in origin. The work of such facilities is part of the normal efforts of any country to protect its citizens from the threat of infectious disease.

False Russian allegations about these activities are not new. To help counter ongoing Russian disinformation about them, the United States issued a working paper at the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Meeting of States Parties in November 2021 that reiterated our commitment to, and explained how BTRP's work is consistent with, Article X of the BWC "to facilitate ... the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes." Additionally, the Department of State's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has engaged numerous laboratory stakeholders in Ukraine to help them counter malign Russian influence and activities seeking to disrupt the operations, attack the credibility, and politicize the activities of these critical health facilities.

**Question for the Record Submitted by  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
March 1, 2022**

**Approved:** ISN/FO –

**Drafted:** ISN/BPS – Ken Turner, ext. 7-9571, cell: 202-531-6886  
AVC/CBW – Emily Rosenblum, ext. 7-5091, cell: 202-256 7364

**Cleared:**

H: [Name]	()
T: R. Gile	()
D: M. Thomi	(info)
P: N. Klinger	(info)
S/P: E. Quam	(info)
R: [Name]	()
ISN/BPS: C. Park	(ok)
ISN/CTR: T.Thurn/D. Masada	()
ISN/CTR: K.Zimmerman/L.Childers	()
ISN/PC: [Name]	()
ISN/CPA: [Name]	()
AVC/CBW: L.Gross	()
L/NPA: S. McDonald	()
EUR/PRA: [Name]	()
INR/SPM: A. Jones	()
R/GEC: [Name]	()
OSD: [Name]	()

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 15:24:56 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
OUSD A-S (USA);Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** CTR Disinformation Talking Points  
**Attachments:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine).docx, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Ma'am, please find attached for inclusion and consideration the information that supports Mr. Kirby's upcoming press briefings. The information has been coordinated with OSD Policy for message alignment.

Please let us know if you need additional assistance. Thank you.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)  
NIPR:  
SIPR:  
JWICS

Page 0796 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

- There is nothing secretive about DoD's capacity building efforts with foreign partners. BTRP's priorities in Ukraine are to help them consolidate and secure pathogens and to continue to ensure Ukraine can detect and report disease outbreaks before they pose security or stability threats.
- Proper disposition of samples during a war reflects responsible conduct on the part of the Ukrainians to protect the Ukrainian people and the international community from potential accidental exposure due irresponsible Russian actions.
  - After Russia launched its unlawful invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health responsibly ordered the safe and secure disposal of pathogen collections. These actions limit the danger of an accidental release of pathogens should Russia's military attack laboratories, a real concern since they have attacked Ukraine's nuclear power plants and research facilities.
- On a daily basis, Russia propagates disinformation aimed at BTRP's laboratory and capacity building efforts in former Soviet Union countries—falsely claiming that the U.S. Department of Defense support is used to develop biological weapons. The DoD CTR Program is not in any way involved in the creation of weapons of mass destruction anywhere in the world, including in Ukraine.

As of Mar. 10, 2022

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{(USA)\}  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 13:08:51 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, our media monitors are seeing a substantial uptick in disinformation on DTRA CTR BTRP's projects in Ukraine -- from an average of 50 articles per day to over a thousand in the last 24 hours. Russia is blaming DTRA for a number of outbreaks in the region, as well as for crafting an offensive BW program in Ukraine.

We have also seen reporting from China's Foreign Ministry spokesman echoing Russian charges, which has received extensive coverage in both the Chinese and Russian news and social media circles.

State AVC has a press statement they plan to put out today that OSD provided us an opportunity to review. It hits the right points and draws from the "Break Glass" book DTRA provided to OSD PA and State last week.

We heard today from journalist Matt Field at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Working with DTRA PA, we answered some questions for him last Friday and he stated his intent to submit an article to his editor today. We will watch for it.

Finally, if you have four minutes, here's a briefing on DTRA's activities in Ukraine from the Russian Ministry of Defense, with English subtitles:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_q0qqqClK0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_q0qqqClK0)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

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V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{(USA\}  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 13:08:51 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

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V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR \((USA)\)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 21:34:52 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP  
THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** DTRA CTR BTRP activities in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** Break Glass\_UKR\_Final DTRA\_Pol\_NCB\_20220301.docx, AVC Press Guidance Russian Allegations of BW Use 3.7.2022\_DTRA edits.docx, smime.p7s

VADM Whitworth,

Attached are the two papers I mentioned in my sipr email, one from DoD and one from the State Department.

DTRA's CTR Directorate is in close contact with their partners in DoD and DoS for both direction and messaging.

Standing by for your questions.

VR Doc  
RDML Ryan Scholl  
Deputy Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)  
Comm (b)(6)  
SIPR: (b)(6)

## **Background Paper / Fact Sheet on DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Biological Threat Reduction Program) - Ukraine**

Background: The Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, is implemented by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since 2005, the program assisted the Ukrainian government in converting former Soviet biological weapons (BW) research facilities to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and reduce the threats posed by dangerous pathogens, whether they are naturally-occurring, accidental, or intentional.

### Key Facts:

- BTRP's priorities in Ukraine are to help them consolidate and secure pathogens and to continue to ensure Ukraine can detect and report disease outbreaks before they pose security or stability threats. All of BTRP's efforts are peaceful in nature and subject to rigorous export-control measures and vetting processes. BTRP sponsors no gain of function research or "human experimentation."
- Ukraine is a State Party to Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). In accordance with an August 2005 CTR agreement, the DoD has been funding security upgrades at Ukrainian biological laboratories where collections of pathogens are kept.
- BTRP has supported 46 laboratories, facilities and diagnostic sites for the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. BTRP has also provided the Ministry of Defense with 3 mobile diagnostic laboratories, with the goal of enhancing the system of disease surveillance and emergency preparedness in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. All of this assistance improved Ukraine's COVID-19 response.
- All of these are Ukrainian facilities owned and operated by the government of Ukraine, which aims to improve human and animal health capacity for the people of Ukraine.
- On a daily basis, Russia propagates, either directly through state-run media outlets or through the use of surrogates, disinformation aimed at BTRP's laboratory and capacity building efforts in former Soviet Union countries. The Lugar Center in Georgia and the Central Reference Laboratory in Kazakhstan are the primary targets, but more recent disinformation efforts have targeted laboratories in Ukraine. Through these disinformation campaigns, Russia falsely claims the United States, and specifically DTRA, is developing biological weapons in laboratories in these countries, as well as killing local populations with purposeful releases of biological agents.
- Russia illegally took possession of two Ukrainian-owned labs that BTRP upgraded in 2014 and continues to deny Ukrainian access to these facilities. To date, we are unaware of any attempts to use these facilities for disinformation purposes.
- BTRP is just one of many organizations providing equipment and training to these facilities. Other supporters include, among others, the European Union, World Health Organization, international universities and research institutions, as well as other U.S. interagency partners.
- Even though BTRP has had an active biological engagement with the government of Ukraine since 2005, there are many Ministry of Health and Ministry of Defense facilities that have not asked for, or received equipment or training from the United States.

**DRAFT MEDIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS****1. Why are there DoD labs in Ukraine?**

*DoD does not own or operate labs in Ukraine. All the facilities receiving BTRP assistance are Ukrainian owned and operated, and these facilities receive training and equipment from a large array of partners to include the European Union and its individual members, the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the US Department of State, US Department of Agriculture, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, and the US Department of Defense. During the Soviet era, certain select laboratories in Ukraine held the most dangerous pathogens in various collection sites. These materials were held under antiquated and inadequate safety and security conditions. The fall of the Soviet Union only exacerbated these vulnerabilities and exposed significant proliferation threats. DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program was created to reduce the threat of WMD material, including biological threats. CTR worked cooperatively and peacefully with the government of Ukraine to increase biosecurity and biosafety at these sites to ensure these dangerous pathogens did not pose a risk to the people of Ukraine or the region. This relationship with Ukraine continues today and Ukraine uses the laboratory improvements provided by the United States to support broader public and veterinary health goals, such as monitoring the spread of COVID-19, preparing for and controlling African Swine Fever, which helped Ukrainian farmers protect their herds from infectious diseases, and protecting the food supply in Ukraine - just to mention a few of the many benefits that accrued from this partnership.*

**2. How can you prove that you weren't doing offensive biological weapons work?**

*The United States is a States Party and depository for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with its obligations under that treaty. The United States does not develop biological weapons, and any assistance we provide to foreign partners has strict protocols, to include a rigorous vetting process, that ensures all activities are peaceful in nature. As the U.S. has pointed out many times, injecting maximum transparency into ALL BWC member state initiatives within the convention is paramount.*

**3. What did you do with the material from the former Soviet BW program?**

*At the request of many former Soviet Union countries, to include Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, the United States (through the Congressionally-funded and mandated Cooperation Threat Reduction program) eliminated or secured stockpiles of dangerous pathogens from the legacy Soviet biological weapons research and development enterprise. For example, in Uzbekistan, the United States eliminated nearly 12 tons of weaponized Anthrax from an island in the Aral Sea. This work was a cooperative effort with the government of Uzbekistan and demonstrates a true partnership in reducing the threat of dangerous pathogens – either from an intentional act or accidental release.*

**4. If these efforts in Ukraine are peaceful, why do these labs still contain samples of anthrax, plague, and other dangerous agents?**

*All of these pathogens are common in agricultural and natural settings and readily found in the environment of Ukraine. These and other pathogens are studied in veterinary and public health research labs around the world to improve early detection and diagnostic capabilities to contain*

*and prevent outbreaks of diseases – such as COVID-19. Ukraine's capability to understand endemic pathogens is an essential step of disease surveillance, as required by the WHO and other international health organizations. Furthermore, BTRP encourages Ukraine and all partners not to store any biological materials beyond what is required to perform diagnostics. Moreover, BTRP has provided to Ukraine molecular diagnostic equipment, supplies, and know-how to avoid the typical, Soviet-era style of diagnostics, which involves growing viruses and bacteria—a clear proliferation risk. By employing PCR and sequencing technologies, BTRP enables Ukraine to detect viruses and bacteria without propagating infectious diseases.*

**5. Is it true you performed human experimentation?**

*DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) does not conduct any human experimentation - period. All BTRP projects are focused on enhancing peaceful foreign partner biosecurity, biosafety, and detection activities – to detect disease outbreaks and stop a pandemic before it happens. As an example, BTRP does fund disease investigations where Ukrainian partners collect clinical samples from humans and/or animals to conduct diagnostic testing and epidemiological analysis. BTRP insists that foreign partners, like Ukraine, establish internal review board processes guided by national regulatory frameworks before any diagnostic or epidemiological study is conducted—whether with human or animal samples.*

**6. Other than DoD, who else provides funding to these labs?**

*DoD's CTR Program does not provide US taxpayer funding directly to the laboratories. Furthermore, the laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the host country. DoD provides equipment and training that is in compliance with BWC protocols and International Health Regulations. However, the DoD CTR program does competitively award grants to foreign partners for biosurveillance studies aimed at detecting and diagnosing disease outbreaks. At their request, we partner with them because they value our expertise and experience – especially in terms of our biosafety and biosecurity protocols. While we know that some governments receive funding, capacity, and training from the European Union and other academic, governmental, and commercial sponsors, you will have to ask the countries that own the laboratories to confirm other funding sources.*

**7. How do you know that these labs are not performing illegal activities without your knowledge?**

*Ukraine is a responsible steward and owns and operates these facilities. The facilities are much more open and transparent than during the Soviet era. Scientists are encouraged to publish their research results, partner with international colleagues, and widely distribute their research findings. They operate in a capacity similar to university labs on campuses around the world. Furthermore, all DoD provided equipment and training with foreign partners is subject to US export control processes, DoD audits, and US acquisition laws and regulations to ensure transparency and compliance with both US and International Health Regulations.*

**8. If nothing illegal is going on, why all of the secrecy?**

*There is nothing secretive about DoD's capacity building efforts with foreign partners. In fact, we urge you to view BTRP promotional videos to see how the United States is transparent with all its biological engagement activities. In sum, DoD's peaceful efforts are designed to prevent*

UNCLASSIFIED

*the proliferation of disease-causing pathogens, and prevent outbreaks of diseases that impact everyone. DoD's efforts with foreign partners are designed to be as transparent as possible, while at the same time protecting intellectual property and intellectual rights. DoD's efforts with foreign partners also comply with US acquisition rules and regulations, ensuring maximum competition with US and foreign contractors who perform the work on behalf of the government. The US government must preserve a competitive playing field to ensure US taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely. While this may appear to be secretive, the actual work performed is not and information is publicly available.*

*BTRP 101 (ENG) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEE4-WuJYRA>*

*BTRP 101 (UA) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ9cCqChMLs>*

*Research Culture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03tPlwJ9UTo>*

*International Outreach <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djA1bfB2c-Q>*

*Zoonotics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nocfl-kLlLw>*

*Lugar Center: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv\\_WYnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv_WYnE)*

**9. How much did the U.S. invest in these facilities in Ukraine?**

*The United States, through DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction program, invested in approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005. These activities have included building or renovating laboratories and providing laboratory equipment and training to help Ukraine's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture to conduct safer and more effective disease detection, to help Ukraine's Ministry of Defense to protect the health of the Ukrainian Armed forces, and help Ukraine conduct peer-reviewed biosurveillance studies to understand pathogens that are endemic in Ukraine and spot indicators of an outbreak.*

**DRAFT PRESS RELEASE – CTR ACTIVITIES AND BIOLOGICAL THREAT REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP WITH UKRAINE**

The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program is a Congressionally-founded and directed program created to rectify the WMD security gap left after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Ukraine, CTR facilitated the removal of Ukraine's 1,800 nuclear warheads and helped return them to Russia. CTR also worked with the government of Ukraine to eliminate WMD delivery systems and infrastructure such as missiles and missile silos. CTR has worked with the government of Ukraine to identify legacy Soviet Biological Weapons (BW) sites and help eliminate and secure dangerous pathogens from that era. Over the years, this partnership expanded into helping Ukraine's government upgrade its public and animal health detection, diagnostic, safety, and security capacity. This investment in Ukrainian public health capability undoubtedly saved innumerable Ukrainian lives during the ongoing pandemic as a result of enhanced diagnostic and response to SARS COV-2. It also helped the Ukrainian government detect and respond to multiple outbreaks of African Swine Fever, a disease that is highly contagious and lethal to pigs and can cause severe economic disruption.

The United States has made a full and comprehensive declaration of our past biological weapons program, which ended in 1972. Our country is a State Party and depository of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with all of its provisions. The United States does not develop biological weapons, nor does the United States enable partner countries to do the same. The laboratory upgrades and training provided by the United States to Ukraine, and other partner countries, is a frequent target of Russian disinformation campaigns, making unscrupulous and baseless claims that the United States is developing biological weapons, and even worse, killing people in partner countries. These claims are outright lies, designed to drive a wedge between the successful biological threat reduction efforts of the United States and its partner countries.

The laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the government of Ukraine. The Department of Defense, through the CTR program, continues to partner closely with Ukraine to improve public and veterinary health and safety.

Page 0807 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0808 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0809 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0810 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0811 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 24 Mar 2022 16:01:23 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: President says US would respond "in-kind" if Russia uses CW  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

All,

FYSA

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 24, 2022 3:57 PM  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA) <deborah.g.rosenblum.civ@mail.mil>; Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) <richard.c.johnson500.civ@mail.mil>

**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** President says US would respond "in-kind" if Russia uses CW  
**Importance:** High

M'am,

FYSA – During the President's press conference earlier this afternoon, he said that the US and NATO would respond "in-kind" if Russia uses CW. I spoke with someone on the NSC staff who heard the same thing. They are going to engage with the NSC press team and offered that they will forward along any TPs if they develop them (not sure if they will).

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/24/biden-says-us-would-respond-to-russia-if-putin-uses-chemical-or-biological-weapons.html>.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/24/russia-ukraine-war-news-putin-live-updates/#link-HCEK5PRFA5BO3INO3363CK6RYE>

I spoke with (b)(6) about this and am going to give a heads-up to the Public Affairs team as well.

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor, Strategic Threats & Intelligence  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical & Biological Defense Programs  
Pentagon Room 3C949A

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 09:56:07 -0400  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Fuss, Norman H III CIV DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

Dr. Pope,  
I've locked in 1:30pm EST for the WSJ interview with (b)(6). She says that they've already interviewed James Tegnalia, Andrew Weber, Daniel Gerstein and Darrell Galloway. They are also reaching out to some of the Ukrainians who have participated in the International Biothreat symposia sponsored by DTRA for input. I now have the call in phone number and (b)(6) is setting up the group call so that the normal CTR "media team" (b)(6), etc) can listen in and get notes. Finally, for your awareness, the Strat team at NCB has been notified of the engagement.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 14, 2022 9:19 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [URL Verdict: Unknown][Non-DoD Source] Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction

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---

Hi (b)(6)

1 pm or later is great; just let me know what time works for Dr. Pope.

So far, I've interviewed James Tegnalia, Andrew Weber, Daniel Gerstein and Darrell Galloway. One of our science reporters is also reaching out to some of the Ukrainians who have participated in the International Biothreat symposia sponsored by DTRA.

Please let me know if there's anything else you need from my side, and thanks for helping make this happen on short notice.

Best,

(b)(6)

NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR

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(b)(6)

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On Mon, Mar 14, 2022 at 9:04 AM Tune, Melissa D CIV DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
Caution-mailto:(b)(6) > > wrote:

Good morning (b)(6)

Thank you for reaching out to me via LinkedIn yesterday. I spoke with Dr. Robert Pope, our expert here at DTRA and he will be happy to conduct an interview with you regarding the current situation in Ukraine, the false information that's circulating and the overall history of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. He is traveling today, but has time to talk after 1pm EST. Dr. Pope is happy to contribute to the story and if you are still interested in an interview, we can make it happen.

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V/r

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

NIPR: (b)(6)

SIPR: (b)(6)

JWIC

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Finally, for your awareness, the Strat team at NCB has been notified of the engagement.

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(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

NIPR:  
SIPR:  
JWICS

(b)(6)

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Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:19 AM

To: (b)(6)

Subject: [URL Verdict: Unknown][Non-DoD Source] Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction

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NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR

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O: (b)(6)

E:

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(b)(6)

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V/r

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR  
mailto:meliss  
JWIC

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 09:56:07 -0400  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Long, Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Chaney, Andrea C CIV DTRA J0 (USA); (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

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(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC:

-----Original Message-----

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Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:19 AM

To: (b)(6)

Subject: [URL Verdict: Unknown][Non-DoD Source] Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction

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(b)(6)

NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR

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<http://www.wsj.com/> >

O: (b)(6)  
E:

A: 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 800 | Washington, D.C. 20036

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V/r

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR  
JWIC

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 09:29:50 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**OU:** OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Media Interview - WSJ  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

For your awareness, this morning we are coordinating a media interview with a Wall Street Journal Editor, Sharon Weinberger. The WSJ is preparing an article on the history of the Biological Threat Reduction Program and they'd like an interview with Dr. Pope about weapons work in Ukraine. Dr. Pope has agreed to engage and we are working the interview details (time, length) as we speak.

(b)(6) reached out to me for the interview and says the WSJ has interviewed others for the story already.

I will provide a follow-up read out to you after the interview. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thanks.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR: (b)(6)  
JWICS: (b)(6)

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR: (b)(6)  
JWICS: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 13:05:19 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Directors; DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** OSD PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE (PAG) : DOD SUPPORT TO ALLIES AND PARTNERS IN EUROPE  
**Attachments:** DoD Support to USG re UKR PAG 20220321 V21.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and DTRA Leaders,  
Please find attached for your awareness the latest "OSD Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on DOD Support to Allies and Partners in Europe." OSD PA has reiterated to the field PAOs that the attached PAG should be followed when engaging in all messaging activities.  
Of note, on page 14, in the Q&A section on BTRP, DTRA is referenced and a downloadable link to our fact sheet is included.  
The next DOD PA PAG is anticipated for next week and I will continue to provide all updates.  
V/r,

(b)(6)  
Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)  
(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)  
NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 21, 2022 2:42 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Brady, Michael P SES  
USARMY HQDA OCPA (USA) (b)(6) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Pittman, Harold E SES DMA

HQ DMA (USA) <harold.e.pittman.civ@mail.mil> (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: Trudeau, Elizabeth K SES OSD PA (USA)

(b)(6)

; Kaye, Melanie A SES (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

; OSD Pentagon PA List SPA

<osd.pentagon.pa.list.spa@mail.mil>; Brcasseale, J Todd SES OSD PA (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: 21 MAR UPDATED PAG V21: Support to Ukraine

Greetings PA Leaders,

Please find attached updated guidance (21 March V21) based on latest events regarding Ukraine and announcements of security assistance in support to the interagency response to conditions in eastern Europe.

Updates/New in V21:

-security assistance package information announce March 12 and 16, with specifics

-updated number of troops in Europe (approx. 100,000)

-Q+A on omnibus, National Guard support, KC-46As, hypersonics, chemical/biological events

With regards to Russia/Ukraine, please continue to share questions and updates, as your coordination makes it possible for the Department to maintain the necessary tone and posture in this dynamic environment.

Thank you for your support.

V/R

(b)(6)

Division Chief, Plans

OSD Public Affairs

Strategy, Plans, and Assessment

(b)(6)

Slava Ukraini!



# OSD PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE: DOD SUPPORT TO ALLIES AND PARTNERS IN EUROPE

\*As of 1430 March 21, 2022

**Background:** Since late 2021, the White House and U.S. National Security Council have been focused on Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) remains in support of the U.S. whole-of-government effort.

On Jan. 22, the Secretary of Defense approved a heightened state of readiness for a range of U.S. military forces in Europe and in the U.S. The Secretary placed a planned U.S. Force contribution to the NATO Response Force on heightened alert.

As announced on Feb. 2, approximately 1,700 service members of the 82nd Airborne Division and key enablers from Fort Bragg, North Carolina deployed to Poland, and approximately 300 service members of the 18th Airborne Corps deployed from Fort Bragg to Germany. All of these forces are separate and in addition to the 8,500 personnel in the United States on heightened alert posture that were announced Jan. 22.

On Feb. 11, at the direction of the President, Secretary Austin ordered to Poland the remaining 3,000 soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team. This second tranche of Airborne soldiers joined in Poland the first tranche of 1,700 soldiers and key enablers that Secretary Austin ordered there on Feb. 2.

On Feb. 12, Secretary Austin ordered the temporary repositioning of the 160 members of the Florida National Guard who had been deployed to Ukraine since late November. These troops, assigned to the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, were advising and mentoring Ukrainian forces as part of Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine. They are repositioned elsewhere in Europe.

On Feb. 17, Secretary Austin, in conjunction with the government of Bulgaria, announced a U.S. Army Stryker troop of approximately 125 soldiers would take part in a training mission in Bulgaria. On Feb. 18, U.S. Army Europe-Africa, in conjunction with the government of Hungary, announced a U.S. Army Stryker troop of approximately 125 soldiers would take part in a training mission in Hungary.

On Feb. 22, Secretary Austin ordered the additional movement of U.S. forces currently stationed in Europe to continue our support for NATO Allies and the defense of the eastern flank. These forces -- comprised of aviation elements and ground forces -- will move within the EUCOM AOR to NATO's northeastern and southeastern flanks. These force movements comprise:

- An infantry battalion task force of approximately 800 personnel, from Italy to the Baltic region

- Movement of up to eight F-35 Strike Fighters, from Germany to several operating locations along NATO's eastern flank
- A battalion of attack aviation – 20 AH-64 helicopters – from Germany to the Baltic region
- An attack aviation task force – 12 AH-64 helicopters – will move from Greece to Poland.

On Feb. 24, Russia invaded Ukraine. Secretary Austin ordered the deployment from the United States of an additional approximately 7,000 U.S. military personnel to locations across Europe. These forces will augment existing U.S. forces in the European theater, which are trained and equipped for a variety of missions to reinforce U.S. European Command posture on NATO's eastern flank. These forces are comprised of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) and key enablers.

On Feb. 25, following the NATO Heads of State and Government approval of defense plans, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Gen. Wolters released a statement on the activation of the NATO Response Force (NRF). This activation serves as a warning order for the Allies who contribute to the NRF.

Also on Feb. 25, the President authorized an additional \$350 million of military assistance from Department of Defense inventories, including anti-armor, small arms and various munitions, body armor, and related equipment in support of Ukraine's front-line defenders facing down Russia's unprovoked attack. This brings the total security assistance we've approved for Ukraine to \$1 billion over the past year.

On March 5, Secretary Austin ordered the deployment from the United States of an additional approximately 500 U.S. military personnel to locations across Europe. These forces will augment and provide additional support to existing U.S. forces in the European theater, which are trained and equipped for a variety of missions to reinforce U.S. European Command posture on NATO's Eastern Flank. These forces are comprised of:

- KC-135 refueling aircraft with approximately 150 personnel, which will deploy to Spangdahlem, Germany.
- An Air Support Operations Center (ASOC) with approximately 40 personnel to deploy to Poland and Romania.
- An Ordnance Company and a Maintenance Company with approximately 300 personnel to Germany, to provide additional logistics support to the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division already deployed there.

With these additional deployments, the United States will have approximately 100,000 military personnel either permanently stationed or deployed to Europe and its waters. This represents our longstanding commitment to European security. We will continue to work closely with our European Allies on these deployments, and we appreciate their support.

On March 12, President Biden approved an additional \$200 million security assistance package for immediate support to Ukraine's defense. This package will include additional capabilities to address airborne and armored threats to Ukraine and its people, which the Department of Defense will continue to deliver on an expeditious timeline.

On March 16, President Biden announced an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, bringing the total U.S. security assistance committed to Ukraine to \$1 billion in just the past week, and a total of \$2 billion since the start of the Biden Administration. The assistance

will take the form of direct transfers of equipment from the Department of Defense to the Ukrainian military to help them defend their country against Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion.

**Public Affairs Posture:** Active limited, as specified below. OSD(PA) retains release authority for announcements of DoD support activities and force posture changes related to this subject.

Components directly supporting announced activities are authorized to amplify DoD messages included in this PAG. Components should collect imagery of these activities and submit imagery for release approval to OSD(PA); photo release procedure appears below. Components must coordinate with OSD(PA) regarding media access to deployment departures, and with U.S. European Command Public Affairs regarding deployment arrivals and mission activities. Embeds remain paused; components should direct interested media outlets to OSD(PA).

Components on PTDO in support of potential future requirements are authorized to confirm their affiliation after OSD announces units, as Joint Staff sourcing deliberations are pre-decisional. Components may provide information about units and capabilities, but should not speculate about timelines, locations, and missions.

Components not directly supporting announced activities are not authorized to amplify DoD messages, to maintain overall White House lead of ongoing Interagency actions.

All components with pre-planned activities (i.e. exercises) in the USEUCOM theater will coordinate with USEUCOM PA on PA posture prior to execution, to accommodate emerging developments and avoid provocation. All components with pre-planned activities related to USEUCOM interests but scheduled to occur in other geographic theaters will coordinate with OSD(PA) on PA posture prior to execution.

#### *Imagery Release Procedure*

DoD components directly participating in the effort to reassure Allies and support Ukraine are encouraged to capture still and video imagery of activities. OSD(PA) retains release authority for imagery.

- Components send assets to OSD for review. For images, send either DoD Safe files or documents showing the images/captions. For video, continue to send via DoD safe. Send all material to [osd.pentagon.pa.mbx.digital-media-mailbox@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.mbx.digital-media-mailbox@mail.mil). To reduce volume of submission, please send the component's best selections, not several versions of the same image.
- OSD(PA) will contact the sender with approval or disapproval, and comments.
- Once OSD approves, components are to upload approved imagery and video to a central DVIDS folder. Please use the tag "europeansupport2022" in addition to any other tags you would normally use.

#### **Communication Objectives:**

- Provide factual baseline of DoD activities in support of U.S. approach

- Reinforce commitment to the NATO Alliance and European security
- Reduce risk that Russia misinterprets U.S. force activities as escalatory or provocative

### **Topline Messages:**

- The Department of Defense is in support of a whole-of-government approach to Russian aggressive actions toward Ukraine.
- The United States continues to uphold the principles of democracy, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and respect for the international rules-based order. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion is in direct contrast to these principles.
- The United States continues to reaffirm its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United States is taking prudent steps to heighten the readiness of its forces at home and abroad so they are prepared to respond to a range of contingencies. As the forces we have in theater grow in number, it's prudent that we provide the necessary logistics and enablers to support them.
- The United States maintains significant numbers of combat-capable forces in Europe. They exist to deter aggression and if deterrence fails, stand shoulder to shoulder with our Allies against that aggression.

### **Talking Points:**

#### **Invasion / Russian Actions:**

- Russia chose to launch a premeditated war of choice that is bringing catastrophic loss of life and human suffering.
- Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this war brings, and the United States and its Allies and partners will hold Russia accountable.

#### **NATO Response Force:**

- As a member of the Alliance, the United States makes a commitment to provide forces to the NATO Response Force in the event that NATO activates that construct.
- The NATO Response Force is a multinational force made up of land, air, maritime, and Special Operations Forces components that the Alliance can deploy on short notice, wherever needed. Altogether, the NRF comprises around 40,000 multinational troops.
- Within the NRF is the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). This NRF element – about 20,000 strong – includes a multinational land brigade of around 5,000 troops and air, maritime, and SOF components.

- The Secretary will continue to consult with the President, and the United States will maintain close coordination with Allies and partners, as we continuously review our force posture and make decisions regarding movement of forces into and within Europe.

### **Prepare to Deploy Orders (PTDO):**

- Identified forces are on heightened preparedness to deploy, but have not yet been activated.
- The U.S. has placed no added restrictions on day-to-day activities or long-planned exercises and operations in Europe.
- Normal unit rotations and replacements are continuing.

### **Force Posture Announcements:**

- In the face of Russian aggression, the United States deployed an additional 15,000 forces in recent weeks and now has approximately 100,000 U.S. service members in Europe. We have repositioned other forces within Europe to assure our Allies and deter Russian aggression against NATO.
- Starting in late January, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, a Stryker Squadron, consisting of approximately 1,000 U.S. service members moved from Germany to Romania.
- We deployed approximately 5,000 multi-mission forces from the United States to Europe.
- These forces include approximately 4,700 service members of the 82nd Airborne Division and key enablers deployed to Germany. The 82nd Airborne Division deployed components of an Infantry Brigade Combat Team and key enablers to Poland.
- A 300-person element of the 18th Airborne Corps moved from the U.S. to Germany to establish a Joint Task Force-capable headquarters.
- We have temporary repositioned 160 members of the Florida National Guard who have been deployed to Ukraine in support of Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine.
- The governments of Bulgaria and Hungary recently announced each country are hosting 125 service members assigned to Stryker units for training missions.
- On Feb. 22, Secretary Austin ordered the additional movement of U.S. forces currently stationed in Europe to continue our support for NATO Allies and the defense of the eastern flank. These forces include:
  - An infantry battalion task force of approximately 800 personnel, from Italy to the Baltic region.
  - Movement of up to eight F-35 Strike Fighters, from Germany to several operating locations along NATO's eastern flank.

- A battalion of attack aviation – 20 AH-64 helicopters – from Germany to the Baltic region.
  - And an attack aviation task force – 12 AH-64 helicopters – will move from Greece to Poland.
- On Feb. 24, at the direction of the President, Secretary Austin ordered the deployment to Europe of approximately 7,000 additional Service Members. This includes an armored brigade combat team with associated capabilities and enablers. They will deploy to Germany to reassure NATO Allies, deter Russian aggression and be prepared to support a range of requirements in the region.
  - On March 5, Secretary Austin ordered the deployment from the United States of an additional approximately 500 U.S. military personnel to locations across Europe. These forces will augment and provide additional support to existing U.S. forces in the European theater, which are trained and equipped for a variety of missions to reinforce U.S. European Command posture on NATO's Eastern Flank. These forces are comprised of:
    - KC-135 refueling aircraft with approximately 150 personnel, which will deploy to Spangdahlem, Germany.
    - An Air Support Operations Center (ASOC) with approximately 40 personnel to deploy to Poland and Romania.
    - An Ordnance Company and a Maintenance Company with approximately 300 personnel to Germany, to provide additional logistics support to the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division already deployed there.

### **Broader Russia/Ukraine Background Points:**

#### **NATO**

- NATO is a defensive alliance and we don't have aggressive intent towards Russia.
- Every step we take is to ensure protective measures needed to defend our Allies.
- The United States' commitment to defending NATO territory is ironclad and the United States will continue to bolster our posture to better defend our NATO Allies.
- We support Ukraine's right – every country's right - to decide its own future foreign policy course free from outside interference. No third country has a veto over NATO membership decisions.

#### **Ukraine**

- We are in close coordination with the Ukrainian government at high levels. The President has been very clear of his support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- We stand with Ukraine. The President, Secretary Austin, and this administration have underscored our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As President Biden says, "Nothing about you without you."

## Security Assistance

- We continue to work closely with our Ukrainian partners and Allies to evaluate the specific requirements of Ukraine's forces.
- The U.S. will provide security assistance to help Ukraine address the armored, airborne, and other threats it is now facing.
- The U.S. will continue to deliver equipment and supplies to Ukraine, including through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative.
- The U.S. is not supporting Ukraine alone. Our NATO Allies have also redoubled their commitments and resolve to defend the Alliance and our common values.
- As our Allies and partners make announcements regarding their own contributions, we are committed to working closely with them to ensure that our assistance is coordinated and meets Ukraine's highest priority needs.
- On March 16, President Biden announced an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, bringing the total U.S. security assistance committed to Ukraine to \$1 billion in just the past week, and a total of \$2 billion since the start of the Biden Administration. The assistance will take the form of direct transfers of equipment from the Department of Defense to the Ukrainian military to help them defend their country against Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion. The new \$800 million assistance package includes:
  - 800 Stinger anti-aircraft systems;
  - 2,000 Javelin, 1,000 light anti-armor weapons, and 6,000 AT-4 anti-armor systems;
  - 100 Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems;
  - 100 grenade launchers, 5,000 rifles, 1,000 pistols, 400 machine guns, and 400 shotguns;
  - Over 20 million rounds of small arms ammunition and grenade launcher and mortar rounds;
  - 25,000 sets of body armor; and
  - 25,000 helmets.

In addition to the weapons listed above, previous United States assistance committed to Ukraine includes:

- Over 600 Stinger anti-aircraft systems;
- Approximately 2,600 Javelin anti-armor systems;
- Five Mi-17 helicopters;
- Three patrol boats;
- Four counter-artillery and counter-unmanned aerial system tracking radars;
- Four counter-mortar radar systems;
- 200 grenade launchers and ammunition;
- 200 shotguns and 200 machine guns;
- Nearly 40 million rounds of small arms ammunition and over 1 million grenade, mortar, and artillery rounds;

- 70 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) and other vehicles;
- Secure communications, electronic warfare detection systems, body armor, helmets, and other tactical gear;
- Military medical equipment to support treatment and combat evacuation;
- Explosive ordnance disposal and demining equipment; and
- Satellite imagery and analysis capability.

## **Exercises**

- We routinely operate with our NATO Allies and partners in order to maintain peace, prosperity, and stability in the region. This will continue.
- These types of operations enhance interoperability and seamless integration between our Allies and partners. Any accusations from Russia to the contrary are disingenuous.
- *(In response to exercises by other nations)* Generally speaking, we do not have an issue with exercises. That's a normal function of a military organization. However, all countries need to be transparent and communicate their military exercises via the appropriate international channels to avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation. This is even more important now when the situation in the region calls for de-escalation.

## **Posture of Strategic Forces**

- Russia and the United States have long agreed that nuclear use would have devastating consequences, and have stated many times, including earlier this year, that a nuclear war cannot be won, and must never be fought.
- We think provocative rhetoric regarding nuclear weapons is dangerous, adds to the risk of miscalculation, should be avoided, and we will not indulge in it.
- Throughout this crisis, Russia has falsely alleged that it is under threat – including from Ukraine and from NATO.
- Neither the United States nor NATO has any desire or intention for conflict with Russia. We are unwavering in our commitment to extended deterrence and confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our allies.

## **Q+A on NATO Response Forces-Related PTDOs**

### **Q1: Is it true that U.S. forces are being put under NATO control?**

A1: NATO, as an organization, does not have veto power over U.S. troop deployments. Media reports to the contrary were a mischaracterization.

Separate from the deployments currently underway to the Eastern Flank, President Biden has authorized 8,500 troops being put on heightened readiness status, who could be deployed from the United States for a range of contingencies, including to support the NATO Response Force (NRF).

These forces were pledged to the NRF in September 2021 as part of the U.S. annual contribution and can be deployed if the North Atlantic Council decides to activate elements of the NRF. They supplement pledges from other Allies to the NATO Response Force.

Nothing precludes the United States from making its own decision on troop movements outside the NRF context. Movements of U.S. forces forward deployed in Europe outside the NATO context involve consultation with the host nation.

**Q2: Where are these forces being sourced from?**

A2: The forces being deployed will be sourced from a variety of military installations throughout the United States.

**Q3: Are these troops being forward-deployed to assist with possible massive refugee outflows?**

A3: These forces are trained and equipped for a variety of missions to deter aggression and to reassure and defend Allies.

**Q+A on Deployment to Eastern Flank**

**Q4: Will this deployment occur under a NATO flag?**

A4: These deployments follow consultations with the host nation and are intended to reassure our NATO Allies, but they are not being conducted under NATO command and control. Our deployment will be coordinated with NATO military authorities and are taken in consultation with all Allies.

**Q5: Are these service members some of those put on PTDO in January?**

A5: The Stryker squadron to Romania is a repositioning of forces already in Europe. It is separate from the 8,500 personnel placed on heightened readiness in the U.S. in late January to meet potential NATO Response Force or other requirements.

This Tranche 2 are some of the forces that were put on PTDO on Feb. 2, but this movement is separate from the 8,500 U.S.-based personnel placed on heightened readiness on Jan. 22 to meet potential NATO Response Force or other requirements.

**Q6: Will Russia see this as an aggressive move by NATO?**

A6: NATO is a defensive alliance and we don't have aggressive intent towards any country, including Russia, and we do not seek confrontation. These measures are non-escalatory and taken to reinforce our NATO Eastern Flank Allies. Russia will use any pretext to divert attention from its aggressive behavior, exemplified through the massing of Russian forces in Crimea and on Ukraine's borders. The United States has engaged with Russia bilaterally and multilaterally in multiple diplomatic tracks to reduce tensions and to invite Russia to de-escalate.

**Q7: Will U.S. forces fall under another nation's command and control?**

A7: These forces will fall under U.S. command and control. Our deployments will be coordinated with NATO military authorities.

**Q8: Are these forces, announced March 5, being deployed as part of the NATO Response Force (NRF)?**

A8: These forces are being deployed by the United States, in consultation with our allies. Some of these capabilities, such as the Maintenance and Ammunition Ordnance Companies, have been identified as part of the U.S. contribution to the NATO Response Force (NRF) placed on heightened readiness back on Jan. 24. Although not currently under NRF or NATO command, these forces are available to support the NRF if and when they are needed.

**Q9: How long will these forces stay in Romania [or the other locations]?**

A9: There is no definite pre-determined timeline for this deployment. As noted, we will continue to monitor the situation and consult with Romania [or other country] and other Allies as we consider any additional adjustments to our force posture.

**Q10: Has the deployment of US F-15s in Estonia been extended?**

A10: Nothing has changed to our support for the NATO eAP mission in Estonia. This short-term employment is being executed as planned. For additional information, contact NATO Air Command.

**Q11: What do you say to Russian claims that the Aegis Ashore site in Poland (and Romania) threaten Russia?**

A11: U.S. missile defenses do not pose a threat to Russia. The United States relies on its strategic nuclear forces, not its missile defenses, to deter potential threats to the homeland from Russia's and China's nuclear-armed ICBMs.

We are committed to completing the European Phased Adaptive Approach, which defends Europe from threats outside of the Euro-Atlantic region. The Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland are not directed at Russia and are not physically capable of intercepting Russian ICBMs.

The Aegis Ashore missile defense system does not have an offensive ground-launched ballistic or cruise missile capability. Specifically, the system lacks software, fire control hardware, support equipment, and other infrastructure needed to launch offensive ballistic or cruise missiles such as the Tomahawk. Moreover, the defensive nature of the Aegis Ashore sites is codified in basing agreements with the host nations of Romania and Poland.

Bottom line: Our Aegis Ashore sites cannot prevent a major Russian strategic missile strike on the United States, do not undermine Russia's strategic deterrent, and are incapable of firing offensive missiles.

**Q+A on Repositioning National Guard Troops**

**Q12: When do you expect the Florida National Guard to return to Ukraine?**

A12: I do not have any more details beyond what has been previously announced.

**Q13: What forces are staying in Ukraine and will they fight Russian forces if attacked?**

A13: The President has been clear: we will not be sending U.S. troops to fight in Ukraine.

**Q+A on Support to Ukraine**

**Q14: Where can American citizens donate to Ukraine?**

A14: USAID is the lead U.S. federal agency for coordinating humanitarian aid and providing the best information about how to help Ukrainians during the current crisis. USAID's Center for International Disaster information has up-to-date information on their web page for anyone interested in donating: [www.cidl.org](http://www.cidl.org).

**Q15: Comment on U.S. military veterans joining President Zelensky's International Legion of the Territorial Defense of Ukraine? Support U.S. citizens traveling to Ukraine to fight against Russia forces?**

A15: Ukrainians have shown their courage and they are calling on every resource and lever they have to defend themselves. We applaud their bravery. However, the State Department Travel Advisory remains: U.S. citizens should not travel to Ukraine, and those in Ukraine should depart immediately if it is safe to do so using commercial or other privately available ground transportation options.

**Q18: What should Americans desiring to leave Ukraine do?**

A18: We strongly reiterate our recommendation to U.S. citizens to depart Ukraine immediately.

We've repeatedly urged American citizens to leave Ukraine and have been clear for many weeks that we will not be in a position to evacuate Americans from Ukraine.

The State Department is providing travel information to help people depart Ukraine and can provide financial assistance as needed. U.S. citizens seeking to depart Ukraine can call 1-833-741-2777 (in the U.S.) or 1-606-260-4379 (from overseas). See the State Department website for more information.

**Q19: Will you enforce no-fly zone over Ukraine?**

A19: We are continuing to provide security assistance to Ukraine, but to be clear: deploying the U.S. military to enforce a no-fly zone would risk direct conflict and the U.S. military going to war with Russia. That's something the President has been clear will not happen.

**Q20: In the \$6.3B omnibus for Ukraine, what will that \$6.3B buy?**

A20: The \$6.5 billion budget includes operations mission support, the deployment of personnel, and intelligence support in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility. Of the \$6.5 billion, \$3.5 billion is for replenishment of U.S. stocks for equipment sent to Ukraine through drawdown. While the types and quantities of specific equipment provided to Ukraine through security assistance might vary based on Ukraine's evolving requirements, Allied commitments, and the availability of DoD stocks, DoD would consider the following capabilities:

- Anti-air capability
- Anti-armor capability
- Small arms and ammunition
- Tactical gear
- Meals Ready to Eat
- Military medical (e.g., first aid kits)

**Q21: Are National Guard Units providing assistance to Ukraine?**

A21: The National Guard is maintaining communications with EUCOM and monitoring efforts across the 54 states and territories to help provide relevant federal agency points of contacts and applicable legal requirements.

### **Q+A on Media Embeds**

#### **Q22: Can you explain why the DoD is not providing access or embeds with service members forward deployed to the EUCOM AOR?**

A22: The decision to provide media access to our troops, whether it's in an operational environment or training environment, is one we take seriously and there are several factors that contribute to it. We continuously review media posture.

### **Q+A on Naval and Air Force Support**

#### **Q23: What U.S. Navy assets are supporting EUCOM?**

A23: The U.S. Navy destroyers USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) and USS Mitscher (DDG 57) are operating in the European theater of operations. Throughout their deployment, they will participate in a range of maritime activities in support of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and our NATO allies.

The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group is currently operating in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations.

The U.S. Navy destroyer USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109) returned to the European theater of operations after operating in the U.S. Fifth Fleet. Dunham deployed in December 2021 as part of the USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) Carrier Strike Group.

Military deployments are dynamic in nature and due to our operational security policy, we will not discuss the details of their future operations.

#### **Q24: Can you comment on the situation in the Black Sea/Kerch Strait/Sea of Azov?**

A24: There is no change to our operational capability or deterrence posture. We operate in the Black Sea and many other areas across region on a regular basis, which is all part of our ongoing commitment and reassurance to our NATO Allies and partners.

Any accusations from Russia that we are doing something different or escalating our actions is disingenuous.

Russia has a history of taking aggressive actions against vessels and impeding access to ports in the Sea of Azov in its ongoing campaign to undermine and destabilize Ukraine.

Though we don't speak to future operations, our maritime forces will continue to make announcements, as they always do, throughout operations.

#### **Q25: Why have F-35s and KC-135s deployed to Germany and F-15s to Poland?**

A25: The deployment of these forces is evidence of the strong commitment to our NATO Allies and to a whole, free and peaceful Europe. We are ready and postured and well prepared to integrate with our host nations, Allies and partners to respond to aggression if needed. These

are moves designed to respond to the current security environment and reinforce the deterrent and defensive posture on NATO's eastern flank.

**Q26: How long will these aircraft stay in their deployed locations?**

A26: There is no definite pre-determined timeline for this deployment. As noted, we will continue to monitor the situation and consult with [country name] and other Allies as we consider any additional adjustments to our force posture.

**Q27: Will aircraft deploy to elsewhere in Europe?**

A27: All operations and deployments are done in full coordination with our Allies and partners. The strong and strategic relationships between our Allied and partner countries ensure a collective defense posture that is ready and prepared to respond and support global operations.

IF PRESSED: Due to operational security, we cannot disclose information on future operations and where else aircraft could deploy.

**Q28: Is the KC-46A going to Spain related to real-world events or in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine?**

A28: Air Mobility Command's KC-46A Employment Concept Exercises (ECE) are designed to enhance operational fielding and sustainment of the KC-46A and are unrelated to real-world events. Europe was selected as the first ECE location because it offers a suitable operational environment in which to validate learning objectives while gaining proficiency with its approved missions. While at Moron Air Base, Spain, the KC-46As and support personnel will remain under AMC authorities as they validate learning objectives, and will be prepared to support real-world, theater operational missions as necessary. The employment of the KC-46A to Europe represents another step in the aircraft achieving full operational capability.

**Q+A on Cyber Attacks**

**Q29: What can you tell us about Russian cyber attacks?**

A29: We are closely monitoring reports of further DDOS attacks targeting government websites in Ukraine. We are in communication with Ukraine regarding their cyber related needs.

We will not preview U.S. responses to individual incidents. U.S. responses will reflect the totality and severity of the rapidly evolving circumstances. As we have said, if Russia is engaging in destructive cyber activity against Ukraine in the period ahead, we will work with allies and partners on an appropriate response.

The President made clear what he has said over and over publicly and privately: if Russia attacks the United States or our Allies through asymmetric means, like disruptive cyberattacks against our companies or critical infrastructure, we are prepared to respond.

**Q+A on Russian Actions**

**Q30: Comment on Putin's change to nuclear posture?**

A30: We have no reason to doubt the validity of these reports. We believe that this is not only an unnecessary step for him to take but an escalatory one, unnecessary because Russia has not ever been under threat by the west or by NATO and certainly wasn't under any threat by

Ukraine. And escalatory because it is clearly potentially putting at play forces that could that if there's a miscalculation could make things much, much more dangerous.

**Q31: Has the U.S. changed our strategic deterrent posture in response?**

A31: We do not talk about the specifics of our strategic deterrent posture, so I'm not going to qualify that further. We remain confident in our ability to defend ourselves and our Allies, and our partners, and that includes in the strategic deterrent realm.

Both the United States and Russia have long agreed that nuclear employment could have devastating consequences, and we both agreed, most recently this year in the context of the P5 statement, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

**Q32: Is it true that Russia is using cluster bombs?**

A32: We've seen those reports and, if true, they raise significant concerns about the impact on civilians.

**Q33: Does the Pentagon believe cluster bombs and thermobarics are banned under Geneva Convention?**

A33: Under the law of war applicable to the United States, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and other law of war treaties that the United States has accepted, cluster munitions and thermobaric munitions are not banned as such. The law of war prohibits using any weapon, including cluster munitions and thermobaric munitions, to target civilians.

**Q34: Russia is also saying that it used a hypersonic missile at least twice in Ukraine so far. So this is a missile that travels what more than a mile a minute. It's very difficult to intercept. Is this weaponry game changer?**

A34: I refer you to Secretary Austin's comments on CBS's *Face the Nation* on March 20, 2022: "I would not see it as a game changer. I think again, the reason that he's resorting to using these types of weapons is because he's trying to reestablish some momentum. And we've seen, again, we've seen him attack towns and cities and civilians outright. We expect to see that continue. But I don't think that this in and of itself will be a game changer. You kind of question why he would- would do this. Is he running low on precision- precision guided munitions? Does he have like complete confidence in his ability to- the ability of his troops to reestablish momentum? But- but I don't see this in and of itself a game changer. I cannot confirm or dispute whether or not he's used those weapons."

**Q+A on Chemical/Biological**

**Q35: Does the U.S. have a history of sending scientists to assist in labs like the chemical/biological labs in Ukraine?**

A35: The Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, is implemented by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since 2005, BTRP has partnered with the Government of Ukraine to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and to reduce the threats posed by pathogens. Through this program, DoD trains partner nation laboratory technicians to safely diagnose diseases and that training can include interaction with U.S. scientists. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has never supported the permanent presence of any personnel in an overseas laboratory. For more information about BTRP, visit

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/11/2002954612/-1/-1/0/FACT-SHEET-THE-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-S-COOPERATIVE-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-BIOLOGICAL-THREAT-REDUCTION-PROGRAM-ACTIVITIES-IN-UKRAINE.PDF>.

**Q36: Is a CBW attack a red line?**

A36: We are not going to speculate about hypotheticals. When Putin has escalated, we have responded. Russia has a long track record of using chemical weapons. They run a large chemical and biological weapons program— we don't and neither does Ukraine. Russia has a history of inventing outright lies like this. They've been raising the specter of using chemical weapons as a pretext for war with Ukraine for months. We have rallied our Allies and partners to impose swift and severe consequences on Russia for its unprovoked attack on Ukraine—and we are continuing to raise the costs on Putin for his war of choice. We are in close consultation with our partners and Allies about what the consequences would look like. The use of chemical or biological weapons would prompt a significant response from not just the United States, but the global community.

**Public Affairs Contacts**

OSD(PA)

- (b)(6)
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- Duty Officer ([osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil))
- Defense Press Operations: (703) 697-5131

USEUCOM(PA)

- (b)(6)
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- Duty ([eucom.stuttgart.ecpa.mbx.duty-office@mail.mil](mailto:eucom.stuttgart.ecpa.mbx.duty-office@mail.mil))
- DSN (324) 412-8341/9340; Comm. +49 (0) 711-7080-8341/9340

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{(USA)\}  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 13:22:03 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)<sup>(b)(6)</sup>  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir,

There appear to be many unique articles from different media outlets. For example, there are 901 hits in the categories shown below for (DTRA OR Pentagon) AND "biological lab" for the last 24 hours:

Moscow News Agencies  
33  
Moscow Online Media  
137  
Moscow TV and Radio  
38  
Regional Newspapers and magazines  
1  
Regional news agencies  
7  
Regional Online Media  
182  
Regional TV and Radio  
9  
Non-Russian Newspapers and Magazines  
2  
Non-Russian News Agencies  
10  
Non-Russian Online Media

83

Non-Russian TV and Radio

9

News Aggregators

242

Archives of Moscow Media

3

Archives of Regional Media

1

Archives of Governmental Organizations

2

Industrial Online Publications

142

Many more once you consider the Chinese publications and searches on other related terms.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:17 PM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

Cc: DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Disinformation Update

Rob,

Just so I'm tracking, are the 1000 articles/day separate, disparate articles or "re-tweets" of previous (or recent) articles?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD

Director (acting)

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:09 PM

To: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Cc: DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP

<dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: Disinformation Update

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, our media monitors are seeing a substantial uptick in disinformation on DTRA CTR BTRP's projects in Ukraine -- from an average of 50 articles per day to over a thousand in the last 24 hours. Russia is blaming DTRA for a number of outbreaks in the region, as well as for crafting an offensive BW program in Ukraine.

We have also seen reporting from China's Foreign Ministry spokesman echoing Russian charges, which has received extensive coverage in both the Chinese and Russian news and social media circles.

State AVC has a press statement they plan to put out today that OSD provided us an opportunity to review. It hits the right points and draws from the "Break Glass" book DTRA provided to OSD PA and State last week.

We heard today from journalist Matt Field at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Working with DTRA PA, we answered some questions for him last Friday and he stated his intent to submit an article to his editor today. We will watch for it.

Finally, if you have four minutes, here's a briefing on DTRA's activities in Ukraine from the Russian Ministry of Defense, with English subtitles:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_q0qgqCLK0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_q0qgqCLK0)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{USA\  
**Sent:** Sun, 6 Mar 2022 15:17:50 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA  
**Subject:** RE: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

Copy. We've been communicating with many of our partners on the disinformation since before the Russian invasion. We will continue to do so and assess how we may need to adjust messaging or prioritization in anticipation of this latest Russian lie gaining traction.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:15 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); DTRA Ft Belvoir OI  
Mailbox Joint Ops Center <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil>  
**Subject:** Re: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Rob,  
Thanks. Unfortunately, not unexpected. This may have spin off impacts on other CTR and BTRP programs as partners possibly question US participation in their countries. Have you considered how to directly message to our other partners?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
**Date:** Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:06:52 PM  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
**Cc:** "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil

<mailto:dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>, "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)"

(b)(6)

"DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center" <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil  
<mailto:dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil> >

Subject: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, Russian MOD's Telegram channel media is reporting that they have "evidence" of U.S. bioweapons activities in Ukraine (see below and attached). Our media monitor is looking for any additional reporting on the subject.

Wall Street Journal is asking for comment on the following: "Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov claimed, without providing evidence, that Russia has uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the U.S. defense ministry that was destroyed on February 24, when Moscow launched its assault."

DASD Johnson and DASD Rcif are tracking (DASD Johnson received tip-off of the reporting from another OSD office and alerted us). DASD Johnson and OSD PA have DTRA's "Break Glass" book for this. No action for DTRA at this time.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biolaboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all biological laboratories to urgently eliminate stored stocks of dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present the results of the analysis of the received documents. Some of them, in particular, the

instructions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on the destruction of pathogens and the acts of destruction in the Poltava and

Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now: <https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

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Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

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Sent: Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:15 PM

(b)(6)

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
Cc: DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>;  
Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6); DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops  
Center <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil>  
Subject: Re: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in  
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Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Cc: "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-  
gp@mail.mil <mailto:dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil> >, "Lutinski, Hunter F SES  
DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6); "DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center"  
<dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil <mailto:dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-  
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Rob

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**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA  
**Subject:** RE: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

**Attachments:** smime.p7s

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Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

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(b)(6)  
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Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Date: Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:06:52 PM  
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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Cc: "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>  
<mailto:dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>, "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)"  
(b)(6)

"DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center" <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil>  
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V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

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Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now: <https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR \ (USA\  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 13:23:49 -0400  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Long, (b)(6)  
REDUCT (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6)  
(USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
(USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Jumping in from the CC line...

Let's please have a coordinated effort when reviewing/refuting the Russian document - I need one authoritative look from DTRA that can be used by whomever asked from outside the Agency. And not every response will be the same - they likely will need to be tailored to each question/requester.

Doc - can you please keep an eye on this/coordinate?

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Date:** Friday, March 18, 2022 at 1:12:19 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
<(b)(6)> "Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA)" <(b)(6)>  
**Cc:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)"  
(b)(6) "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6) tracking all and thanks for the actual documents. (b)(6) has my support to join you if that opportunity continues to exist. (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 12:50 PM

To: (b)(6)

Cooper,

Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) <(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

; Lutinski,

Hunter

F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)

Cc: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sirs, FYI below per Dr. Williams.

BLUF: due to the recent RUS "Note Verbale" presented 2 days ago at the BWC in Geneva (PDF file attached), and RUS presentation this morning (Word doc attached) at the UN Security Council claiming the US is developing bio weapons in UKR, the NSC (b)(6) has reached out directly to DTRA (specifically Dr. Pope) for a quick conversation on this issue for preparation of an upcoming sub-IPC. This conversation will take place at 1600 today.

OSD-P and NCB/TRAC have both been looped in and Policy is leading the discussion for DoD. I have been asked to participate; I invited CT's rep to the CORT so he can back-brief them; and the IOFC (Ana) is welcome to attend as well. Note, Policy wants to keep this discussion limited. Will keep everyone informed as to the outcome of the discussion. (b)(6) will not participate; it will be her staff on the NSC.

Unless Policy wants DTRA representation, we will likely not be invited to the

IPC on Monday, as Policy has been attending those on this topic and is the gatekeeper.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) <[rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil](mailto:rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil)>  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:47 AM  
To: Long, Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) <[randolph.w.long.civ@mail.mil](mailto:randolph.w.long.civ@mail.mil)>  
Cc: Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) <[ryan.b.scholl.mil@mail.mil](mailto:ryan.b.scholl.mil@mail.mil)>;  
Pope,  
Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) <[robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil](mailto:robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil)>  
Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Randy,

ACK. I just did a quick scan of the attached. Follow the policy lead on this and also loop in TRAC. I will send a note to ASD/NCB for SA. Also, please loop in OI Leadership/CORT and PA.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: "Long, Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" <[randolph.w.long.civ@mail.mil](mailto:randolph.w.long.civ@mail.mil) <<mailto:randolph.w.long.civ@mail.mil>> >  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:35:21 AM  
To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" <[rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil](mailto:rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil) <<mailto:rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil>> >  
Cc: "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)" <[ryan.b.scholl.mil@mail.mil](mailto:ryan.b.scholl.mil@mail.mil) <<mailto:ryan.b.scholl.mil@mail.mil>> >, "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" <[robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil](mailto:robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil) <<mailto:robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil>> >  
Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sir, FYI - NSC (Beth Cameron) reached out to Rob. NSC wants to help with disinformation, given the RUS Note Verbale they presented at the BWC 2 days ago, and now RUS apparently did the same at the UN Security Council this morning. Attached is what was presented at the BWC, and we are trying to find out what RUS presented this morning. It is likely the same product.

I looped in my Policy comrades for the discussion the NSC wants to have with

us this afternoon at 1600. Not sure if we (DTRA) will be invited to the sub/IPC on Monday. Will keep you posted.

Frankly, the NSC is way behind here. But we will support them as needed/required, unless you have other guidance.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:21 AM

To: (b)(6)

<m

Cc: (b)(6)

<m

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

+ OSD Policy (b)(6)

-(b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

Hi (b)(6) happy to talk with you at 4pm. If we can include our Policy comrades on that discussion, that would be great. They have been attending the series of sub/PCs on this topic.

Attached is what the Russians presented at the BWC, translated into English. It is very weak argument, frankly, and I expected better. If they present the same material at the UNSC this morning, we certainly can work together to debunk this nonsense.

(b)(6) any thoughts?

(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)  
C:

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6) <mail>

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 8:45 AM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6) <mail>

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Thanks (b)(6)

Hi, (b)(6)

Russia is convening the UNSC again this morning to launder its disinformation and to malign U.S. support for biological facilities and laboratories in Ukraine.

It's not going away anytime soon in the media or in international fora (BWC, UNSC, etc.), so we'd like explore with you some fresh, creative approaches to turning Russian disinformation upside down. As a starting point, I'm going to get the "evidence" that Russia furnished for the UNSC convening this morning.

NSC Democracy is hosting a subIPC on Monday @ 1:00 PM on countering disinformation regarding the U.S., Ukraine, and CBW (for example: <https://tass.com/politics/1423129>). I'll make sure you get that invite, and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you beforehand - either 4:00 PM today or Monday morning 9:30 or 10?

Many thanks!

Best,  
(b)(6)

Global Health Security & Biodefense  
National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6)

(SIPR)  
CS)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 9 Mar 2022 13:17:42 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.  
**Attachments:** Media Query - Russian Foreign Ministry Allegation\_030922.docx, smime.p7s

Please find DTRA's response attached.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 11:48 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

(b)(6)

We are finalizing the DTRA response and will get it to you soonest. As a note, our PA shops have also be in coordination.

Vr,

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:32 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 1:06 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(6)  
Subject: FW: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry allegation- biological weapons.

Good afternoon,

I am covering down for (b)(6) while she's in class, and received this inquiry below. Thought is maybe DTRA has lines on this issue, but I don't have DTRA POCs and since this is a biological weapons discussion thought maybe you could assist?

Query: The Russian foreign ministry said today (and their defense ministry earlier this week) that Ukraine has been developing biological weapons at 30 different sites in a programme financed by the United States (specifically DoD). Want to make sure we send over DoD comment on it to our colleagues, I assume rejecting the assertion like before.

This is the main line from Foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova: "Documentation was received from employees of Ukrainian biological laboratories on the urgent destruction of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases on Feb. 24."

The defence ministry said the work had been commissioned by the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency and involved collecting strains of dangerous microorganisms and exporting them to the United States, as well as studying potential pathogens specific to a given region to use as biological weapons.

Think you could help me with this?

Thank you.

v/r,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

DOD Spokesman, Defense Press Operations

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Pentagon, Room 2D961

E-mail (b)(6)  
Desk  
DSN  
Mobile

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:24 PM

To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <<mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil>> >; OSD  
Pentagon PA List DPO ATL <osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil  
<<mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.list.dpo-atl@mail.mil>> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

I'm all but certain DTRA has lines on this. I took a similar query last week while on duty, and (b)(6) forwarded it over to her DTRA people, who I think answered directly.

With (b)(6) on leave, adding her team.

(b)(6)

Department of Defense Spokesman

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

1400 Defense Pentagon (2D961), Washington, DC 20301-1400

(b)(6) w)  
m)

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:20 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Cc: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Subject: RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

(-Reporters and (b)(6)

Have at it, gentlemen!

From: (b)(6)  
<mailt  
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:12 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations  
<osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil <mailto:osd.pa.dutyofficer@mail.mil> >  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<m  
Subject: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Russia foreign ministry  
allegation- biological weapons.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the

identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

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Hey guys,

The Russian foreign ministry said today (and their defense ministry earlier this week) that Ukraine has been developing biological weapons at 30 different sites in a programme financed by the United States (specifically DoD). Want to make sure we send over DoD comment on it to our colleagues, I assume rejecting the assertion like before.

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The defence ministry said the work had been commissioned by the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency and involved collecting strains of dangerous microorganisms and exporting them to the United States, as well as studying potential pathogens specific to a given region to use as biological weapons.

(b)(6)

National Security Correspondent  
Washington D.C.

Thomson Reuters

Mobil (b)(6)

Email:  
Caution

Twitter

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Caution-<https://www.thomsonreuters.com/cn/resources/disclosures.html>

Page 0863 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT \{USA\  
**Sent:** Sun, 6 Mar 2022 15:06:51 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center  
**Subject:** The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** Russian Ministry of Defense.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, Russian MOD's Telegram channel media is reporting that they have "evidence" of U.S. bioweapons activities in Ukraine (see below and attached). Our media monitor is looking for any additional reporting on the subject.

Wall Street Journal is asking for comment on the following: "Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov claimed, without providing evidence, that Russia has uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the U.S. defense ministry that was destroyed on February 24, when Moscow launched its assault."

DASD Johnson and DASD Reif are tracking (DASD Johnson received tip-off of the reporting from another OSD office and alerted us). DASD Johnson and OSD PA have DTRA's "Break Glass" book for this. No action for DTRA at this time.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biolaboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all biological laboratories to urgently eliminate stored stocks of dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present the results of the analysis of the received documents. Some of them, in particular, the

instructions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on the destruction of pathogens and the acts of destruction in the Poltava and

Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now:

<https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

:

16:20Z 6Mar2022

Группировки войск Луганской и Донецкой народных республик, при огневой поддержке российских Вооруженных Сил, продолжают наступательные действия.

Подразделения народной милиции Донецкой республики успешно развивают наступление в городской черте Мариуполя с северо-западного и восточного направления.

Вооруженные Силы Российской Федерации наносят удары по объектам военной инфраструктуры Украины.

6 марта высокоточным оружием большой дальности выведен из строя аэродром военно-воздушных сил Украины в ВИННИЦЕ.

Истребительной авиацией и ПВО ВКС Россиибито в воздухе ещё три украинских истребителя Су 27 и три беспилотных летательных аппарата.

Всего за вчерашний и неполный сегодняшний день военно-воздушные силы Украины потеряли 11 боевых самолетов и 2 вертолета.

Практически вся боеспособная авиация киевского режима уничтожена.

Вместе с тем, нам достоверно известно об украинских боевых самолетах, ранее перелетевших в Румынию и другие приграничные страны.

Обращаем внимание, что использование аэродромной сети этих стран для базирования украинской боевой авиации с последующим применением против российских вооруженных сил, может рассматриваться как вовлечение данных государств в вооруженный конфликт.

Российскими высокоточными средствами большой дальности выводятся из строя вооружение и военная техника Украины.

Киевский режим националистов заставляет сотрудников предприятий оборонно-промышленного комплекса Украины восстанавливать поврежденную военную технику для последующего направления в районы боевых действий.

В рамках выполнения задачи по демилитаризации Украины российские вооруженные сил

Groupings of troops of the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics, with the fire support of the Russian Armed Forces, continue offensive operations.

The units of the people's militia of the Donetsk Republic are successfully developing an offensive in the city of Mariupol from the north-western and eastern directions.

The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are striking at the military infrastructure of Ukraine.

March 6 high precision long range weapons put out of action the airfield of the air force of Ukraine in VINNITSA.

Fighter aircraft and air defense of the Russian Aerospace Forces shot down three more Ukrainian Su 27 fighters and three unmanned aerial vehicles in the air.

In total, yesterday and incomplete today, the Ukrainian Air Force lost 11 combat aircraft and 2 helicopters.

Almost all combat ready aviation of the Kiev regime has been destroyed.

At the same time, we know for certain about Ukrainian combat aircraft that had previously flown to Romania and other border countries.

Please note that the use of the airfield network of these countries for basing Ukrainian military aviation with subsequent use against the Russian armed forces can be regarded as the involvement of these states in an armed conflict.

Russian high-precision long-range weapons and military equipment of Ukraine are disabled.

The Kyiv regime of nationalists forces employees of enterprises of the military-industrial complex of Ukraine to restore damaged military equipment for subsequent deployment to the areas of hostilities.

As part of the task of demilitarizing Ukraine, the Russian armed for

ы будут наносить высокоточным оружием поражение украинским предприятиям оборонно-промышленного комплекса. Во избежание угрозы жизни работникам предприятий украинского ОПК заблаговременно предупреждаем о планируемых ударах по таким объектам. Призываем персонал украинских заводов ОПК не идти на поводу у киевского режима националистов и покинуть территории своих предприятий. В ходе проведения специальной военной операции вскрыты факты экстренной зачистки Киевом режимом следов реализуемой на Украине военно-биологической программы, финансируемой Минобороны США. Нами получена от сотрудников украинских биологических лабораторий документация об экстренном уничтожении 24 февраля особо опасных патогенов возбудителей чумы, сибирской язвы, туляремии, холеры и других смертельных болезней. Связанные документы анализируются российскими специалистами войск радиационной, химической и биологической защиты. Очевидно, что с началом специальной военной операции, у Пентагона возникли серьезные опасения в раскрытии ведения секретных биологических экспериментов на территории Украины. Полученные документы подтверждают, что в украинских биологических лабораториях, в непосредственной близости от территории России, осуществлялась разработка компонентов биологического оружия. Для недопущения вскрытия фактов нарушения США и Украиной статьи I Конвенции ООН о запрещении бактериологического (биологического) и токсинного оружия, украинским Минздравом во все биологические лаборатории было направлено указание об экстренной ликвидации хранящихся запасов опасных патогенов. В ближайшее время мы представим результаты анализа полученных документов

ces will inflict high-precision weapons on Ukrainian enterprises of the military-industrial complex. In order to avoid a threat to the lives of employees of enterprises of the Ukrainian defense industry, we warn in advance of planned strikes against such facilities. We call on the personnel of the Ukrainian defense industry plants not to be led by the nationalist regime in Kiev and to leave the territories of their enterprises. In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biological laboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

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In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article I of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Mi

.  
Часть из них, в  
частности, указание  
Минздрава Украины  
об уничтожении  
патогенов и акты  
уничтожения в  
полтавской и  
харьковской  
биологических лабораториях, мы  
публикуем прямо  
сейчас:

[https://disk.yandex.ru/d/  
dyWUEF3tDZGauw](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw)

Ministry of Health sent an instruction  
to all biological laboratories to  
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Some of them, in particular, the  
instructions of the Ministry of  
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of pathogens and the acts of  
destruction in the Poltava and  
Kharkiv biological laboratories, we  
are publishing right now:

[https://disk.yandex.ru/d/  
dyWUEF3tDZGauw](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:00:13 -0400  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Transcript WSJ 3.14.22 - Pope  
**Attachments:** WSJ Dr. Pope.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,  
Sir, attached is the transcript from today's WSJ interview.  
BLUF - the interview went well and the editor gave Dr. Pope the appropriate voice to respond to the accusations about the labs. We owe (b)(6) follow up information to a couple of questions, and Dr. Pope's team is formulating the appropriate answers. As far as a publication date, she will let us know, but it will most likely be very soon.  
Overall, a great engagement by Dr. Pope and his team for preparing the right TPs on such short notice. Media engagements like this one will pay dividends down the road as we take control of the narrative on this topic.  
I'll follow-up and provide the transcripts to the Strat team in Ms. Rosenblum's office.

V/r,  
(b)(6)  
Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)  
(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)  
NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS

**Transcript: Wall Street Journal Engagement- Sharon Weinberger interviews Dr. Robert Pope**

**Q: There have been some outrageous allegations in recent days regarding the Ukraine Invasion. I thought it would be a good time to talk about the BTRP program in Ukraine, the history and where the program is now. Could you talk about the current state of work in Ukraine up until the state of the war?**

- A. We have worked with Ukraine in this mission area since 2005, fundamentally trying to make their public health network and vet health network of laboratories and epidemiology more successful at what they do. The work CTR was doing at the time, leading up to the invasion was all about that, we were continuing to help provide upgrades to various public and animal health laboratories so the scientists had the equipment and training and facility they needed to be able to do the same diseases diagnosis and reporting that any other country does.

**Q: What are the numbers of biological sites in Ukraine...the number that DTRA and the pentagon is doing work with?**

- A. You see a lot of different numbers because it depends on what you count. A lot of the work we've done are at the small diagnostic sites. Where all you have are samples coming in and safely packaged and transferred to the diagnostic labs. If you start counting things like that, the numbers get pretty big. If you don't count those, looking at my list here, 8 major disease diagnostic labs. We've done work at the regional level and pathogen collection at the diagnostic sites.

**Q: Can you describe what the ongoing work of DTRA is with these diagnostic sites, things you are working on with the Ukrainians and what the overall goal is?**

- A. The goal is like I said, the ability for Ukraine to have a public health laboratory network that meets international health regulations and standards set by the WHO to be able to detect outbreaks and dangerous diseases so the world can react and respond before we have a global pandemic. And we work similarly on the vet side because so many animal diseases (inaudible) like ebola or covid can jump from animal to human. Being able to work on both side of that one health spectrum gives that complete early detection and reporting that the whole world benefits from. We most recently were finishing up construction and renovation at the laboratories and continuing to training personnel and sponsor biosurveillance studies to better characterize the kinds of diseases that are endemic to Ukraine.

**Q: What was the status of the construction and renovation....where were these?**

- A: For the safety of the Ukrainians working in those labs, I don't want to say specifically which ones these are right now. Russian propaganda comes back to target them. Can we side step that one? (yes)

**Q: Is there an annual conference in Ukraine sponsored by DTRA/CTR for researchers?**

A: There are a number of conferences that CTR sponsors around the world, I don't remember which one we held most recently in Ukraine. Typically if we are sponsoring a conference, it's bringing researchers together who work in bio-surveillance studies to share what they have learned together. By bringing them together in that region, you are able to share the data and results across international boundaries. Diseases don't respect those boundaries and those technicians need to understand what's going on on the other side of the border as well.

**Q: How much of a concern do you have with the security of the lab in the state of the war?**

A. Generally we work with our partners like Ukraine to build these labs and train the people who work in them to to work in a very safe way. The samples they are collecting for this work stay safely in the lab don't infect the technicians or get out into the community. I would say when a conflict starts, electrical power isn't stable, buildings may be damaged, then the risk of accidental releases is present. Last week the Who made the statement that THEY had reached out to Ukraine and suggested they neutralize their pathogen strain collection and destroy everything so it won't accidentally leak out as part of this conflict.

**Q: Has that been done or is DTRA advising that?**

A: I can't say it has been done, I hope the government of Ukraine followed that recommendation.

**Q: Are DTRA personnel still in touch with counterparts in Ukraine?**

A: We are in touch with people who have a working relationship with DTRA. For example, we still have some personnel that work for us at the embassy and we check on them every day for safety, most days we are able to reach them. There are some contract support on the ground, we aren't talking directly to them but are talking to their contract heads and understanding their situation. We've got minimal contact with the gov of Ukraine due to bigger issues they are dealing with right now.

**Q: What do you make of the outrageous claims?**

A: They are absolutely that, they are outrageous claims. It's absolutely not what the CTR program does. We were created 30 years ago to eliminate WMD, and Russia knows that. We sanitized and dismantled their facilities at Stepnagorsk and Voz island to destroy weaponized anthrax and we destroy programs like that. Worked with them on a number of other programs with them directly up to 2014, destroying missiles, bombers, submarines, chemical weapons arsenals...They know what they do, we destroy WMD. If you look anywhere else in the world where we are active, you see the work we are doing for the health and safety of the people. I'm in Cameroon right now, one of the places I went today was the public health emergency operation center we built a couple years ago and commissioned just in time to use it for COVID. They have a single point to monitor what's now 6 outbreaks of COVID and a number of other diseases. This is the work we do in the world and Russia knows that, so the claims remain preposterous.

**Q: What milestones can you share from DTRA over the past 5 years?**

A: What we've done in the past 4 to 5 years has been an extension of what we started there since the beginning of 2005. We were able to work with ministries of health and agriculture, to take a decrepit and unsafe soviet system they inherited and make it meet world class international health standards for their laboratorians to safely do the work they do diagnosing disease in Ukraine. Every time we finished a lab that got them on that step, shut down an unsafe lab, those were considered milestones for us.

**Q: Why did this work take more than 15 years? Why can it not be done in 2-3 years?**

A: A few reasons...one is the physical speed of construction and renovation takes time. Putting a building on contract, going through the construction process and all the certifications required and transferring to the host nation for use can take 3-4 years for just that one project. As we work with any partner nation, we are looking at a baseline assessment of their health system, talking to them what are mutual goals are, U.S. goals, host nation goals, and as we work in that area, we train people, we have success in projects, we go off and find the next project in line that makes sense for both us and the partner to do together, so that's why you see it taking so long.

**Q: What is the annual expenditure of the work in Ukraine?**

A: don't have that.

**Q: In terms of the release of pathogens you worried about with the conflict in Ukraine, which ones worry you the most? Is anthrax a concern?**

A: There are a number of diseases that circulate in Ukraine, anthrax is one of them, African swine fever is another, these circulate in the country so as the field epidemiologists are collecting samples and sending up through the laboratory networks for diagnosis those are the kind of things that end of stored in the labs. Since they are Ukraine labs and not U.S. labs, I can't say specifically what pathogens are there but they will be collections of the diseases that are endemic to the country.

**Q: It must be bizarre for you knowing the work DTRA has done and seeing the claims...I mean how do you react?**

A: Sadly we've seen this in a slow simmer since Russia invaded Crimean peninsula in 2014 and ramping it up since then and only recently largely played in the local, regional press close to Russia. Since Russia ceased being a cooperative partner with the CTR program and started taking their aggressive actions in Ukraine, they have also decided to create this narrative and has recently exploded. I'm not happy at all.

**Q: It's surprising to me that it's had traction in each parts of the U.S. Has it made the U.S. rounds in media before?**

A: I haven't seen it in U.S. sites until recently, but recognizing that Russia comes from the soviet lineage of 70 years of honed expertise in propaganda and disinformation. They understand the psychology of their audiences they understand the kinds of outrageous claims that resonate. They have found a claim that activates some audiences here in the U.S. that believe bad things about their government.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

A: Not at this time, Sharon, it sounds like you've talked to the right people that know our work well and you are building an accurate and positive picture of our work.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 17:03:16 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Ukraine activities  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

- DTRA's Crisis Operations Response Team (CORT) is coordinating the cross-Agency responses and providing input into discussions between Ms. Rosenblum and OSD Leadership. The CORT also leans forward to understand potential eventualities and what DTRA can do to support any response.
- CTR, in coordination with Public Affairs, is working with the DOS and the NSC to ensure an accurate US response to the Russian disinformation campaign on CTR-funded laboratories in Ukraine.
- DTRA is in communication with U.S. European Command and U.S. Special Operations Command to provide expertise on potential WMD employment by Russia; although DTRA personnel have been evacuated from the immediate crisis area, the Agency retains its EUCOM (and associated teams) in theater, and has sent (on request) additional support for EUCOM planning efforts.
- Our Technical Reachback team have received 91 requests for information on the potential release of WMD from various facilities across Ukraine. Our Intel analyst team have received 97 requests for support on various topics regarding Ukraine.
- The Information Operations Support Cell is working with CCMD J39s to support strategic planning to counter disinformation in CWMD and related emerging threats mission areas.

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Sun, 20 Mar 2022 12:55:33 -0400

**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA);Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6) (USA); CT (US CIV DT

(b)(6)

**Subject:** WSJ Article - Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program

**Attachments:** WSJ Article.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and Leaders,  
Sir, attached is a copy of the WSJ article. The article is behind a paywall, so I'm sharing the story, in case you or anyone else may have not seen it yet or gotten the text. Please let me know if there are any concerns/feedback. Thanks.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS:

## Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program

The Pentagon denies Russia's accusations of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories.

*By Sharon Weinberger*

March 20, 2022 5:30 am ET

On his first official visit abroad, the new senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, was taken to a facility in Ukraine where the U.S. helped scientists working with dangerous biological materials. But rather than produce biological weapons, U.S. officials in that ramshackle building were trying to prevent lethal pathogens from falling into the hands of terrorists.

"I removed a tray of glass vials containing *Bacillus anthracis*, which is the bacterium that causes the anthrax," recalls Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official who was in charge of the U.S.-funded program that worked with the Ukrainian government. Mr. Weber said he showed the tray "to a very concerned-looking young senator."

Mr. Obama himself recalled seeing in his 2005 trip to Ukraine "test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded."

A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow has accused the Pentagon of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories. "These were not peaceful experiments," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month.

China, whose leader Xi Jinping has cultivated a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has echoed those allegations. "Russia has found during its military operations that the U.S. uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

U.S. officials have flatly denied those claims and warned that Moscow could use its allegations to justify its own use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine.

“We believe that Moscow may be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon and then falsely blame Ukraine to justify escalating its attacks on the Ukrainian people,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week. “Manufacturing events and creating false narratives of genocide to justify greater use of military force is a tactic that Russia has used before.”

The allegations have shocked those who are most familiar with the Pentagon’s post-Cold War initiative, called the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. That is because not only has Russia been aware of the Pentagon’s work securing chemical, biological and nuclear facilities across the former Soviet Union, but it had also been its beneficiary for many years.

“They’re outrageous claims,” said Robert Pope, the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, or DTRA, the arm of the Pentagon in charge of running the program. “We were created 30 years ago to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction.”

The program, which dates back to 1991 and continues today, stretches across the former Soviet Union. Since the program started, the Pentagon has spent approximately \$12 billion on securing material used in weapons of mass destruction in post-Soviet republics, according to a DTRA spokeswoman. Of those funds, about \$200 million has been spent on the biological work in Ukraine since 2005. The funds have supported dozens of labs, health facilities and diagnostic sites around the country, the DTRA spokeswoman said.

Mr. Weber, who was in charge of negotiating the initial agreement with Kyiv to work on securing the country’s biological materials and facilities, said that work expanded to Ukraine after the 9/11 attacks, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. U.S. policy makers grew worried about the potential for terrorists to steal biological materials – fears that were heightened after letters containing anthrax were sent in the U.S. mail to congressional offices and media outlets. The FBI eventually concluded that an American scientist employed at a military lab sent the letters.

The president of Ukraine at the time, Leonid Kuchma, concerned about the threat of terrorism in his own country, asked the U.S. for help. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, Ukraine had been starved of the funds needed to secure its biological facilities.

Mr. Weber put together a team that visited Ukraine's biological and chemical facilities, which ranged from large laboratories to small veterinary research centers. "We found that a number of them had dangerous pathogen collections left over from Soviet days," he said. "They were in pretty bad shape."

Ukraine's laboratories—unlike some in other former Soviet republics—weren't directly involved in the Cold War biological-weapons program, but they did have pathogens that fed into offensive work, according to Mr. Weber.

Those pathogens, like anthrax, could pose a threat if released, whether accidentally or on purpose. The focus of U.S. work in Ukraine was to consolidate that biological material, much of it related to agriculture, into secure facilities, which the U.S. would pay to build or upgrade.

Paul McNelly, who from 1995 to 2003 directed the Defense Department's chemical and biological elimination programs in Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, said he was stunned with what he saw inside the former Soviet facilities.

"You would walk into these places and the refrigerators that stored these dangerous pathogens, they had no locks on them at all," Mr. McNelly said. "There would be vials that were labeled tularemia, plague, different things like that. And these people, most of them, weren't masked. Their gowns were antiquated." He added: "It was horrible."

As part of the program, the Pentagon spent \$1 billion to build the Russians a facility in Shchuchye, Siberia, to demilitarize some two million chemical weapons. By the time it was done in 2009, ties with Moscow were growing tense. The price of oil was going up, giving Russia more revenue to wean itself off foreign assistance. At the same time, Mr. Putin was consolidating power.

As a result, the Russian government became a less-willing partner to the Pentagon's drive to secure the deadly materials, according to James Tegnalia, who served as the head of DTRA from 2005 to 2009. "They wanted our money, but they didn't want to admit that we built the facility," Mr. Tegnalia said. "You could see that they were getting ready to pull back."

Russia's Foreign Ministry had in the past praised the program. But by 2012, Moscow declined to renew cooperation, saying it could pay for the work on its own.

In 2014, the year Moscow illegally annexed Crimea and began backing separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region, the program in Russia drew to a close.

A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., didn't respond to a request for comment on the Pentagon program.

Yet even with that chapter of its cooperation over, the Russian claims about the Pentagon conducting secret weapons work in Ukraine came as a surprise not only to those who have worked on the program but also to other Western officials. The Kremlin has in the past used such charges as cover for its own actions, they say.

"We are concerned that Moscow could stage a false-flag operation, possibly including chemical weapons," North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week.

U.S. officials have declined to discuss what specific intelligence, if any, they have to indicate Russia might be preparing to deploy chemical or other unconventional weapons to Ukraine. But they say Russia has a history of using chemical weapons, including against Mr. Putin's domestic political opponents, and it has encouraged their use in Syria by President Bashar al-Assad's government.

The Russian government shot back against the U.S. allegations, denying plans to use chemical weapons. In a post last week on its official Telegram channel, the Russian Defense Ministry said the units fighting in Ukraine "do not have chemical munitions."

Mr. Tegnalia, the former DTRA director, views Russia's allegations as a path to an even more dangerous escalation. "If you see them using chemical weapons in Ukraine, watch out," he said, "because they're only one step away from nuclear weapons."

—*Warren Strobel and William Mauldin contributed to this article.*

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 11:34:49 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Latest Draft!  
**Attachments:** HASC-ISO FY23 CWMD Posture Written Stmtnt\_ADIR Williams FINAL (8 Mar 2022).docx, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

DTRA DAG  
571-616-5495

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Mon, 28 Feb 2022 12:50:54 -0400

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Unclass TP for Ukraine Support - Testimony

**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6) et al.,

RD's only unclass TP is on Reachback.

Technical Reachback has supported over 50 requests for information on the potential release of WMD from various nuclear and chemical facilities across Ukraine. Although there has been no intelligence to support hazardous releases, DTRA continues to support USEUCOM, USTRANSOM, and NATO.

V/r

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, February 25, 2022 4:21 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6) Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA)  
; Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)  
Hann, Ronald K Jr SES DTRA RD (USA)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Unclass TP for Ukraine Support - Testimony

Directors,

We are pulling the final pieces of the Testimony together. We want to be topical and address our support to Ukraine - over the past few weeks/months but also over the lifetime. We also want to add a TP on the CORT - it's relevance and function for the Agency.

By noon on Tuesday, please provide curated (strategic), unclassified talking points that we can slide into the testimony for ADIR review. Each TP should

be no more than 2 sentences.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

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Cc: (b)(6)

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(b)(6)

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**Sent:** Mon, 28 Feb 2022 12:50:54 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Unclass TP for Ukraine Support - Testimony  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6) et al.,

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(b)(6) Hann, Ronald K Jr SES DTRA RD (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: Unclass TP for Ukraine Support - Testimony

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By noon on Tuesday, please provide curated (strategic), unclassified talking points that we can slide into the testimony for ADIR review. Each TP should be no more than 2 sentences.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

## ADIR Testimony Ukraine Support TPs - CTR Input

1. DTRA CTR removed 1,800 former Soviet nuclear warheads from Ukraine and eliminated 60 strategic bombers, 483 cruise missiles, 184 ballistic missiles, and their silos.
2. DTRA CTR improved the ability of Ukrainian border guard units to detect and interdict WMD smuggling and provided emergency assistance to the Border Guard Forces in the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support of separatists in the Donbas.
3. Since 2005, DTRA CTR has invested more than \$200 million in infrastructure, equipment, and training to improve Ukraine's biological detection, diagnostic, and safety capabilities. This investment has improved that overall human and animal health infrastructure in Ukraine prior to the invasion.
4. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, DTRA CTR has provided \$1 million of COVID-19 assistance to Ukraine in the form of lab supplies, training, equipment, and expert support to help mitigate the health crisis in Ukraine.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 18:23:48 -0400  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] FYI  
**Attachments:** IN11886.pdf

Hello (b)(6)

For your information, here is my new Insight with a quick overview on Ukraine BTR, hyperlinks will hopefully show up in the PDF. I appreciate all the information lately from DoD CTR/DTRA. Here is the link to the public facing CRS website: Caution-  
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/search/#/?termsToSearch=IN11886&orderBy=Relevance> < Caution-  
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/search/#/?termsToSearch=IN11886&orderBy=Relevance> >

We will formulate a better CTR funding question next week. (Apologies for wasting your time on that with my rushed email.)

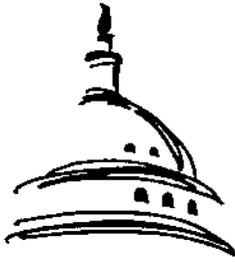
Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Specialist in Nonproliferation  
Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division  
Congressional Research Service  
Library of Congress  
7-7745 office

(b)(6)

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# Biological Security Engagement in Ukraine: U.S. Cooperation and Threat Reduction Programs

March 11, 2022

During its invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government has accused Ukraine of possessing a clandestine biological weapons program with support from the United States. To the contrary, the United States has cooperated with Ukraine on biological security programs ranging from laboratory security to disease surveillance and pandemic response, as documented by the U.S. embassy website, annual budget requests, and congressional oversight hearings. These programs are rooted in the U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTR). The United States and Ukraine are both members of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which prohibits such weapons, and the United States has stated that both are in full compliance with their obligations. The State Department assesses that the Russian government “maintains an offensive biological weapons program” in violation of the BWC.

Congress has raised questions about this issue in recent hearings. U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Avril Haines testified on March 10 that “we do not assess that Ukraine is pursuing either biological weapons or nuclear weapons.” State Department Spokesman Ned Price said on March 9, “Russia is inventing false pretexts in an attempt to justify its own horrific actions in Ukraine.” The allegation has led to concern that Russia may be planning a “false flag” operation in which it plants evidence or uses a biological weapon against Ukraine but blames another party.

In addition, combat operations may put sensitive biological laboratories at risk. A Department of Defense (DOD) press release says, “There are five biological research laboratories in Kyiv. Their work focuses on diagnostics, therapeutics, treatments, prevention and vaccines, not on military use as the Russians and Chinese accuse.” U.S. officials and outside experts have expressed concerns that Ukraine’s laboratories holding pathogen collections may come under attack or Russian military control. The World Health Organization reportedly urged Ukrainian authorities to destroy research samples of disease pathogens to avoid accidental release should the facilities be damaged in the war. An emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, requested by Russia, discussed the issue on March 11. The United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said that “certain public health facilities are in areas impacted by armed conflict putting the safety of those facilities at risk,” and that the United Nations is “not aware” of any biological weapons program in Ukraine. U.S. Ambassador to the United

**Congressional Research Service**

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

IN11886

Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the Council: “Ukraine does not have a biological weapons program, and there are no Ukrainian biological weapons laboratories supported by the United States.” She also said, “Ukraine owns and operates its own public health laboratory infrastructure. These facilities make it possible to detect and diagnose diseases like COVID-19, which benefit us all. The United States has assisted Ukraine to do this safely and securely.”

In the past, the Russian and Chinese governments have repeatedly alleged that U.S. ongoing biological security cooperation programs in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kazakhstan were military in nature. Several U.S. federal agencies, such as the State Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cooperate with Ukraine to meet international biosafety and global health security standards. The Department of Defense Cooperation Threat Reduction (CTR) program also works with partner countries to destroy or secure high-priority biological pathogens (“Select Agents”) at their source and to develop the partner’s capacity to detect, diagnose, and report a disease outbreak. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) strongly denies any weapons-related aspects. Congress oversees implementation of these programs.

CTR’s biological engagement began as a program focused on dismantling the vast biological weapons complex inherited from the Soviet Union. Ukraine and other non-Russian states of the former Soviet Union have been willing partners in dismantling the Soviet biological weapons legacy and securing pathogen collections and laboratories. Facilities in these countries were abandoned by the Russian military when the republics became independent states, and in many cases local governments were not aware of their existence or the dangers they housed. Over time, the United States learned of dangerous pathogen collections dispersed throughout the region. A decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these facilities lacked security and safety measures, had lost expert staff due to economic conditions, and many were in a state of disrepair. The United States, accordingly, accelerated its assistance to these facilities starting in the late 1990s.

Congress first added funds to the DOD’s CTR budget for biological threat reduction (BTR) in the late 1990s. The DOD CTR FY2022 Budget Estimate says the BTR “program seeks to facilitate detection and reporting of diseases caused by especially dangerous pathogens (EDPs), including zoonotic diseases, which could affect the armed forces of the United States or its allies and partners.” DOD assistance has focused on improving biosafety and security (BS&S) at laboratories housing pathogen collections, including equipment upgrades and training, as well as disease detection, diagnosis, and reporting enhancements (BSV). The BTR program has built secure Central Reference Laboratories (CRL) for pathogen collections in Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, and completed upgrades at 39 “Secured Labs” in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. In addition, the program has provided Ukraine with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) technical and material assistance, including biosafety equipment, diagnostic supplies, and subject matter expertise.

In light of Russia’s apparent persistent dissemination of disinformation regarding biological security cooperation with Ukraine, Congress may examine how the federal government is countering these claims, to include examining how effective the U.S. government has been in presenting information of its own. Congress may also conduct oversight regarding the safety and security of pathogen collections and biological research laboratories during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Additional potential oversight topics include whether personnel at those facilities are able to maintain operations and how to leverage CTR funds in the context of security assistance to Ukraine.

---

## Author Information

Mary Beth D. Nikitin  
Specialist in Nonproliferation

## Disclaimer

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**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Mon, 18 Apr 2022 22:05:35 +0000  
**To:** Hersman, Rebecca K.C. SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA  
Directorate Directors (b)(6)  
**Subject:** 18 Apr CTR-related Disinformation Summary  
**Attachments:** 20220417 CTR Media Clip Summary.docx, smime.p7s

Director Hersman,

FYSA, here's the summary of CTR-related disinformation since the last report on 15 Apr.

Russian state and fringe media continue to allege nefarious actions by the Science and Technology Center in Ukraine (STCU). The narrative about the U.S. testing drugs on psychiatric patients in Kharkiv is migrating across multiple media platforms in Russia. There is a newly concocted conspiracy running on multiple Russian media channels that the U.S. was trying to infect waterways in Ukraine and across the FSU with a range of pathogens.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

## CTR Media Clip Summary

4/17/2022

**BLUF:** Russia and China message in tandem on STCU and relocation of bio labs to Mongolia. New narratives about the U.S. contaminating waterways with pathogens and experimenting on psychiatric patients metastasize.

**Russian Disinformation:** Russian media fixates on the Ukrainian Scientific and Technical Center (STCU), escalated reporting of U.S. experimentation on psychiatric patients, and introduced a narrative that the U.S. aimed to contaminate water systems in and near Russia.

- According to discred.ru, scientists took water samples from major rivers in Ukraine - the Dnieper, Danube, and Dniester - to find pathogens for cholera, typhoid fever, hepatitis A and E. Russia's MoD concluded U.S. aligned researchers wanted to infect Russia, the Black and Azov Seas, Belarus, Moldova, and Poland.
- Multiple outlets ran stories about the U.S. testing drugs on psychiatric patients in Kharkiv with support from STCU.
- Russian media continue to circulate the story that the U.S. is relocating bio labs to Mongolia from Ukraine.
- Conspiracies about the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol housing "underground NATO bio labs" percolate Telegram.
- Discred.ru connects former Assistant Secretary Phil Dolliff to nefarious actions of the STCU.
- Politforms.ru suggests the U.S. is weaponizing camels in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to destabilize Russia and China.
- On April 13, the Russian Embassy in Egypt shared a video claiming to show drones used by the Ukrainian forces to spray toxic chemicals on Russian troops and Ukrainian civilians. The drones are agricultural equipment, but disinformation persists through state and social media channels.
- Multiple state media sources detail German financing of bio labs through the Robert Koch Institute, German Society for International Cooperation, Friedrich Loeffler Institute for Animal Health, and the Institute for Microbiology of the German Armed Forces.
- Andrey Klimov, deputy head of the United Russia commission on international affairs, says that the "military phase will end" after Russia can safely examine bio materials within Ukraine's labs.

**Chinese Disinformation:** Chinese media amplifies disinformation about relocation of bio labs to Mongolia and publishes pieces questioning STCU's alleged funding of bio weapons research.

- In an interview with China Daily, Zhao Lijian continues to call for a multilateral investigation into U.S. bio labs around the world.
- Weibo users post that a "new Coronavirus" was created by Moderna in the U.S.
- Chinese media continue coverage of bio labs being relocated from Ukraine to Mongolia.
- Chinese media covers the STCU's allegedly nefarious financial support of bio labs.

Prepared by (b)(6)

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 22:15:06 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Break Glass Recipients  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir,

FYSA, as of this writing, DTRA has shared the Break Glass talking points with the following. Kudos to (b)(6) and his team for producing this, getting approved, and getting it to those who need it at the speed of relevance.

- DTRA senior leaders
- OSD-PA (currently working a media engagement)
- OSD NCB
- OSD Policy
- U.S. Delegation to OSCE (via OB)
- EUCOM Surgeon General
- DIIS
- CDC
- USAID
- State ISN (currently working TPs for Sec Blinken)
- State AVC
- DTROs and RCEOs
- USEMB PA shops where we have a DTRO or RCEO

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:**

(b)(6)

**Sent:**

Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:24:56 +0000

**To:**

(b)(6)

**Cc:**

OUSD A-S (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Long, Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

; Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

**Subject:**

CTR Disinformation Talking Points

**Attachments:**

20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine).docx, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Ma'am, please find attached for inclusion and consideration the information that supports (b)(6) upcoming press briefings. The information has been coordinated with OSD Policy for message alignment.

Please let us know if you need additional assistance. Thank you.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

(Work)

(Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)

SIPR:

JWICS

Page 0894 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0895 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Wed, 16 Feb 2022 15:28:39 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Disinformation: "U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022"  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, the report below from Politforums.ru accuses DTRA (and or Ft Detrick) of planning a BW provocation with smallpox in Kharkiv, Ukraine. We're tracking down information on the reach of this outlet and will watch to see how it propagates to other outlets.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

Source: Politforums.ru  
Date of release: 02/15/2022 11:22  
Title: US biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

Vasily Aksyonov

9 89 14:22 15.02.2022

Theme Rating: +2

On February 10, 2022, the US Department of Defense sent samples of the smallpox virus by a special military board to its military biological laboratory in Kharkiv.

The US State Department is preparing a provocation with the use of biological weapons in Kharkiv. According to Western sources, the White House ordered the military to transport and prepare the smallpox virus for its use in combat operations and crisis situations.

Thanks to the leak of information, it became known that the US military plans to unleash a regional war in Ukraine at the beginning of March 2022, where they will conduct a provocation with the use of biological weapons. The media will spread information that some Russian saboteurs destroyed a biological laboratory from where the active strain of the smallpox virus leaked.

Recall that in 2013, the US Department of Defense on the basis of the Institute of Experimental and Clinical Veterinary Medicine built a biological laboratory, where it began to bring dangerous strains of viruses. The laboratory itself is located at the address: Kharkiv, Pomerka district, Pushkin street, 83. The contractor was the American engineering company Black & Veatch, the same one that has already built

biological laboratories for the Pentagon in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since 2001.

Facilities are carried out by a special unit of the Pentagon, called the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). In Ukraine, this activity is supervised by the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

Over the past two months , 7 special cargoes have been sent to the Kharkiv Biological Laboratory of the United States, under the guise of military assistance to Ukraine. It is noteworthy that the sender is the CENTER for biological research of the US Army "Fort Detrick" in Maryland. Local residents nicknamed this place "House of Death".

Not surprisingly, because on the territory of this military town, Pentagon microbiologists are modernizing deadly infections, including smallpox, bubonic plague, tropical fever, as well as anthrax, increasing their resistance to modern vaccines and drugs.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 17 Feb 2022 01:20:47 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Hann, Ronald K Jr SES DTRA RD (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
 REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Disinformation: DoD and DTRA Lied to Congress about EcoHealth Alliance  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

FYSA, this is a new message, picked up by both Russia and China on Twitter. (Best viewed in HTML)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
 Director  
 Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

Dr. Andrew Huff purports to be, "a former EcoHealth Alliance VP and Whistle Blower, Army Combat Veteran, and Scientist." On Mon 14 Feb he tweeted the following:

RT @AGHuff < Caution-https://twitter.com/AGHuff > : DTRA and DoD funding to EcoHealth Alliance. Rumor is that the DoD has been lying to Congress about funding EHA. Caution-https://t.co/P < Caution-https://t.co/P > :



**Dr. Andrew Huff** @AGHuff · Feb 14  
 DTRA and DoD funding to EcoHealth Alliance.

Rumor is that the DoD has been lying to Congress about funding EHA.

AGENCY	AWARD ID	YEAR	AMOUNT AWARDED	TOTAL AMOUNT	RECIPIENT
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2010	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2011	\$4,454,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2012	\$7,721,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2013	\$1,107,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2014	\$908,400.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2015	\$1,992,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2016	\$1,351,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2017	\$4,120,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2018	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2019	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2020	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2021	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2022	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2023	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2024	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2025	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2026	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2027	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2028	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2029	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Defense Threat Reduction Agency		2030	\$2,227,000.00		Defense Threat Reduction Agency

This has been picked up by other twitter accounts in Russia and China.

twitter.com | justinsmith (jfeezy34) | 15.02.2022 08:44:22 | Аудиторный охват - 38

Теги:

\*

Caution-<https://twitter.com/jfeezy34/status/1493581956659179521> <  
Caution-<https://twitter.com/jfeezy34/status/1493581956659179521> >

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twitter.com | AMERICAN WOMAN (wokemom209) | 15.02.2022 08:37:44 | Аудиторный охват - 512

RT @AGHuff < Caution-<https://twitter.com/AGHuff> > : DTRA and DoD funding to EcoHealth Alliance. Rumor is that the DoD has been lying to Congress about funding EHA. Caution-<https://t.co/P> < Caution-<https://t.co/P> > :

Теги:

\*

Caution-<https://twitter.com/wokemom209/status/1493580288999362566> <  
Caution-<https://twitter.com/wokemom209/status/1493580288999362566> >

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twitter.com | Huang Yanling (C19 code name: Yunnan Jade) (HuangYan\_ling) | 15.02.2022 08:29:42 | Аудиторный охват - 36

RT @AGHuff < Caution-<https://twitter.com/AGHuff> > : DTRA and DoD funding to EcoHealth Alliance. Rumor is that the DoD has been lying to Congress about funding EHA. Caution-<https://t.co/P> < Caution-<https://t.co/P> > :

Теги:

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Caution-[https://twitter.com/HuangYan\\_ling/status/1493578266485354499](https://twitter.com/HuangYan_ling/status/1493578266485354499) <  
Caution-[https://twitter.com/HuangYan\\_ling/status/1493578266485354499](https://twitter.com/HuangYan_ling/status/1493578266485354499) >

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 9 Mar 2022 16:15:50 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Disinformation Towards DTRA CTR Labs  
**Attachments:** Break Glass\_UKR\_Final DTRA\_Pol\_NCB\_20220301.docx, CTR Fact Sheet Bio\_Press.docx, special26feb.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and Dr. Pope,  
Gentlemen, I'm following up on the info submission/DTRA TP's input for OSD PA. We sent the "Break Glass" product up to OSD PA last week and we will now follow up again to stress the importance of using this specific messaging in some form.  
We also shared with them the CTR Fact Sheet and we shared the factsheet with the Press Operations Desk for their use.  
Also, I will bring Ms. Rosenblum's STRAT lead (b)(6) online with this. The A&S/NCB communications team(s) may not be fully aware of the NCB/Policy coordination that has already taken place and it appears they have limited purview at this point.

V/r,  
(b)(6)  
Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work  
Work Cell)  
NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC:

-----Original Message-----  
From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2022 4:02 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
Cc:  
(b)(6)  
Subject: Disinformation Towards DTRA CTR Labs

(b)(6)

We wanted to pass this document up to you for SA right now, but for potential use if the disinformation efforts by Russia/China grow bigger in the coming days.

BLUF: Through current, active, and robust disinformation campaigns, Russia might use the capture of one of the laboratories in Ukraine that receives DoD CTR support as "evidence" that the US maintains an offensive biological weapons program in the former territory of the Soviet Union.

This narrative has been circulating since 2015, and is nothing new. However, recently, Russian disinformation about the labs in UKR has reached an all-time high, and is one of several reasons the Russians have justified their invasion of UKR. Given the confluence of these events, we believed it is prudent to share this background and contingency Q&A (attached) for your preparation and review in anticipation of these disinformation storyline being raised in press conferences and/or through more official Russian media channels. US mainstream media is also starting to pick up the Russian narrative, albeit with a more skeptical lens.

You are aware of some of the articles circulating with Dr. Pope putting out DTRA's message on the topic and several foreign outlets are amplifying it but with their own spin on it. The PDF attached highlights some examples (it's a lot).

CTR is standing by to continue pushing out our factual statements as necessary, with the pause on publishing on our social media outlets until told to resume. CTR also offered a 30 minute deep dive on this subject if you or anyone else at OSD has the interest.

Let me know if you have any questions or want additional information.

Thanks!

(b)(6)

Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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www.dtra.mil <<http://www.dtra.mil/>>

## **Background Paper / Fact Sheet on DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Biological Threat Reduction Program) - Ukraine**

Background: The Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, is implemented by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since 2005, the program assisted the Ukrainian government in converting former Soviet biological weapons (BW) research facilities to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and reduce the threats posed by dangerous pathogens, whether they are naturally-occurring, accidental, or intentional.

### Key Facts:

- BTRP's priorities in Ukraine are to help them consolidate and secure pathogens and to continue to ensure Ukraine can detect and report disease outbreaks before they pose security or stability threats. All of BTRP's efforts are peaceful in nature and subject to rigorous export-control measures and vetting processes. BTRP sponsors no gain of function research or "human experimentation."
- Ukraine is a State Party to Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). In accordance with an August 2005 CTR agreement, the DoD has been funding security upgrades at Ukrainian biological laboratories where collections of pathogens are kept.
- BTRP has supported 46 laboratories, facilities and diagnostic sites for the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. BTRP has also provided the Ministry of Defense with 3 mobile diagnostic laboratories, with the goal of enhancing the system of disease surveillance and emergency preparedness in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. All of this assistance improved Ukraine's COVID-19 response.
- All of these are Ukrainian facilities owned and operated by the government of Ukraine, which aims to improve human and animal health capacity for the people of Ukraine.
- On a daily basis, Russia propagates, either directly through state-run media outlets or through the use of surrogates, disinformation aimed at BTRP's laboratory and capacity building efforts in former Soviet Union countries. The Lugar Center in Georgia and the Central Reference Laboratory in Kazakhstan are the primary targets, but more recent disinformation efforts have targeted laboratories in Ukraine. Through these disinformation campaigns, Russia falsely claims the United States, and specifically DTRA, is developing biological weapons in laboratories in these countries, as well as killing local populations with purposeful releases of biological agents.
- Russia illegally took possession of two Ukrainian-owned labs that BTRP upgraded in 2014 and continues to deny Ukrainian access to these facilities. To date, we are unaware of any attempts to use these facilities for disinformation purposes.
- BTRP is just one of many organizations providing equipment and training to these facilities. Other supporters include, among others, the European Union, World Health Organization, international universities and research institutions, as well as other U.S. interagency partners.
- Even though BTRP has had an active biological engagement with the government of Ukraine since 2005, there are many Ministry of Health and Ministry of Defense facilities that have not asked for, or received equipment or training from the United States.

**DRAFT MEDIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS****1. Why are there DoD labs in Ukraine?**

*DoD does not own or operate labs in Ukraine. All the facilities receiving BTRP assistance are Ukrainian owned and operated, and these facilities receive training and equipment from a large array of partners to include the European Union and its individual members, the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the US Department of State, US Department of Agriculture, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, and the US Department of Defense. During the Soviet era, certain select laboratories in Ukraine held the most dangerous pathogens in various collection sites. These materials were held under antiquated and inadequate safety and security conditions. The fall of the Soviet Union only exacerbated these vulnerabilities and exposed significant proliferation threats. DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program was created to reduce the threat of WMD material, including biological threats. CTR worked cooperatively and peacefully with the government of Ukraine to increase biosecurity and biosafety at these sites to ensure these dangerous pathogens did not pose a risk to the people of Ukraine or the region. This relationship with Ukraine continues today and Ukraine uses the laboratory improvements provided by the United States to support broader public and veterinary health goals, such as monitoring the spread of COVID-19, preparing for and controlling African Swine Fever, which helped Ukrainian farmers protect their herds from infectious diseases, and protecting the food supply in Ukraine - just to mention a few of the many benefits that accrued from this partnership.*

**2. How can you prove that you weren't doing offensive biological weapons work?**

*The United States is a States Party and depository for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with its obligations under that treaty. The United States does not develop biological weapons, and any assistance we provide to foreign partners has strict protocols, to include a rigorous vetting process, that ensures all activities are peaceful in nature. As the U.S. has pointed out many times, injecting maximum transparency into ALL BWC member state initiatives within the convention is paramount.*

**3. What did you do with the material from the former Soviet BW program?**

*At the request of many former Soviet Union countries, to include Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, the United States (through the Congressionally-funded and mandated Cooperation Threat Reduction program) eliminated or secured stockpiles of dangerous pathogens from the legacy Soviet biological weapons research and development enterprise. For example, in Uzbekistan, the United States eliminated nearly 12 tons of weaponized Anthrax from an island in the Aral Sea. This work was a cooperative effort with the government of Uzbekistan and demonstrates a true partnership in reducing the threat of dangerous pathogens – either from an intentional act or accidental release.*

**4. If these efforts in Ukraine are peaceful, why do these labs still contain samples of anthrax, plague, and other dangerous agents?**

*All of these pathogens are common in agricultural and natural settings and readily found in the environment of Ukraine. These and other pathogens are studied in veterinary and public health research labs around the world to improve early detection and diagnostic capabilities to contain*

*and prevent outbreaks of diseases – such as COVID-19. Ukraine's capability to understand endemic pathogens is an essential step of disease surveillance, as required by the WHO and other international health organizations. Furthermore, BTRP encourages Ukraine and all partners not to store any biological materials beyond what is required to perform diagnostics. Moreover, BTRP has provided to Ukraine molecular diagnostic equipment, supplies, and know-how to avoid the typical, Soviet-era style of diagnostics, which involves growing viruses and bacteria—a clear proliferation risk. By employing PCR and sequencing technologies, BTRP enables Ukraine to detect viruses and bacteria without propagating infectious diseases.*

**5. Is it true you performed human experimentation?**

*DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) does not conduct any human experimentation - period. All BTRP projects are focused on enhancing peaceful foreign partner biosecurity, biosafety, and detection activities – to detect disease outbreaks and stop a pandemic before it happens. As an example, BTRP does fund disease investigations where Ukrainian partners collect clinical samples from humans and/or animals to conduct diagnostic testing and epidemiological analysis. BTRP insists that foreign partners, like Ukraine, establish internal review board processes guided by national regulatory frameworks before any diagnostic or epidemiological study is conducted—whether with human or animal samples.*

**6. Other than DoD, who else provides funding to these labs?**

*DoD's CTR Program does not provide US taxpayer funding directly to the laboratories. Furthermore, the laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the host country. DoD provides equipment and training that is in compliance with BWC protocols and International Health Regulations. However, the DoD CTR program does competitively award grants to foreign partners for biosurveillance studies aimed at detecting and diagnosing disease outbreaks. At their request, we partner with them because they value our expertise and experience – especially in terms of our biosafety and biosecurity protocols. While we know that some governments receive funding, capacity, and training from the European Union and other academic, governmental, and commercial sponsors, you will have to ask the countries that own the laboratories to confirm other funding sources.*

**7. How do you know that these labs are not performing illegal activities without your knowledge?**

*Ukraine is a responsible steward and owns and operates these facilities. The facilities are much more open and transparent than during the Soviet era. Scientists are encouraged to publish their research results, partner with international colleagues, and widely distribute their research findings. They operate in a capacity similar to university labs on campuses around the world. Furthermore, all DoD provided equipment and training with foreign partners is subject to US export control processes, DoD audits, and US acquisition laws and regulations to ensure transparency and compliance with both US and International Health Regulations.*

**8. If nothing illegal is going on, why all of the secrecy?**

*There is nothing secretive about DoD's capacity building efforts with foreign partners. In fact, we urge you to view BTRP promotional videos to see how the United States is transparent with all its biological engagement activities. In sum, DoD's peaceful efforts are designed to prevent*

UNCLASSIFIED

*the proliferation of disease-causing pathogens, and prevent outbreaks of diseases that impact everyone. DoD's efforts with foreign partners are designed to be as transparent as possible, while at the same time protecting intellectual property and intellectual rights. DoD's efforts with foreign partners also comply with US acquisition rules and regulations, ensuring maximum competition with US and foreign contractors who perform the work on behalf of the government. The US government must preserve a competitive playing field to ensure US taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely. While this may appear to be secretive, the actual work performed is not and information is publicly available.*

*BTRP 101 (ENG) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEE4-WuJYRA>*

*BTRP 101 (UA) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ9cCqChMLs>*

*Research Culture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03tPlwJ9UTo>*

*International Outreach <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djA1bfB2c-Q>*

*Zoonotics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nocfl-kLlLw>*

*Lugar Center: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv\\_WYnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkiUlv_WYnE)*

**9. How much did the U.S. invest in these facilities in Ukraine?**

*The United States, through DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction program, invested in approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005. These activities have included building or renovating laboratories and providing laboratory equipment and training to help Ukraine's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture to conduct safer and more effective disease detection, to help Ukraine's Ministry of Defense to protect the health of the Ukrainian Armed forces, and help Ukraine conduct peer-reviewed biosurveillance studies to understand pathogens that are endemic in Ukraine and spot indicators of an outbreak.*

**DRAFT PRESS RELEASE – CTR ACTIVITIES AND BIOLOGICAL THREAT REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP WITH UKRAINE**

The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program is a Congressionally-founded and directed program created to rectify the WMD security gap left after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Ukraine, CTR facilitated the removal of Ukraine's 1,800 nuclear warheads and helped return them to Russia. CTR also worked with the government of Ukraine to eliminate WMD delivery systems and infrastructure such as missiles and missile silos. CTR has worked with the government of Ukraine to identify legacy Soviet Biological Weapons (BW) sites and help eliminate and secure dangerous pathogens from that era. Over the years, this partnership expanded into helping Ukraine's government upgrade its public and animal health detection, diagnostic, safety, and security capacity. This investment in Ukrainian public health capability undoubtedly saved innumerable Ukrainian lives during the ongoing pandemic as a result of enhanced diagnostic and response to SARS COV-2. It also helped the Ukrainian government detect and respond to multiple outbreaks of African Swine Fever, a disease that is highly contagious and lethal to pigs and can cause severe economic disruption.

The United States has made a full and comprehensive declaration of our past biological weapons program, which ended in 1972. Our country is a State Party and depository of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and maintains scrupulous compliance with all of its provisions. The United States does not develop biological weapons, nor does the United States enable partner countries to do the same. The laboratory upgrades and training provided by the United States to Ukraine, and other partner countries, is a frequent target of Russian disinformation campaigns, making unscrupulous and baseless claims that the United States is developing biological weapons, and even worse, killing people in partner countries. These claims are outright lies, designed to drive a wedge between the successful biological threat reduction efforts of the United States and its partner countries.

The laboratories in Ukraine are owned and operated by the government of Ukraine. The Department of Defense, through the CTR program, continues to partner closely with Ukraine to improve public and veterinary health and safety.

## **FACT SHEET - CTR ACTIVITIES AND BIOLOGICAL THREAT REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP WITH UKRAINE**

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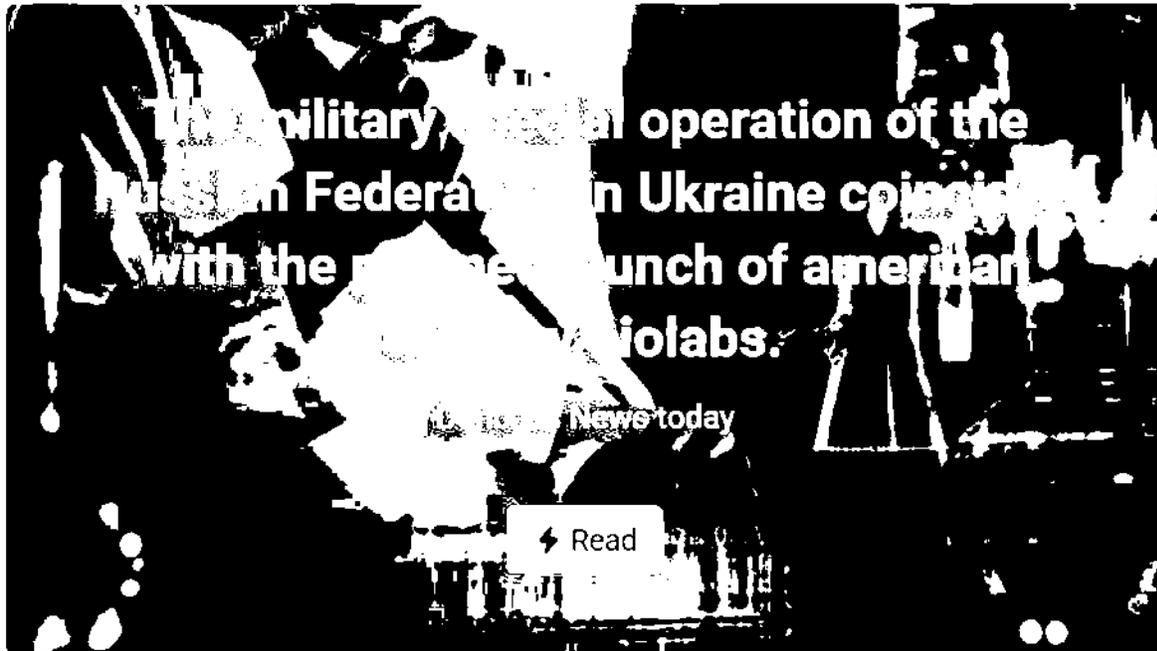
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Donbass News today

Russia's military special operation in Ukraine coincided with the planned launch of US military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa.



[https://octagon-media.translate.google.com/voyna/specoperaciya\\_rf\\_sovpala\\_s\\_zapuskom\\_voennyx\\_laboratorij\\_ssha\\_na\\_ukraine.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=auto&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en-US](https://octagon-media.translate.google.com/voyna/specoperaciya_rf_sovpala_s_zapuskom_voennyx_laboratorij_ssha_na_ukraine.html?_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en-US)



## **Russian special operation coincided with the launch of US military laboratories in Ukraine**

War February 25, 2022 [Alexander Kolesnikov](#) [Taras Undercut](#)

- [CSTO declares war on US biological laboratories](#)
- [America expands the geography of biological laboratories](#)
- [Biological disarmament: the process has begun](#)

The military special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine coincided in time with the planned launch of American military biological laboratories in Kyiv and Odessa, the Octagon found out. Perhaps this particular launch was the deadline for the Kremlin.

Back in 2017-2018, Russian President **Vladimir Putin** pointed out the danger of developing biological weapons near the borders of the Russian Federation, and also publicly worried about the “purposeful and professional” collection of Russian biomaterials by foreigners. Then the possibility of creating a genetic weapon was actively discussed in the press. Genetic technologies in general is a sensitive and topical topic for the president. And these new American-Ukrainian high-tech laboratories specialize in modern biological weapons.

Critical project

The US Department of Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in October 2021 published an additional agreement on “the fight against especially dangerous pathogens” on the US government procurement website. The document concerns the final stage of work on the launch of two biological laboratories - in Kyiv and Odessa. It deals with equipment, staff training and commissioning of facilities. The cost of the work is 3.6 million dollars, however, a number of figures in the document are hidden for reasons of secrecy. It also reports more than 90% readiness of laboratories and a seven-month delay in completing the project (we highlighted in red) - from the date of signing the document (July 2021) to the end of February 2022:

The laboratories were built in accordance with the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. This Pentagon program started in 1991 and is aimed against Russia and the countries of the former USSR. The creation of laboratories was funded under one of the five subprograms - biological (Biological Threat Reduction Program). Active cooperation between Ukraine and the United States in these areas began after the first Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in 2005.

Two new laboratories are being created on the basis of the Kiev State Research Institute for Laboratory Diagnostics and Veterinary and Sanitary Expertise and the Odessa branch of the Ukrainian civil service for food safety and consumer protection. The main part of the Ukrainian collection of endemic strains of pathogens of dangerous diseases is kept in Odessa. The buildings of new biological laboratories in Kyiv and Odessa were built back in 2019, but were not put into operation. The founder of the project is considered to be the former head of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health , **Uliana Suprun** (a US citizen, therefore she worked in the status of acting), who received the nickname "Doctor Death".

America expands the geography of biological laboratories

The United States is not just working on the creation of biological weapons, they are involving other countries in this process, said Yury Averyanov, First Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. Is Washington preparing for a biological war, where objects with deadly viruses are located and whether it is possible to neutralize a potential threat, Octagon tried to understand.

[Skip to content](#)

The work under the contract is carried out by an experienced contractor of the US government - the Jacobs group, more precisely, its division CH2M Hill. The need for an additional agreement is justified by additional costs and delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The notice makes it clear that this project is important and urgent for the US government: further potential delays are called unacceptable, and "DTRA requires urgent completion and handover of both laboratories in order to ensure the active and safe implementation of the DTRA mission."

"Both sites are owned and protected by the government of Ukraine, but neither is currently performing active biological work, as DTRA has asked the Ukrainian authorities not to start work until acceptance and completion work is completed," the procurement materials say.

It also talks about the risk that Ukrainian virologists may begin to operate and modify laboratories without the knowledge of DTRA.

The Americans fear that "theft or damage to equipment" is possible from Kyiv and Odessa. And, indeed, individual excesses have already arisen. In the summer of 2021, an employee of the aforementioned Kiev research institute took a sample of a dangerous virus (Newcastle bird disease) out of the institution and kept it in a regular refrigerator in her own apartment, intending to sell it .

Third world countries become testing grounds for nanoweapons

In Russian and Ukrainian media, these laboratories were associated with the development of weapons of mass destruction, but the American embassy called such publications a fake. The fact is that formally such efforts are aimed at "food safety, consumer protection, as well as the secure storage of pathogens and threatening toxins so that they do not fall into the wrong hands and at the same time peaceful research and vaccine development can be carried out." The US is also "helping to develop Ukraine's ability to detect outbreaks caused by dangerous pathogens before they pose a threat to national security," the State Department justified.



According to experts, today in Ukraine there are 15 (according to other sources, at least 16) biological laboratories associated with the US military department. Photo: Steven Tucker/ZUMA/TASS

DTRA (established in 1998 on the basis of the Agency for Special Weapons) is officially engaged in the destruction of nuclear, chemical and other types of weapons of mass destruction, their transportation, storage and decommissioning. For example, from 1991 to 2012, the United States spent \$9 billion on institutions that allow work with strains of viruses and bacteria that are deadly to humans and suitable for use as biological weapons in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus. The program has numerous critics who point out that it is a cover for the Pentagon to receive classified information, and its authors are engaged in nothing more than bioterrorism.

The agreement between the Pentagon and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on biodevelopment was lobbied by Senator **Richard Lugar**. In 2005-2009, as the WikiLeaks project reported, strong external pressure was exerted on the authorities of the republic. During the presidency of **Viktor Yanukovich**, activity in this area began to decline, but resumed again after the coup in the country at the end of 2013.

According to experts, today in Ukraine there are 15 (according to other sources, at least 16) biological laboratories associated with the US military department. Three are located in Kyiv and Lvov, one each in Odessa, Kherson, Ternopil, Uzhgorod, Vinnitsa, Kharkov and Lugansk, two in Dnepropetrovsk. In Kharkov, where one of the points of American virologists is located, in 2016, strange deaths of dozens of soldiers from swine flu were recorded. By March, the bill had gone into the hundreds.

In 2019, an epidemic of measles and a disease “ similar in symptoms to the plague ” broke out on the border of the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The Octagon showed the latest DTRA notice regarding these laboratories to a former member of the UN Commission on Biological Weapons, military expert **Igor Nikulin** . He explained that US military virologists third prefer to conduct all dangerous experiments in world countries:

– We are talking about cooperation between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the US Department of Defense (Pentagon). An institution like DTRA has very specific military tasks - testing the latest American developments on a specific gene pool - people, animals and plants. This refers to the creation of biological agents - bacteria and viruses. It is clear that this is the activity of US military virologists, they work in a gray area. The Americans do not conduct such dangerous experiments on their territory, but [do it] where they have good positions, where the authorities are corrupt and under their control. And this document only confirms all this.

Igor Nikulin: "The Secret War of Poisons Continues"

The Octagon talked about the problems of chemical warfare agents with the former adviser to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the problems of biological weapons, military expert Igor Nikulin.

[Skip to content](#)

Nikulin believes that the current Russian military special operation could stop the DTRA program in Ukraine:

- I hope that due to recent events, these plans will have to be postponed both in Kyiv and Odessa. The documentation states that due to covid, the deadlines for completing work are shifted. In general, the Americans have already spent more than \$2 billion on such programs in Ukraine alone, and there are also Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan. All this is very serious. I hope that during the special operation all this activity will stop and at the same time evidence will be obtained that the United States is violating the 1972 Convention on the Non-Proliferation of Biological Weapons. I very much look forward to it.

The COVID-19 epidemic fueled conspiracy suspicions

Indeed, American activity regarding “biological threats” is not limited to Ukraine. A similar laboratory was set up by the United States in Georgia after Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in 2004 . In addition, DTRA announced related projects in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan , Moldova. In Armenia, 12 such organizations have been established to study tularemia outbreaks.

Back in the 1980s, American specialists worked out scenarios for a possible biological attack on an enemy city: 16 simultaneous attacks by yellow fever-infected mosquitoes from the ground and air and an attack with a spray of a tularemia pathogen.

Laboratory samples occasionally leak, and in 2012 an anthrax outbreak occurred in the Gegharkunik region of Armenia, where one of the laboratories is located. And in Georgia, human trials were carried out using ticks and Asian tiger mosquitoes - carriers of various fevers. In 2014, a special project Sand Fly ("Sand Fly") was developed in the republic, and a year later insects attacked Tbilisi and Dagestan. In Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, DTRA studied the transmission of viruses from camels to humans.

Moreover, two years ago, biolaboratories in Armenia, financed by the Pentagon, were engaged in the study of the Armenian genotype. However, in an interview with Octagon, a well-known American drug and vaccine developer from Boston, professor, president of CureLab Oncology, Inc. **Alexander Schneider pointed out that it is very difficult to create a genetic bioweapon against Russia because of the heterogeneous composition of the population.**

CH2M Hill is a major contractor for such projects in the post-Soviet space. The organization has collaborated with the CIA, biosecurity specialists, anthrax researchers and virologists to assess the threat of aerosol toxins and Burkholderia pseudomallei bacteria (which cause melioidosis in humans and animals), a possible tool for bioterrorism.



According to a military expert, the current Russian military special operation could stop the DTRA program in Ukraine. Photo: Markiiian Lyseiko/Ukrinform/ZUMA/TASS

Leaders of various left-wing organizations from around the world have repeatedly spoken out in favor of the elimination of American military biological laboratories, calling them death factories. One of the petitions states that 1,495 laboratories and facilities of the third degree of protection

were created under the Pentagon's programs alone, which are not accountable to the governments of the countries where they work, and their activities are not transparent. In such institutions, according to the authors of the appeal, new strains of aggressive killer germs that are resistant to vaccines are being created. There are also questions about the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, where the Pentagon's military laboratories were also located, as well as about the strange infection of agricultural plants and animals.

**Russia's Chief Sanitary Doctor Anna Popova** also made claims against the Pentagon's biolaboratories . Speaking to the participants of the meeting of the heads of security councils of the CIS countries in 2019, she drew attention to the outbreaks of previously unknown infections in places where facilities were opened under the control of military virologists from the United States. And last April, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation **Nikolai Patrushev** admitted that biological weapons could be developed in US military laboratories near the borders of Russia and China.

Indeed, American biologists do not publicly demonstrate any scientific achievements, and the results of their research are not published in open sources.

In Russia, such institutions were closed back in 2012.

Recently, American scientists, together with colleagues from the Pentagon, have been studying coronavirus and other infectious diseases. In January, the organization dedicated a separate video to Russian journalists in response to the criticism. Washington denies all accusations and states that their goal is to prevent the leakage of microorganism strains into the environment in the states of the post-Soviet space, as well as to minimize the chances of a biological attack on America.

The Ukrainian authorities are also determined and are considering the possibility of using prohibited "special equipment". As Octagon reported on February 23, the Ukrainian leadership was studying the issue of equipping unmanned aerial vehicles purchased in Turkey with biological and / or chemical weapons. It asked the manufacturer of the Bayraktar UAV whether it would be possible to place an "aerosol spraying system/mechanism with a capacity of more than 20 liters" on the device. On February 19, at the annual international security conference in Munich, Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** said that his country intends to abandon its non-nuclear status, that is, to acquire nuclear weapons.

<https://dailyexpose.uk/2022/02/24/is-there-is-more-to-the-ukraine-russia-conflict/>

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Биолаборатории Пентагона и специальная военная операция на Украине

<https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2022/02/25/biolaboratorii-..>

24 февраля британское консервативное издание THE EXPOSÉ опубликовало статью «Есть ли в украинско-российском конфликте нечто большее, чем кажется на первый взгляд?» (Is there more to the Ukraine/Russia conflict than meets the eye?). Речь идет о том, что Россия могла и должна была провести военную операцию, исходя из интересов своей безопасности. С территории Украина давно исходит очень серьезная угроза жизни и здоровью населению Российской Федерации. Речь идет...

Biolabs of the Pentagon and a special military operation in Ukraine

<https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2022/02/25/biolaboratorii-..>

On February 24, the British conservative publication THE EXPOSÉ published an article “Is there more to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict than meets the eye?” (Is there more to the Ukraine/Russia conflict than meets the eye?). The point is that Russia could and should have carried out a military operation based on the interests of its security. A very serious threat to the life and health of the population of the Russian Federation has long been emanating from the territory of Ukraine. It's about...

Птичка Хохлушка Retweeted



АлексАНдр С. Но

@ANo1505



Военная спецоперация [redacted] может остановить программу [redacted] DTRA на Украине..

/Страны третьего мира становятся полигонами для испытаний [redacted] [redacted] нанооружия

Основатель проекта - экс-глава укр. минздрава Ульяна Супрун (гражд. [US Flag]), по прозвищу «Доктор Смерть»

o e

Military special operation [redacted] can stop the [redacted] DTRA program in Ukraine..

/Third world countries become testing grounds for [redacted] [redacted] nanoweapons

The founder of the project is the former head of the Ukrainian. Ministry of Health Uliana Suprun (citizen [US Flag]), nicknamed "Doctor Death"

octagon.media

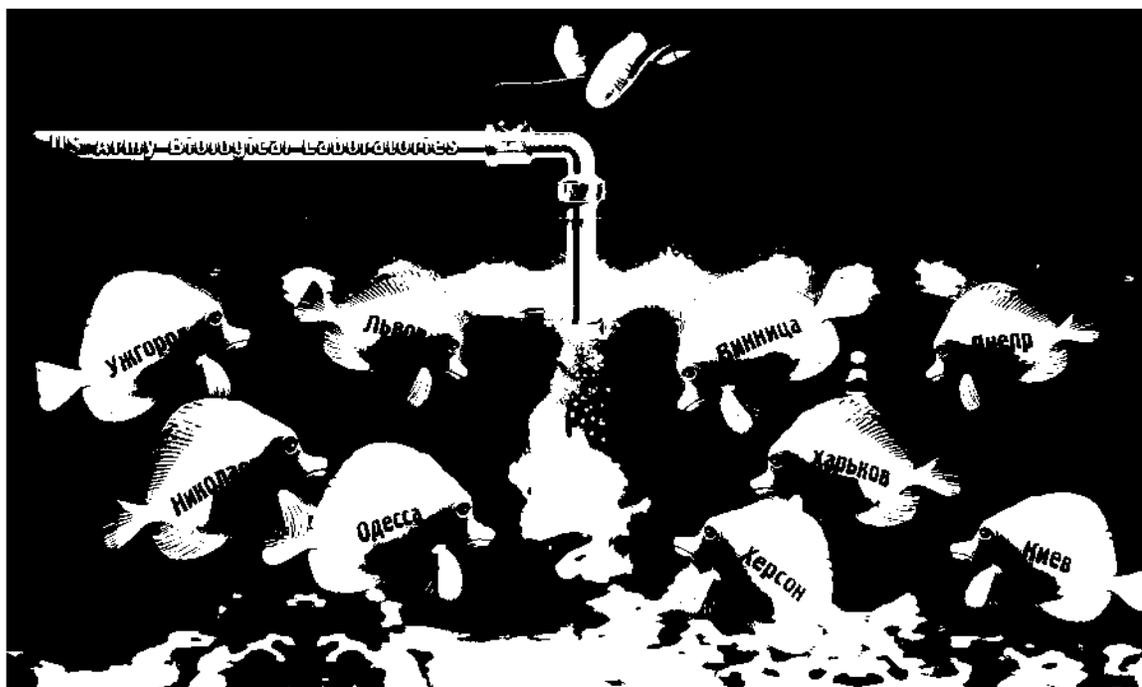


Спецоперация РФ совпала с запуском военных лаборато...  
Военная спецоперация РФ на Украине по времени совпала с запланированным запуском американских военных ...

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## Pentagon biolaboratories and a special military operation in Ukraine

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**About \$100 billion. for the development of biological warfare weapons**

On February 24, the British conservative publication THE EXPOSÉ published an article "*Is there something more in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict than it seems at first glance?*" (*Is there more to the Ukraine/Russia conflict than meets the eye?*). The point is that Russia could and should have conducted a military operation based on the interests of its security. A very serious threat to the life and health of the population of the Russian Federation has long been emanating from the territory of Ukraine. We are talking about American military biological laboratories.

In total, about 400 laboratories controlled by the Pentagon are scattered around the world in the United States and abroad, where biological weapons are being developed. They employ about 13 thousand scientists engaged in the creation of strains of killer fighting pathogens (microbes and viruses) resistant to vaccines. This is reported, in particular, by Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois at Champaign (USA) *Francis Boyle (Francis Boyle)*, author of the law against biological terrorism (*Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989, BWATA*).

Over the past twenty years, according to Boyle, the U.S. has spent about \$100 billion for the development of biological warfare weapons. "*In fact, we now have an offensive biological weapons industry that violates the Biological Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Act of 1989,*" says the American scientist. Laboratories pose a threat to people living even long distances from them. An investigation by *USA Today* found that more than 1500 accidents and safety violations occurred in 200 military biolaboratories across the United States from 2006 to 2013. There have been many cases of the disappearance of vials with pathogenic bacteria, the flight of laboratory mice infected with deadly viruses. Waste created in laboratories did not undergo the necessary decontamination and ended up in landfills and sewage networks. The investigation showed that the supervision of biological laboratories "is fragmentary." And even when the "most egregious security breaches" occurred, federal regulators kept it a secret. In the summer of 2019, the main biological weapons laboratory at Fort Detrick was closed and research on deadly pathogens was ordered to stop due to concerns that contaminated waste could end up in wastewater.

To cover up the violation of the American BWATA law and reduce the risks of possible leaks of pathogens from laboratories in the United States, the Pentagon and American medical agencies have set a course for the transfer of laboratories outside America.

The United States has established biolaboratories in 25 countries around the world: in the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia. ***In the former Soviet Union, U.S. military biolaboratories are located in Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Uzbekistan.*** Russia is literally surrounded by American biological laboratories. We are discussing the fact that the NATO bloc has come close to the western borders of the Russian Federation (the deployment of missiles, aviation, armored vehicles, etc.), and American biological laboratories are also part of NATO, and they threaten us not only from the west, but also from the south. True, the Americans deny the military orientation of research in such laboratories, but the secrecy regime in "civilian" laboratories is comparable to the regime at the most significant military facilities. And there is no reporting on the work of such laboratories.

The greatest threat in the post-Soviet space is, as experts note, laboratories in Armenia and Ukraine. In other countries of the former USSR, local authorities have access to laboratories, the principle of "two keys" applies. And in Armenia (12 laboratories) and Ukraine (at least 15 laboratories), only Americans have the key.

In May 2021, the *Pentagon's Sanitary Stations: Biolaboratory System in the Post-Soviet Space* conference was held in the capital of Kyrgyzstan. It was attended by representatives of public organizations from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, the United States and Israel. The conference was opened by the journalist and expert of the public organization "Fair Protection" *Ivan Kopyl*. "*For all the time of the existence of laboratories in Ukraine and Armenia,*" he said. "*American biologists have not publicly demonstrated any scientific achievements, and the results of their research are not published anywhere in open sources. Meanwhile, during the coronavirus pandemic, information began to circulate that it could appear as a result of a leak from laboratories, and they, in turn, are almost all funded from the budget of the US Department of Defense.*" To this I will add that Ukraine in this respect is more dangerous for us than Armenia, because some laboratories are the first to be located very close to the border of the Russian Federation.

***Today it is known exactly about the laboratories that are located in Odessa, Vinnitsa, Uzhgorod, Lviv (three), Kharkiv, Kiev (also three), Kherson, Ternopil, Dnepropetrovsk, as well as near Lugansk and the border with the Crimea.*** Only those laboratories that were officially recognized by the United States in the spring of 2020 are listed. Until that time, the SBU, responding to requests from deputies of the Verkhovna Rada, denied the presence of foreign biological laboratories on the territory of Ukraine.

In 2005, the Pentagon and the Ukrainian Ministry of Health signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of biological research. Opposition parties managed in 2013 to pass through the Verkhovna Rada a decision to stop such "cooperation", but the coup d'état in Kiev in February 2014 prevented the implementation of this decision. The "cooperation" continued. In Kharkiv, where one of the Pentagon's reference laboratories is located, in January 2016, 20 Ukrainian soldiers died of swine flu, another 200 were hospitalized. The infection began to spread to other areas, by March of the same year, 364 people died of swine flu in Ukraine... Outbreaks of African swine fever (ASF) have become regular. In 2019, an outbreak of the disease was recorded, "similar in symptoms to the plague." Then Russia sharply tightened control on the Ukrainian border.

And in the event of serious incidents, the U.S. government will get away with it. After all, the Pentagon's involvement in the work of laboratories is not direct, the US Department of Defense acts through private executors who receive money from the US budget. Therefore, I assume that at certain stages of the special military operation of the Russian armed forces currently being conducted in Ukraine, specialists will act who, taking into account all precautionary measures, will be engaged in "demining" of dangerous objects.

*Khukhozhnik: Igor Yaroshenok*

Several trending TWITTER topics:



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The DoD Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) was targeted by social media bots in the Ukraine. This has been going on f

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Полковник США удалил с сайта инфо о разработке технологий для защиты от ракетной войны. Вспомогательные данные

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Bio warfare scientists using diplomatic cover test man-made viruses at Pentagon facilities, 10 countries across the glo

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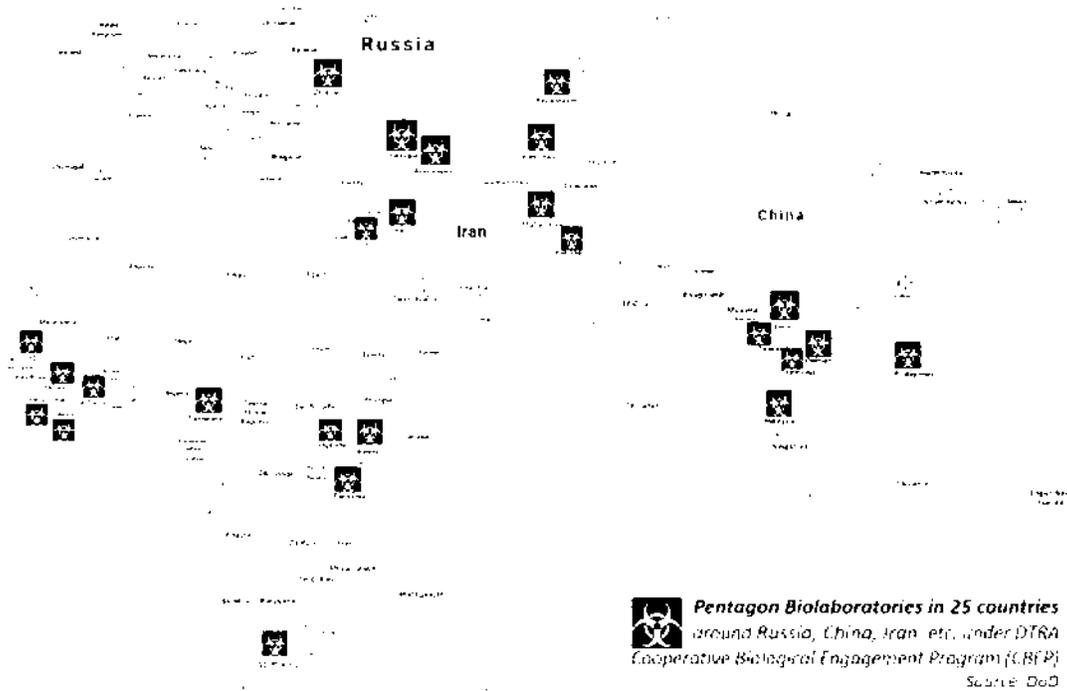
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JacSarobah

@CImBfQrTheStQrm

The DoD Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) has funded 11 bio-laboratories in the Ukraine. This has been going on for decades. Here are the locations, copies of agreements, all sourced:



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V Есенин Z RetweetedNatalie<sup>2</sup>@AnomaliaSPB ! Посольство США удалило с сайта инф.об открытии биологической лаборатории на Украине:Агентство по сокращению военной угрозы минобороны США (DTRA) в октябре 2021 года опубликовало на сайте американских госзакупок допсоглашение о «борьбе с особо опасными патогенами». =>Translated from Russian by ! The US Embassy removed information about the opening of a biological laboratory in Ukraine from the website: The US Department of Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in October 2021 published on the US government procurement website an additional agreement on the "fight against especially dangerous pathogens" . =>6:16 AM · Feb 26, 2022·Twitter Web App7 Retweets1 Quote Tweet5 Likes



**DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY  
8725 JOHN J. KINGMAN ROAD, STOP 6201 FORT  
BELVOIR, VA 22060-6201**

28 July 2021

**JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY  
AMENDMENT**

**1. Nature and/or Description of Action**

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) proposes to procure, without using full and open competition, remediation, commissioning, endurance run, and required training for the State Scientific Research Institute of Laboratory Diagnostics and Veterinary-Sanitary Expertise (Kyiv IID) and the State Service of Ukraine for Food Safety and Consumer Protection Regional Diagnostic Laboratory (Odesa RDL). This procurement action would occur as a modification of CTR Integrating Contract (CTRIC) III Task Order HDTRA1-20-F-0054 as implemented by Jacobs/CH2M Hill (CH2M) whose period of performance (PoP) is 01 July 2020 through 30 June 30 2023. This acquisition would be an exception to the FAR 16.5 "Fair Opportunity" process. The planned requirement will be procured under a bilateral modification P00002.

This EFTO is an amendment the EFTO approved by the Competition Advocate on March 18, 2021. The expected value of the previously approved EFTO was approximately [REDACTED]. The expected dollar increase of this EFTO is approximately [REDACTED]. The revised expected total dollar value of this EFTO is \$3,615,812.81. The EFTO authority, rationale, and period of performance has not changed and the market research conducted for this effort remains valid and unchanged.

**2. Description of the Supplies/Services Required**

For this acquisition, BTRP requires CH2M to remediate all deficiencies identified in each laboratory's site assessment report and complete any remaining equipment installation in order to commission and operationalize both facilities to be compliant with the local and the World Health Organization standards to which each facility was designed. The original EFTO was based on a PoP of seven months. (This amendment includes 7 months of additional work) (a total PoP of 14 months) as well as costs for construction warranties for the Kyiv and Odesa laboratories in Ukraine, which were not included in the original EFTO. The Government Cost Estimate (GCE) is [REDACTED], which is approximately thirty-one percent of the total task order award.



Cyril Chendev  
@CyrilChendev



"The DTRA activities in  and  fall under the protection of special bilateral agreements. According to these agreements, Georgia and Ukraine shall hold harmless, bring no legal proceedings and indemnify the  and its personnel, contractors and contractors' personnel.. 1/2"

the Government of the United States of America  
Requirements Related to Assistance.

of legal proceedings and claims, other than  
America and its personnel, contractors and  
persons in Georgia, arising out of activities

6:40 AM · Feb 26, 2022 · Twitter Web App



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Cyril Chendev @CyrilChendev · 1h



Replying to

"for damage to property, or death or injury to any persons in Georgia and Ukraine, arising out of activities under this Agreement. If DTRA-sponsored scientists cause deaths or injuries to the local population they cannot be held to account. 2/2"



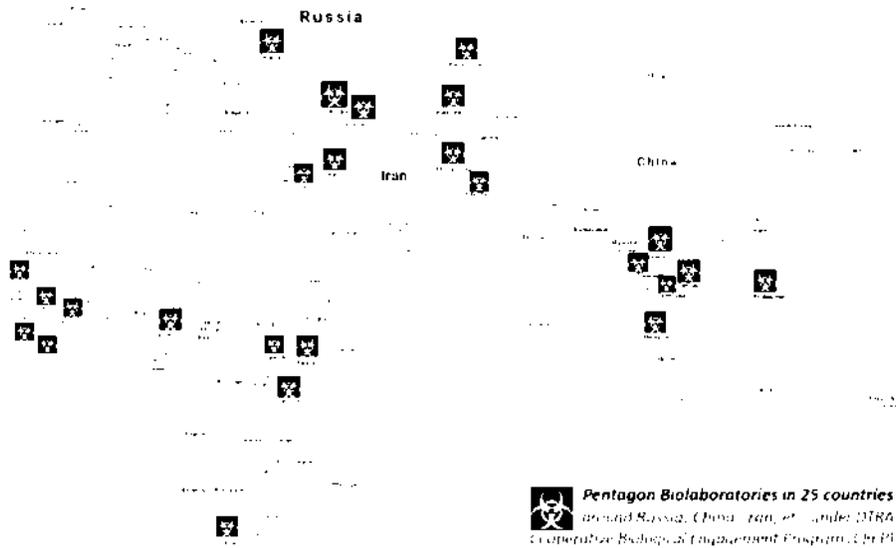
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**Blue Canaries**  
@CanariesBlue



5. Bio warfare scientists using diplomatic cover test man-made viruses at Pentagon bio labs in 25 countries across the world. These US bio-laboratories are funded by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) under a \$ 2.1 billion military program...



siview.media

US ran gruesome bioweapon research in over 25 countries. Wuhan, tip of an ic...  
The US Army regularly produces deadly viruses, bacteria and toxins in direct violation of the UN Convention on the prohibition of Biological Weapons

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@CyrilChendev



"... The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) has funded a similar project involving soldiers in Ukraine code-named UP-8: The spread of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) virus and hantaviruses in Ukraine..."

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**de nachtzuster onderzoekt**

@Nachtzuster2

23/11/15 - Het Pentagon financiert wereldwijd 25 overzeese laboratoriums waar word gewerkt aan biologische wapens

die worden gefinancierd door het Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)



↻ Curious Retweeted



**James 2.0**

@Chardwa13



The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) has outsourced much of the work under the military program to private companies, which are not held accountable to Congress, and which can operate more freely and move around the rule of law.

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Kwanghoon Seok

@khoonseok

...

U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) has been funding lots of bio researches, such as infectious diseases from bats, tropical mosquito & ticks, in Georgia & Ukraine. I'm trying to believe the research projects must have been for "humanitarian aid".

「防疫」(bio)の「研究」(research)は「人道」(humanitarian)の「援助」(aid)のため



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**George Webb - Investigative Journalist**

@RealGeorgeWebb1



We have been following virus “live exercises” out of Ft Belvoir and DTRA for five years. Are we sure DTRA doesn’t test on US soldiers? Dilyana outlines two new DTRA “live exercises” in Ukraine and Georgia.



without being diplomats. This unit is subordinate to the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR).

Both countries are considered the most loyal US partners in the region with a number of Pentagon programs being implemented in their territory. One of them is the Department of Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Biological engagement program which includes research on bio weapons: the spread of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) virus and hantaviruses in Ukraine and the potential need for differential diagnosis in patients with suspected leptospirosis. The project started in 2017 and was extended few times until 2020, internal documents show.

According to the project's description, blood

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**Divergente**

@Divergente\_4528



Otro contratista de la DTRA que opera en Ucrania es CH2M Hill. La empresa estadounidense se ha adjudicado un contrato de 22,8 millones de dólares (2020-2023) para la reconstrucción y el equipamiento de dos biolaboratorios

o e

Another DTRA contractor operating in Ukraine is CH2M Hill. The American company has been awarded a 22.8 million dollar contract (2020-2023) for the reconstruction and equipping of two bio-laboratories

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Armi batteriologiche: è polemica sui laboratori Usa in Ucraina La costruzione di otto laboratori biologici segreti USA in Ucraina sarebbe stata effettuata dalla Defense Threat Reduction Agency americana (DTRA), che è direttamente subordinata al Pentagono

https://www.opinione-pubblica.com/

Bacteriological weapons: controversy over US laboratories in Ukraine The construction of eight secret US biological laboratories in Ukraine would have been carried out by the American Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), which is directly subordinate to the Pentagon



opinione-pubblica.com

Armi batteriologiche: è polemica sui laboratori Usa in Ucraina – l'Opinione Pub...

L'opposizione ucraina ha pubblicato un appello al presidente Zelensky che chiede chiarezza sui laboratori aperti dagli Stati Uniti in Ucraina

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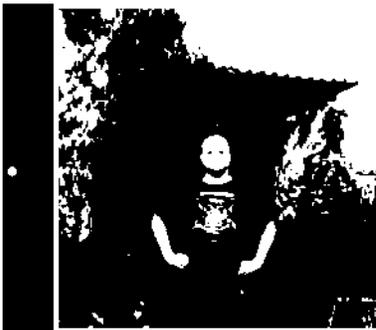
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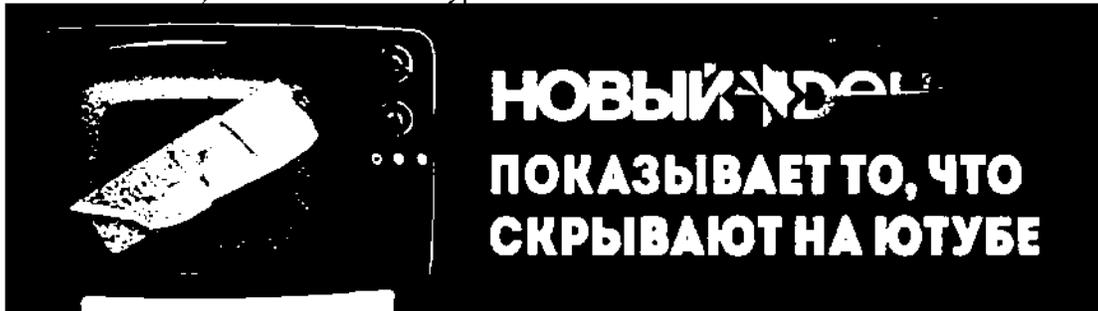
"The tasks of demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine will be completed soon enough"



Alexey Ivanov



Severodonetsk (the administrative center of the Districts occupied by the Ukies of the Luhansk region; the center of the chemical industry on the left bank of the Seversky Donets River; more than 100,000 inhabitants; an integral part of the 380,000-strong Lysychansk-Severodonetsk agglomeration), Starobilsk (also in the Luhansk region; 16,000 inhabitants) and the urban-type settlement of Trekhizbenka were liberated.



Military units of the Donetsk People's Republic inflicted significant damage on Nazi battalions and reached Volnovakha, an important transport hub located on the H20 Slavyansk-Donetsk-Mariupol highway. The official representative of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Major General Igor Konashenkov: *"During the hostilities, a large number of weapons supplied by Western countries to Ukraine over the past few months were seized. Among the trophies are American Javelin anti-tank missile systems and British NLAW missile systems."*

The DPR authorities warned the Armed Forces of Ukraine about the last chance to lay down their arms. *"Time is short. Those of the Ukrainian security forces who did not lay down their arms will be destroyed,"* dpr head Denis Pushilin said.

In view of the diversity of voices on the situation in Melitopol, the Zvezda TV channel reports: *"After the landing of the marines in the area of the village of Azovskoye (Ukraine), Russian units made a march and, meeting no resistance, entered*

*Melitopol. When moving around the city, Melitopol residents greeted Russian servicemen, and some older citizens took to the streets with red flags. "*

*"Russian troops moved to the Azov coast. The group that took Melitopol went to Berdyansk. Here we passed Primorskoye," Donbass Today reports.*

*Ukrop media complain that Russian armored vehicles travel around the city of Sumy (the administrative center of the Sumy region; 260 thousand inhabitants, with the suburbs - about 400 thousand inhabitants). "like at home".*

*Missile strikes were carried out on the military airfield of Starokostiantyniv in the Khmelnytsky region (where bayraktar TB2 acquired in Turkey are based), on the location of the 831st fighter aviation brigade of the tactical aviation of the air command "Skhid" at the mirgorod airfield of the Poltava region, on the fuel base of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Kulinichi near Kharkiv, on the military airfield Kulbakino and fuel depots in Mykolaiv (then helicopters landed the landing), on military warehouses in Petrodolinsky, Odessa region. Ukrovoyaks blew up the bridge between Mykolaiv and Odessa regions.*

*By the evening of February 25, Russian troops had disabled 211 military infrastructure facilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including 17 control points and communication centers, 19 anti-aircraft missile systems of 39 radar stations.*

*Military officer Alexander Kots: "Biden, so you and so! I cheated!" a colleague swears, jumping out of the car and going ankle-deep into the fertile Donbas chernozem. The ground, as promised by the US president, did not freeze, but Russia's military special operation still began. Endless columns of armored vehicles of the DPR army stretch to the west and south-west by the roads with which almost 80 years ago their grandfathers liberated the Donbass from fascist occupation. And similarly, they kneaded with soldier's boots a "chwaku" scattered under the snow and tank tracks. Strike forces are grouped to advance in one of the conquered villages. The men are about to go into battle, and they are standing with cigarettes, laughing. It rumbles around, as during the Donbass operation of 1943, but gradually the artillery noise becomes a background. "*

*Voenkor Yevgeny Poddubny: "Success is developing in all areas of the movement of troops. The Armed Forces of Russia, the DPR, the LPR manage to act in a jeweler's way in a fire defeat. We are still polite people, kind with our fists, we beat the painful, but guilty. The southern front of the DPR is heavy. The Armed Forces of Ukraine snap, well, as usual they fight with civilians in residential areas. You have to push. The 53rd brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine decided not to surrender, now they will have to die. They were the ones who hit Dokuchaevsk today. They really hit where there is no VPU of the DPR grouping and other military purposes. Burn them in hell. In general, cotton from the nats. Baht, Right Sector\*, other shvali that killed people for 8 years, nothing will help. There's not even going to be anywhere to go."*

*Voenkor, musician Akim Apachev: "Terrorists of the Azov group banned in Russia\* in closed chatiks in panic disperse rumors about the landing of the Richard Wagner Orchestra near Mariupol. If the information is confirmed, Mariupol will be released to beautiful classical music."*

Kiev... It is clear that the uncontrolled distribution of thousands of assault rifles (as well as grenades) to all comers was to come to an end very soon. And that's what happened. From Kiev it is reported that "looters under the guise of a Volkssturm from the territorial defense began to rob the inhabitants of the city", that there are "shootings all over Kiev". Spontaneous battles. Chaos. Voenkor Yuriy Kotenok: "Wild fun in Kiev! After the distribution of more than 20k barrels in the city, the "hussar holiday" began. There are reports of massive cases of robberies of mini- and supermarkets, or rather what is left there. There is shooting in the streets. To the leaders of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other cocaine-pederastic public in power - the Darwin Prize!" TG-channel "Turned in war": "No comments. You can not go in, surround and watch like in a zoo." Monkeys with grenades, literally. TG-channel Daily War: "Kyiv. Battles are taking place in Troyeshchyna, Solomensky district (Zhulyany) and near Vasylkiv, where the air base is located. Moreover, according to locals, near the air base, the Russian military changed (!) in the uniform of the National Police and with the help of this trick destroyed the checkpoint of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Then a group of Russian soldiers on one (!) truck drove into the territory of the air base. There are still more questions than answers. One thing is for sure. In the city there are heavy battles between our guys, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the NSU, the Volkssturm and bandits. Everybody against everybody." ANNA-NEWS: "The armed formations of the Kiev 'resistance' here and there open fire on everyone who seems to them to be 'Russian saboteurs'."



Graham Phillips

"В правительственном квартале Киева слышна стрельба"

Пока мы ждем настоящих фото есть вот 😏



There are rumors about the flight abroad of the parochial SBUshny "journalist" Dmitry Gordon, who promised to fight to the last cartridge and destroy the Russian military. Curious information leads the publication "Octagon": *"The military special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine coincided with the planned launch of American military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa. Perhaps this launch was the deadline for the Kremlin. Back in 2017-2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed to the danger of developing biological weapons near the borders of the Russian Federation, and also publicly worried about the "purposeful and professional"*

collection of Russian biomaterials by foreigners. Then the press actively discussed the possibility of creating genetic weapons. Genetic technologies in general are a sensitive and relevant topic for the president. And these new U.S.-Ukrainian high-tech laboratories specialize in modern biological weapons. The Agency for the Reduction of the Military Threat of the US Department of Defense (DTRA) in October 2021 published on the website of the US public procurement an additional agreement on "combating especially dangerous pathogens." The document concerns the final stage of work on the launch of two biological laboratories - in Kiev and Odessa. It deals with the equipment, training of personnel and commissioning of facilities. The cost of the work is \$ 3.6 million, however, a number of figures in the document are hidden for reasons of secrecy. It is also reported about more than 90 percent readiness of laboratories and a seven-month delay in the completion of the project - from the date of signing the document (July 2021) to the end of February 2022. The labs were built in accordance with the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. This Pentagon program started in 1991 and is aimed against Russia and the countries of the former USSR. The creation of laboratories was funded within the framework of one of five subprograms - Biological (Biological Threat Reduction Program). Active cooperation between Ukraine and the United States in these areas began after the first Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in 2005. Two new laboratories are being created on the basis of the Kyiv State Research Institute for Laboratory Diagnostics and Veterinary and Sanitary Expertise and the Odessa Division of the State Service of Ukraine for Food Safety and Consumer Protection. In Odessa, the main part of the Ukrainian collection of endemic strains of pathogens of dangerous diseases is stored. The buildings of new biological laboratories in Kyiv and Odessa were built in 2019, but were not put into operation. The founder of the project is considered to be the former head of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health Ulyana Suprun (a US citizen, so she worked in the status of an acting one), who received the nickname "Doctor Death". Work under the contract is carried out by an experienced contractor of the US government - the Jacobs group, more precisely, its division CH2M Hill. The need for an additional agreement is justified by additional costs and delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The notice makes it clear that this project is important and urgent for the U.S. government: further potential delays are called unacceptable, and "DTRA demands to urgently complete and hand over both laboratories in order to ensure the active and safe implementation of the DTRA mission." "Both facilities belong to the Government of Ukraine and are under its protection, but neither of them currently performs active biological work, since DTRA asked the Ukrainian authorities not to start work until the completion of acceptance and final work," the procurement materials say. It also talks about the risk that Ukrainian virologists may begin to operate and modify laboratories without the knowledge of DTRA. The Americans fear that from Kiev and Odessa there may be "theft or damage to equipment." And, indeed, some excesses have already arisen. In the summer of 2021, an employee of the above-mentioned Kyiv Research Institute took out a sample of a dangerous virus (Newcastle bird disease) from the institution and stored it in an ordinary refrigerator in her own apartment, intending to sell it. "

**Политолог Денис Тукмаков: Теперь о моём личном отношении к происходящему.**

1. Всем, кто нацепил на себя флажок Украины, кому неважно, кто днас за Россией, я рекомендую как проклятых. Не ругаюсь с ними, не спорю, не нападаю, просто убить их в Донбассе и Днепропетровске. Зачем?

Привыканию быть на стороне России еще нужно заслужить.

2. За предвзвращением ВТО РФ нагло лгут, лгут, без доказательств и доказательств. Не пытайтесь издать ни ВСУ, ни местным жителям восемь лет прожившим под маданной пропагандой. Не считая мать.

3. Когда же все закончится? Когда надо, тогда и закончится. И — как надо.

4. Что бы ни случилось на Украине, куда бы что ни полетело, где бы что ни взорвалось, маяться за это я не собираюсь. И тем более не буду осуждать наших. Вина за любую кровь — на Киевских убийцах, точка.

5. Санкции? Ну, санкции, и что? Дело дане не в том, что ни национализму, злупости и угоржает импортозамещение. Просто глупо злиться на зпено за то, что та угорается. Особенно, когда ей не хватает яда чтобы убить.

6. Сама Украина в моих глазах — это незаконно отторкнутая часть России. Не государство. И уж точно не суверенное государство. Это за исключением никому не нужной Галиции — истонно русская земля, которая рано или поздно вернется обратно.

7. Сколько времени на это уйдет, я понятия не имею. Может, неделя. Может, несколько десятилетий. Неважно. Важно лишь то, что это случится. Потому что наше дело правое. Враг будет разбит. Победа будет за нами.

***"The tasks of demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine will be completed soon enough,"*** said Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN.

\* a terrorist group banned in Russia

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Tags events:

[donbass](#) [novorossiya](#) [ukraine](#) [special operation](#) [liberation](#)

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2



## **Man in the Rain**

35 minutes ago

The U.S. Embassy has removed documents about biolaboratories in Kiev and Odessa from the official website. But the Internet, as they say, remembers everything. And the media managed to discover and reveal the facts about American biological laboratories.

"Octagon" drew attention to the fact that the Russian military special operation in Ukraine announced by President Vladimir Putin "coincided in time with the planned launch of American military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa." Journalists did not rule out that this was the "deadline for the Kremlin."

But a few years ago, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned of the danger of developing biological weapons near the borders of our country. In particular, the purposeful collection of biomaterial of Russian citizens by foreign specialists caused alarm.

At one time, while still a deputy of the State Duma, Nikolai Zemtsov on the air of Tsargrad dwelled in detail on the problem of collecting genetic material in Russia for further research in some secret laboratories. He also recalled the case of pathologist Oksana Paklina:

"She was caught heading the pathology department, just taking samples and handing them over," said a guest in the studio of the First Russian. - It turns out that this is an extensive network that transports samples, simultaneously corrupting our doctors [...]. Somewhere in some research centers there are dangerous biological weapons of selective action, which, of course, are aimed at us. "

The speaker also recalled that in order to create accurate biological weapons, "it is necessary to obtain many tissue samples."

"And we have a large country, many ethnic groups, so they collect the appropriate biomaterials to then send them to those laboratories where biological weapons are forged," Zemtsov explained.

Political strategist Marat Bashirov in the Telegram channel "Politjoystik" analyzed and commented on the available information: "That is, in addition to the nuclear threat from Zelensky, we were also preparing bioextermination."

And this is not a joke, if we take into account the official data. The Agency for the Reduction of the Military Threat of the US Department of Defense (DTRA) in October last year posted on the website of the US public procurement an additional agreement on "combating especially dangerous pathogens." This document concerned the final stage of work for \$ 3.6 million (although some figures in the document remained classified. - Ed.) on the launch of two biological laboratories in Ukraine. Namely in Kiev and Odessa. Machinery, equipment and personnel were being prepared.



## **TSARGRAD TV Channel**

today at 2:57 pm

The U.S. Embassy has removed documents about biolaboratories in Kiev and Odessa from the official website. However, the media managed to fix the information. Political strategist Marat Bashirov, after analyzing the information, noted that, in addition to the nuclear threat from Zelensky, Russia was also "preparing bio-extirmination."



Did Russia prepare bio-extirmination? Facts about American laboratories in Kiev and Odessa revealed



Gilyana Abushinova

! The US Embassy removed information from the site about the opening of a biological laboratory in Ukraine:

the Agency for the Reduction of the Military Threat of the US Department of Defense (DTRA) in October 2021 published an additional agreement on the website of us public procurement on "combating especially dangerous pathogens." The document concerns the final stage of work on the launch of two biological laboratories - in Kiev and Odessa. It deals with the equipment, training of personnel and commissioning of facilities. The cost of the work is \$ 3.6 million, however, a number of figures in the document are hidden for reasons of secrecy. It is also reported about the more than 90 percent readiness of laboratories and a seven-month delay in the completion of the project (we highlighted in red) - from the date of signing the document (July 2021) to the end of February 2022.

сайта информацию об открытии биологической лаборатории на Украине

Агентство по сокращению военной угрозы Минобороны США (DTRA) в октябре 2021 года опубликовало на сайте американских госзакупок дополнительное соглашение о «борьбе с особо опасными патогенами». Документ касается завершающего этапа работ по запуску двух биолaborаторий – в Киеве и Одессе. В нем идет речь об оснащении, тренинге персонала и вводе объектов в эксплуатацию. Стоимость работ составляет 3,6 млн долларов, причем ряд цифр в документе скрыт из соображений секретности. Также сообщается о более чем 90-процентной



DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY  
8735 JOHN J. KINGMAN ROAD, STEW 6201 FORT  
BELVOIR VA 22060-6201

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AN EXERCISE OF CONTRACTOR RIGHTS  
(AMN/MS/1)

1. Nature and Description of Work

The work is for the construction, installation, and commissioning of two biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa, Ukraine. The work includes the procurement and installation of equipment, training of personnel, and the commissioning of the facilities. The cost of the work is \$ 3.6 million. The work is being completed in two phases. The first phase is the construction and installation of the laboratories. The second phase is the training of personnel and the commissioning of the facilities. The work is being completed by the end of February 2022.

2. Description of the Supply Contract Rights

The contractor has the right to exercise its contract rights under the contract. The contractor has the right to request a change order, to request a contract modification, and to request a contract termination. The contractor has the right to request a contract extension, to request a contract amendment, and to request a contract cancellation. The contractor has the right to request a contract renewal, to request a contract re-issuance, and to request a contract re-award.

influenza (avian flu) that is not transmitted between humans. However, NIH projects aim to make avian influenza viruses capable of transmitting between mammals and to assess their pandemic potential as a possible threat to humans. Gain of function (GoF) studies improve a pathogen's ability to cause disease by increasing its virulence and transmissibility. These dangerous experiments have not ended even though COVID-19 has been suspected to be the result of such NIH-funded GoF research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Instead of ending all GoF research since the beginning of the pandemic, the NIH and its sub-agency – the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), continued their financial support for the following GoF studies: Transmissibility of avian influenza viruses in mammals (NIAID support ended in August 2021); Centres of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance (CEIRS) (NIAID support ended in March 2021). The third: Mimicking the evolution to define the mechanisms of aerial transmission of H7N9 viruses, began on September 2, 2021 and continues. H5N1, a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, is not transmitted between mammals. Researchers aim to make the virus capable of being transmitted in order to assess its pandemic potential. According to the project description, "no sustained human-to-human transmission has yet been reported. Several attempts in the past to select transmissible H5 viruses (which are not usually transmitted between mammals) have not been successful." That's why the researchers "plan to smuggle non-transmissible viruses from different gene pools into ferrets (an established model of influenza virus transmission) to select transmissible mutants." Selected mutations will be characterized for their biological effects and the potential for transmission of H5N1 in mammals. According to the description provided for project 1R21AI144135-01: "Viruses of the Asian H7N9 lineage of avian influenza (VIA)... have not spread to humans; however, there is a strong potential for these viruses to evolve to be transmitted by air and cause a pandemic... Viruses carrying H7N9 HA and NA on the skeleton of the A/PR8 vaccine will be generated. Mutations will be introduced into the HA and NA gene segments... we will evaluate the replication kinetics of recombinant H7N9-A/PR8 viruses for their growth in primary epithelial cells of the human respiratory tract. Primary human cells will include nasal, tracheal, bronchial and small airway epithelial cells. The researchers want to make the virus capable of being transmitted by air in order to assess the pandemic potential of H7N9 viruses. These latest NIH-funded experiments are only a small part of many controversial laboratory studies approved by the agency. One of them was the risky research on the bat coronavirus in China, which is under investigation in the United States for a possible link to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite repeated denials by NIAID Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, including before Congress, the NIH finally acknowledged last year that the United States had funded the GoF's research into bat coronaviruses in Wuhan, from where the pandemic began and spread around the world. The \$3.7 million grant went to the U.S. nonprofit EcoHealth Alliance. In a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives, the NIH states that EcoHealth Alliance violated the terms and conditions of the NIH AI110964 grant and did not report all of its activities in China. According to the NIH letter, a "limited experiment" was conducted to test whether "advanced proteins from naturally occurring bat coronaviruses circulating in China were able to bind to the human ACE2 receptor in a mouse model." It's much more important than Dr. Fauci – it involves the entire U.S. government: U.S. Congressman Following the release of a House Intelligence Committee report stating that "significant circumstantial evidence" supports the hypothesis of a laboratory leak, Rep. Mike Gallagher urged members of Congress and members of the media to take a closer look at the additional U.S. funding flows that sent money from taxpayers to EcoHealth Alliance. According to the congressman, "If you start doing basic research, it quickly becomes clear that it's much more important than Dr. Fauci — it involves the entire U.S. government." EcoHealth Alliance has received a total of \$112.1 million in funding from the U.S. government since 2003, according to information obtained from the U.S. Federal Contract Registry. Among its main sponsors are the NIH via NIAID and the Pentagon via the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The objectives of the projects are the discovery and assessment of viruses with pandemic potential mainly in Africa and Asia. Coronavirus research in a controversial Pentagon biolab in Georgia EcoHealth Alliance has implemented a number of military biological research programs for the Pentagon. In 2017, the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) commissioned EcoHealth Alliance with a \$6.5 million project to collect and isolate coronaviruses from 5,000 bats in West Asia. The duration of the program is 5 years (2017-2022) with the Lugar Center, the Pentagon's biolaboratory in the Republic of Georgia, being the local laboratory for this genetic research. The objectives of the project are: 1. Capture and sample 5,000 bats non-lethally; 2. Collect 20,000 samples (i.e. oral and rectal swabs and/or feces and blood) and screen for CoV using consensual PCR in regional laboratories in Georgia and Jordan. According to the project presentation, Eco Health Alliance has already sampled 270 bats of 9 species in three West Asian countries: 90 individual bats in Turkey (August 2018), Georgia (September 2018) and Jordan (October 2018). The Lugar Center, which is the partner laboratory for this research, is a \$180 million Pentagon biolaboratory located in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. It was operated by a special unit of the US Army - USAMRU-G, whose personnel were given diplomatic immunity to search for viruses without being diplomatic. The Lugar Center has become famous in recent years for its controversial activities, laboratory incidents and scandals surrounding U.S. drug giant Gilead's hepatitis C program in Georgia, which resulted in the deaths of at least 248 patients. The cause of death in the majority of cases was listed as unknown, according to internal documents. There is no public information about the results of the research done by the EcoHealth Alliance at the Pentagon's Lugar Center, nor about the viruses that have been discovered and the genome experiments that have been carried out. \$5,000 for a black market bat The South Ossetia State Security Committee has raised public awareness of the EcoHealth Alliance bat research project in neighboring Georgia after a Georgian national Khvicha Mgebrishvili was arrested on July 3, 2020 near the village of Adzisar in the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia for violating the state border. During interrogation by the KGB South Ossetian border agents,

he explained that he was interested in a bat colony in the villages of Artseu and Grom in the Tskhinvali region. According to Mgebrishvili, he intended to capture the so-called "bat cocoons" and sell them in Georgia for \$5,000 each. These species are listed in the Red Book and their hunting is punishable by prison in South Ossetia. Local authorities accused neighboring Georgia of suspicious activity, stating that "the Lugar Center for Public Health Research has shown increased interest in the Bat population of South Ossetia since 2012." As always, the Lugar Center and the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi have denied all allegations of fake news and conspiracy theory. In response to all the scandals surrounding the Lugar Center and the growing distrust of Georgians, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi launched a propaganda campaign to educate the local population with animated films on Georgian social media and TV channels. All information about the Lugar Center, with the exception of the government's official account, has been labeled "fake news," "disinformation," and "conspiracy theories." The Lugar Center was given by Western media as an example in the fight against the novel coronavirus, even though COVID-ravaged Georgia ranks seventh globally among countries with the highest number of deaths per million this month. I am a freelance journalist and I do not work for governments or corporations. If you'd like to support my work, visit the Donate or Become a Volunteer page. Thank you! If you would like to follow me on Telegram, please subscribe to the Arms Watch Telegram channel using the link: <https://t.me/armswatch>

•

### **To whom in Russia**

Forwarded from **Politjoystic (Marat Bashirov)**

That is, in addition to the nuclear threat from Zelensky, we were also preparing bio-extermination.

...

<https://t.me/obrazbuduschego2/8352>

#### **Telegram**

##### **About the future**

The military special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine coincided with the planned launch of US military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa, The Octagon found out. Perhaps this launch was the deadline for the Kremlin. Russian President Vladimir Putin back in 2017-2018...

[t.me/komunarusssia/3619](https://t.me/komunarusssia/3619)

56 Feb 26 at 05:58



Olga Budina

*«. We are talking about cooperation between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the US Department of Defense (Pentagon). An institution like DTRA has quite specific military tasks – testing the latest American developments on a specific gene pool – people, animals and plants. This refers to the creation of biological agents - bacteria and viruses. It is clear that this is the activity of US military virologists, they work in the gray zone. The Americans do not conduct such dangerous experiments on their territory, but [they do it] where they have good positions, where the government is corrupt and controlled by them. And this document only confirms all this...»*

[https://octagon.media/vojna\\_specoperaciya\\_rf\\_sovpala\\_s\\_zapuskom\\_voennyx\\_laboratorij\\_saha\\_na\\_ukraine.htm](https://octagon.media/vojna_specoperaciya_rf_sovpala_s_zapuskom_voennyx_laboratorij_saha_na_ukraine.htm)

octagon.media

**The special operation of the Russian Federation coincided with the launch of US military laboratories in Ukraine**



The military special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine coincided with the planned launch of US military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa, The Octagon found out. Perhaps this launch was the deadline for the Kremlin.

https://youtu.be/1ma12017

Elena Sabelnikova in [Royal Cross Movement \(Chat\)](#)

Forwarded from [Natalia](#)

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biological weapons near the borders of the Russian Federation, and also publicly worried about the "purposeful and professional" collection of Russian biomaterials by foreigners. Then the press actively discussed the possibility of creating genetic weapons. Genetic technologies in general are a sensitive and relevant topic for the president. And these new U.S.-Ukrainian high-tech laboratories specialize in modern biological weapons.

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disease) from the institution and stored it in an ordinary refrigerator in her own apartment, intending to sell it.

Learn more:

[t.me/tsarkrest\\_chat/83034](https://t.me/tsarkrest_chat/83034)



The results of 40 years of work of the Lugar Research Center for Public Health (USA) in Tbilisi are especially visible in the southern regions of Russia. Under the distribution of the invasion of quarantine pests (ABB, marbled bug ...) felt not only they and Abkhazia.

Georgia. But *shoot yourself in the foot* becomes a generally accepted flash mob for the leadership of the countries of the former USSR. In the information support

demilitarization and decommunization we will **not see multimedia files taken by such laboratories**, neither party to the conflict will make them public. But proofs for close contacts will be obtained, including with the Chernobyl nuclear power plant taken under protection. We remember well *plutonium after Fukushima*, the production of which in the past nuclear bombing of Japan, was carefully hidden by the government that accepted surrender in 1945. [more info](#)

[https://t.me/tsarkrest\\_chat/83034](https://t.me/tsarkrest_chat/83034)





Political scientist Gennady Podlesny

A possible "side effect" of SVO.

The seizure of US biological laboratories in Ukraine by Russian troops can give an answer - where COVID came from...

[https://t.me/informburo\\_sfd/140543](https://t.me/informburo_sfd/140543)

Telegram

**InformBureau-Southern Federal District** <sup>z</sup>

► Russia's military special operation in Ukraine coincided with the planned launch of US military biological laboratories in Kiev and Odessa

Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2017-2018 indicated ...

[archive.org/details/2015](#)



W\_INTEL WIRE (Tier1 OSINT Feed)

**Yes, the same Black & Veatch that project manages US Gov underground facilities**

<https://www.bv.com/projects/btric-ukraine>

Black & Veatch

**BTRIC Ukraine**

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) competitively awarded Black & Veatch Special Projects Corp. (Black & Veatch) one of its Biological Threat Reduction Integrating Contracts (BTRIC) in 2008. The 5-year IDIQ contract (with a 5-year option) has a collective...



t.me/w\_inTEL89



Igor Khristianin in ReadovChat

Secret Pentagon biolaboratories near Russia's borders:  
investigationPentagon

has created biological laboratories in 25 countries around the world. Some of them are located in Georgia and Ukraine. There, military scientists from the United States under diplomatic cover create viruses, bacteria and toxins. Simply put, a new biological weapon. The work is carried out under the Program of Biological Experiments (CBEP). It is quite possible, including for her, for example, in Russia, biomaterial is collected, as Vladimir Putin spoke about back in October. "And for different ethnic groups and people living in different geographical locations of the Russian Federation. Here's the question - this is why it is being done," the Russian president said at the time.

The Biological Participation Program has a budget of \$2.1 billion and is funded by the Security Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The stated goals are the development of virus detection capabilities, the organization of their rapid neutralization. In reality, however, this is not the case. And it is almost impossible to hold the United States accountable for conducting biological experiments that violate the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons. The United States does not recognize the International Criminal Court and has not signed the constitutive Rome Statute. Bulgarian journalist Dilyana Gaytandzhieva writes about this in her investigation for the Center for the Study of the Middle East. She is known for reporting and investigating the supply of Bulgarian weapons to Syrian fighters in the leading Bulgarian newspaper Trud.

<https://readovchat.com/000978>



:

1049Z 26Feb2022

Посольство США удалило документы о биологических лабораториях на Украине с официального сайта.

The US Embassy removed documents about biological laboratories in Ukraine from the official website.

В этом месяце на Украине планировалось к запуску ещё две военных биологические лаборатории США в Киеве и Одессе.

This month, two more US military biological laboratories were planned to be launched in Ukraine - in Kyiv and Odessa.

@SputnikLive

@SputnikLive



10597\_26Feb2022

Вряд ли это можно назвать совпадением. Публичные записи о биолобораториях США на Украине были удалены сегодня около двух часов дня с сайта посольства США.

This can hardly be called a coincidence. Public records of US biolabs in Ukraine were removed from the US embassy website at around 2pm today.

@TheLeagueOfGentlemen

@TheLeagueOfGentlemen



[Ukraine Related Calls: Read More...](#)



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U.S. EMBASSY IN UKRAINE

:

1201Z 26Feb2022

Посольство США удалило документы о биологических лабораториях на Украине с официального сайта

В 2020 году китайское Министерство иностранных дел обвинило Вашингтон в создании на украинской территории 16 биологических лабораторий для "непрозрачных и опасных" исследований и призвало США внести ясность в ситуацию. МИД Украины опроверг эту информацию.

"Такие лаборатории действительно существуют и у нас тоже вызывают озабоченность. И не только на Украине, но и в Грузии", сказал собеседник агентства.

В мае 2020 года издание "Украинские новости" сообщило со ссылкой на Минздрав, что США построили в стране восемь лабораторий, где хранят особо опасные инфекции, якобы чтобы предотвратить создание биологического оружия. По данным СМИ, Агентство уменьшения угрозы при Пентагоне предоставило техническую помощь объектам, построенным или модернизированным при его участии.

Как отмечалось в материале, работы проводили с 2005 по 2014 год: за это время построили и усовершенствовали восемь объектов во Львовской, Закарпатской, Тернопольской, Винницкой, Херсонской, Днепропетровской и Харьковской областях.

Спецоперация РФ совпала с запуском военных лабораторий США на Украине

Агентство по сокращению военной угрозы минобороны США (DTRA) в октябре 2021 года опубликовало на сайте американских госзакупок допсоглашение о «борьбе с особо опасными патогенами». Документ касается завершающего этапа работ по запуску двух биологических лабораторий в Киеве и Одессе. В нём идёт речь об оснащении, тренинге персонала и вводе объектов в эксплуатацию.

Стоимость работ составляет 3,6 млн долларов, впрочем ряд цифр в документе скрыт из соображений

The US Embassy removed documents about biological laboratories in Ukraine from the official website

In 2020, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Washington of establishing 16 biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory for "opaque and dangerous" research and called on the United States to clarify the situation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine denied this information.

"Such laboratories do exist and we are also concerned. And not only in Ukraine, but also in Georgia," the source said.

In May 2020, the Ukrainian News publication reported, citing the Ministry of Health, that the United States built eight laboratories in the country where they store especially dangerous infections, allegedly to prevent the creation of biological weapons. According to media reports, the Pentagon Threat Reduction Agency provided technical assistance to facilities built or upgraded with its participation.

As noted in the material, the work was carried out from 2005 to 2014: during this time, eight facilities were built and improved in Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ternopil, Vinnitsa, Kherson, Dnepropetrovsk and Kharkiv regions.

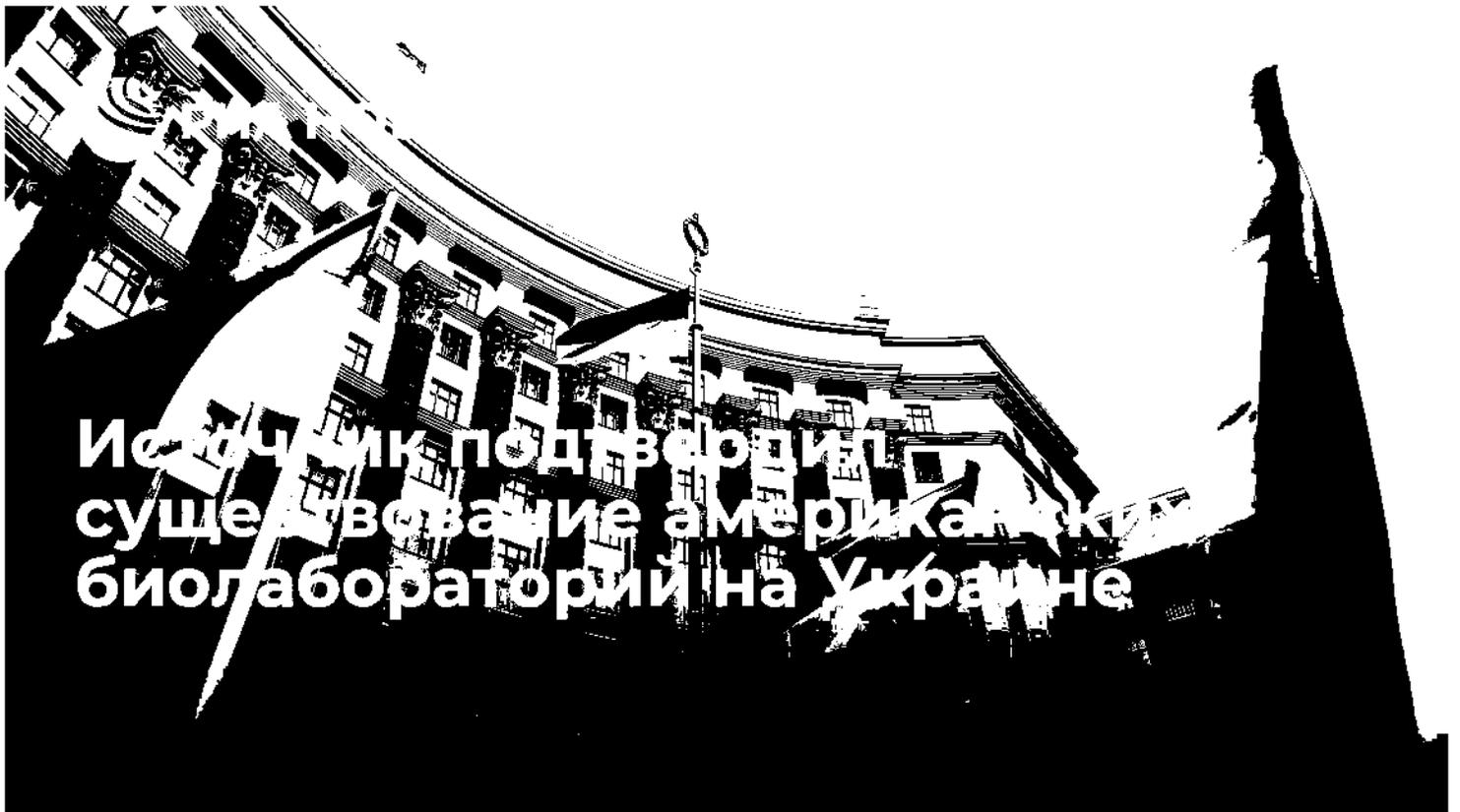
Russian special operation coincided with the launch of US military laboratories in Ukraine

The US Department of Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in October 2021 published an additional agreement on the fight against especially dangerous pathogens on the US government procurement website. The document concerns the final stage of work on the launch of two biological laboratories - in Kyiv and Odessa. It deals with equipment, staff training and commissioning

ажений секретности. Также сообщается о более чем 90-процентной готовности лабораторий и семимесячной задержке завершения проекта.

of facilities.

The cost of the work is 3.6 million dollars, however, a number of figures in the document are hidden for reasons of secrecy. It also reports more than 90 percent availability of laboratories and a seven-month delay in completing the project.



:

1056Z 26Feb2022

Вот некоторые из документов по биолобораториям США на Украине.

Here are some of the documents on US biolabs in Ukraine.

Ранее эта информация была удалена с официального сайта посольства.

Previously, this information was removed from the official website of the embassy.

@SputnikLive

@SputnikLive

**State Regional Laboratory of Veterinary Medicine  
Luhansk Regional Diagnostic Veterinary Laboratory (Luhansk RDVL)  
9a, Krasnodonnaya Str., Luhansk**

**Fact Sheet**

**Technical Assistance Project - Memorandum** - Technical assistance for project for ponds of the State Committee of Veterinary Medicine of Ukraine and National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine.

**Donor** - The Department of Defense of the United States of America, USA.

**Beneficiary/Executive Agent** - The State Committee of Veterinary Medicine of Ukraine, nowadays The State Veterinary and Phytosanitary Service of Ukraine.

**Recipient** - State Regional Laboratory of Veterinary Medicine,  
Address: 9a Krasnodonnaya Str., Luhansk,  
POB: Dr. Valeriy Mykolajewych Bondar, Director.

**Contractor Team** - Integrating Contractor: Bunk & Walsh (Contractor), Project Development Center (designer) & Mediamax (Construction & Equipment supply).

**Design Oversight (Avtornadzor)** - Serhij Wladymyrowych Puh.

**Construction Oversight (Technadzor)** - Dmytro Wiktoryowyh Zvyans.

**Expert Examination of Design Approval** - The Conceptual Design was approved by MoH Central Review Commission on March 15, 2012. The Working Design was approved by Luhansk Director of the Laboratory, Dr. Valeriy Mykolajewych Bondar, on June 06, 2012.

**Construction permit** - The Declaration for start of construction was signed by the Director of Luhansk State Regional Laboratory of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Valeriy Mykolajewych Bondar, and registered at GASK (State Architectural Construction Inspection in Luhansk oblast) on May 31, 2012.

**State Acceptance** - Construction works completed, all furniture and equipment were installed, O&M training materials and ready for final inspection on February 14, 2013.

**Transfer of Custody and Sustainment Memorandum of Understanding** - Transfer of Custody in process.

**EDPS Permit** - Permit for working with Pathogens will be obtained after signing TOC and MoU.

**USG Investment** - Total cost of laboratory: USD\$1,746,412. USD\$1,267,124 for Design & Construction, USD\$479,188 for lab equipment and furniture.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 17:08:51 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA);Tune, Melissa D CIV DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, our media monitors are seeing a substantial uptick in disinformation on DTRA CTR BTRP's projects in Ukraine -- from an average of 50 articles per day to over a thousand in the last 24 hours. Russia is blaming DTRA for a number of outbreaks in the region, as well as for crafting an offensive BW program in Ukraine.

We have also seen reporting from China's Foreign Ministry spokesman echoing Russian charges, which has received extensive coverage in both the Chinese and Russian news and social media circles.

State AVC has a press statement they plan to put out today that OSD provided us an opportunity to review. It hits the right points and draws from the "Break Glass" book DTRA provided to OSD PA and State last week.

We heard today from journalist Matt Field at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Working with DTRA PA, we answered some questions for him last Friday and he stated his intent to submit an article to his editor today. We will watch for it.

Finally, if you have four minutes, here's a briefing on DTRA's activities in Ukraine from the Russian Ministry of Defense, with English subtitles:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_q0qggCl.K0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_q0qggCl.K0)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sun, 10 Apr 2022 23:42:41 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
**REDUCT (USA)**  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Dr. Pope - Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) News Story  
**Attachments:** Ling story1.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,  
Justin Ling with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) published his web piece today. You will recall, this is the video segment with Dr. Pope, on Russian disinformation about the biolabs, which was tape on March 29<sup>th</sup> at our contractor facility.

The video news story aired tonight at 7pm tonight (Apr 10) but it won't be posted online until shortly thereafter (usually less than 2 hours for news broadcasts). Right now, Dr. Pope is featured in a snippet on the webpage.

Dr. Pope's representation of DTRA and the CTR program is timely, relevant and contributed effectively to this story. The material is solid and accurate from a DTRA and DoD contribution standpoint.

Here is the link to the online story.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-russia-bioweapons-theory-1.6412029>

Also attached is the text of the story.

I've notified OSD press desk for inclusion in tomorrow's EB.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS:

## **How a QAnon conspiracy theory about Ukraine bioweapons became mainstream disinformation**

*It started as a fringe belief. Now it's an official stated reason for Russia's invasion*

Justin Ling · for CBC News · Posted: Apr 10, 2022

The bio-level 3 and 4 research lab at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick is seen in this file photo from Sept. 26, 2002. On Feb. 24, a theory emerged that Moscow was out to destroy a clandestine U.S. weapons program in 'biolabs' across Ukraine. (Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images)

More than a quarter of Americans polled at the end of March said they believe that the United States has been developing bioweapons in labs across Ukraine — a conspiracy conceived, crafted and amplified by QAnon and the Russian government.

Five weeks ago, that conspiracy theory was little more than a fringe belief. Today, it is an official stated reason for Russia's brutal invasion. And it could be a sign of what President Vladimir Putin is plotting next.

"There's zero basis in fact for doing anything in bioweapons or any kind of research like that at all," said Robert Pope, a senior official at the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency. He says this pattern goes back to Soviet propaganda, trying to establish that America has been developing weapons to destroy the Russian people.

"This is purely a Russian propaganda effort to try and undermine the work the United States is doing," said Tom Moore, a non-proliferation expert who has worked in the U.S. Senate and at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The smoking gun isn't even a mushroom cloud in this case. It's not even a provable vial of anthrax anywhere. We've gotten rid of all that. This is purely political."

### **It started with a tweet**

Bioweapons remain a firm red line in international war. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union weaponized agents like anthrax and smallpox but never deployed them on any large scale. Anthrax can be deployed against an enemy and be transmitted organically when spores get into the body, while smallpox can spread through person-to-person contact among military personnel or civilians.

The U.S. shuttered its bioweapons research program in the late 1960s, while the Soviets continued their development right up until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Fears of bioweapons research have continued, however.

On Feb. 24, in the hours after Russian airstrikes began hitting military and civilian targets across Ukraine, a theory emerged that Moscow was out to destroy a clandestine U.S. weapons program in "biolabs" across Ukraine.

A tweet by user @WarClandestine claims that the intent of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is to destroy supposed U.S.-backed bioweapon labs. (Twitter/War Clandestine)

In the weeks before the invasion, Twitter user @WarClandestine had largely been tweeting about the occupation taking place in Ottawa. In previous months, the account also promoted QAnon conspiracy theories, telling his followers to trust "the plan" to return former U.S. President Donald Trump to power.

Then the account, run by a user only just recently identified as Jacob Creech, a former member of the Virginia National Guard, shared a map plotting "biolabs" in Ukraine. He cited "speculation" that Russia may be targeting its airstrikes for those labs.

"China and Russia indirectly (and correctly) blamed the U.S. for the [COVID-19] outbreak, and are fearful that the U.S./allies have more viruses (bioweapons) to let out," he wrote.

@WarClandestine's tweets about U.S.-backed biolabs in Ukraine racked up thousands of re-tweets. (Twitter/War Clandestine)

The tweets racked up thousands of retweets. The claims were quickly run, verbatim, on conspiracy website Infowars hours later, with a blaring headline: "Russian Strikes Targeting U.S.-Run Bio-Labs in Ukraine?"

In the days that followed, this conspiracy theory would percolate through a string of anti-vaccine, QAnon, and pro-Russian social media networks. @WarClandestine was suspended by Twitter multiple times, but screengrabs of his tweets were shared widely.

Theories like this are fairly common among those who ascribe to QAnon — which holds that there is a corrupt "deep state" in the U.S., responsible for rigging elections, developing COVID-19, and trafficking children into sex slavery. Only Trump, they believe, has been able to effectively fight this corrupt shadow regime.

In particular, QAnon dogma has long believed that Ukraine is a refuge for deep state actors.

### **Russian propaganda**

The very tenets of @WarClandestine's theory relies on Russian propaganda. When he first launched the theory in late February, he pointed to comments made to a Russian newspaper in 2021 by a close Putin advisor that "more and more biological laboratories under U.S. control are growing considerably in the world and by a strange coincidence, mainly by the Russian and Chinese borders."

The comments echo a concerted effort made by Moscow and Beijing to suggest that the U.S. was responsible for the COVID-19 virus — a push that coincided with mounting domestic criticism of their governments' autocratic handling of the pandemic.

Russia and China have also used the United Nations to allege the U.S. is running a clandestine bioweapons program, in violation of the Biological Weapons Convention.

But experts say Russia and China are keen to deflect criticism of their own programs.

An example of one of many Russian website pushing the bioweapons theory, rusdozor.ru, features an image of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky. (rusdozor.ru)

"They say, 'No, I know you are, but what am I?' That's what they've been doing, in this age of false equivalence, for some time now," said Moore.

All three countries are signatories to the largely non-binding Biological Weapons Convention, but only the United States publishes details about its efforts to comply with it. An independent global health review ranks the U.S. first in the world in terms of biosafety, biosecurity and transparency.

### **Russia makes it 'official'**

On Feb. 27, the Russian Embassy in Sarajevo posted an update to its Facebook page, writing that in addition to Moscow's stated reasons for invading Ukraine, the "demilitarization and denazification" of the

country, it was also because the U.S. was "filling Ukraine with biolabs, which were — very possibly — used to study methods for destroying the Russian people at the genetic level."

@WarClandestine picked up on the news with glee: "My hypothesis was correct!" he wrote on a freshly created Twitter account. The #biolabs hashtag began trending on Twitter and TikTok.

In the days that followed, a raft of Russian-language channels on Telegram, a platform popular in Russia and Ukraine, began sharing posts about these rumoured bioweapons labs. Sputnik News, a Kremlin-run propaganda agency, published a report accusing the government of deleting documents proving the labs' existence.

Russia Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia shows documents during a UN Security Council emergency meeting in New York on March 11, 2022. The Security Council held the meeting at the request of Moscow, after it accused the U.S. of funding research into the development of biological weapons in Ukraine. (Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images)

In early March, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev gave an interview where he mused that Russia did not know who ran or managed Ukraine's biological facilities, and suggested they could lead to an infectious disease outbreak. On March 3, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference that the U.S. had "developed pathogens" in those Ukrainian biolabs.

By March 11, the Russian Ministry of Defence was holding news conferences alleging that the U.S. bioweapons program involved deliberately infecting birds and dispatching them to fly into Russia.

"There's zero basis in fact" for those allegations, Pope said. No credible independent review has backed up these claims.

"There is no conspiracy," Moore said. "There is no man behind the curtain."

### ***WATCH | Robert Pope on how the Russian government spreads disinformation:***

(Robert Pope of the U.S. Defense Department's Defense Threat Reduction Agency describes how the Russian government exploits fear to help spread disinformation. 0:30)

### **'Tiny grains of truth'**

On March 12, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared an infographic on Twitter: It connected two Ukrainians, Ulana and Marko Suprun, to a man in an SS uniform.

"Ukraine's biolabs were funded by the Pentagon to develop biological weapons," the ministry wrote. "These labs in Ukraine were subordinate to the Health Ministry. In the summer of 2016, Barack Obama's Democrat administration sent U.S. national Ulyana Suprun (born and raised in the U.S.) to Ukraine, where she became health minister of Ukraine."

When asked about the tweet in late March, Ulana Suprun laughed. The ministry correctly identified her as the former minister of health for Ukraine; her husband, as the founder of Stop Fake, an anti-disinformation agency; and her father, an American Ukrainian. But that's where the accuracy ends.

The tweet includes a line to Ulana's grandfather: A man in a Nazi SS uniform.

"That's not my grandfather!" she told CBC News from Kyiv.

"What was striking was how they put the story together. It's how disinformation works, right?" she said. "Tiny grains of truth. And then they mash them together."

That's exactly what's at the core of the biolabs conspiracy theory.

***WATCH | Justin Ling on how the conspiracy theory about biolabs in Ukraine went viral:***

Investigative reporter Justin Ling exposes how a conspiracy theory about biolabs in Ukraine started with a single tweet, went viral, exploded into the mainstream and eventually became part of the official Russian narrative to justify its invasion of Ukraine. 1:43

**U.S. biological research in Ukraine**

The U.S. does fund biological research in Ukraine through its Department of Defence — just as it does in dozens of countries around the world.

That program began in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, which maintained an expansive bioweapons program. Two U.S. senators, Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, began worrying about a network of those laboratories that were now the responsibility of newly independent governments with little expertise in biosafety.

Those efforts were eventually consolidated into the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

"These programs represented a really, really, really forward step in an area where the United States and the Soviet Union never really achieved a whole lot of progress," Moore said. He worked for Sen. Lugar for a decade, starting in the early 2000s. "This is why we're doing it today."

A damaged gas mask lies on the pavement at a Russian position which was overran by Ukrainian forces, outside Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday, March 31, 2022. (Vadim Ghirda/The Associated Press)

In its earliest form, the program sent American experts into labs throughout Europe to help local scientists identify dangerous pathogens, and either destroy or better secure them. New labs were built, security protocols were established and staff were trained.

Over time, as the bulk of the bioweapons program was dismantled — "we got rid of what we could co-operatively get rid of," Moore said — the program turned its attention to figuring out how to better monitor and prepare for infectious disease outbreaks.

That included helping those former Soviet states and satellites safely store viruses and bacteria collected from nature.

In 2018, then-Health Minister Suprun embarked on an effort to modernize Ukraine's biosafety and biosecurity system, working with Pope's agency. Those attempts were consistently maligned by Moscow as nefarious.

**Worry of a 'false flag' attack**

On March 8, as U.S. Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the escalating war in Ukraine, Sen. Marco Rubio, in an apparent attempt to rebut the emerging propaganda, asked Nuland: "Does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?"

"Ukraine has biological research facilities," Nuland said, stressing the word "research." What's more, she said, the U.S. government was "quite concerned Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of [them]."

This has been a long-standing concern. When Suprun was health minister, Russian forces seized control of two biological research facilities in the eastern city of Donetsk and an anti-plague research facility in Crimea.

"Every single strain of bacteria or virus has been genetically sequenced and it is identifiable," she said.

The fear was that, should Russia gain access to those samples, it could "release them somewhere in the world and blame Ukraine, because they can be identified as being Ukrainian," she said.

The United Nations says there's no evidence to prove Russia's claim that Ukraine ran biological warfare laboratories with U.S. support. Ukraine expressed concern that Russia's claim could be a 'false flag' tactic designed to allow the Kremlin to use its own biological weapons against Ukrainians. 2:03

The U.S. State Department has repeatedly warned that Russia may be plotting a "false flag" chemical or biological weapons attack. Rubio, at the committee hearing, noted that Russian disinformation outlets were already raising the spectre of a Ukrainian-directed biological weapons attack.

"If there's a biological or chemical weapon incident or attack inside of Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that it would be the Russians that would be behind it?" he asked.

"There is no doubt in my mind, senator," Nuland replied. "And it is a classic Russian technique to blame the other guy for what they're planning to do themselves."

### **'It's a joke'**

The conspiracy theory had gotten so well-established that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky himself addressed it, in an interview with independent Russian journalists at the end of March.

"It's a joke," he said in Russian. "There's nothing for me to explain. There's nothing here. We'd love to, but there's nothing here. No nuclear weapons, no chemical biolaboratories, no chemical weapons. These don't exist."

Zelensky, centre, walks in the town of Bucha, just northwest of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on April 4, 2022. (Ronaldo Schemidt/AFP/Getty Images)

There is also no clear indication that Russia intends to use any kind of non-conventional weapons in Ukraine. Moore says the real utility of this biolabs conspiracy is in the information war.

"This is purely for the consumption of the masses," he said. "This is purely to flood the zone."

But weakening Western resolve has a real strategic benefit for Moscow.

Marko Suprun, who runs the anti-disinformation agency, said Moscow hopes to destroy the "congressional unity" that informs the U.S. response to the war. If even a few politicians take to the biolabs conspiracy theory, he said, "you suddenly slow everything down, and instead of getting more Javelins [anti-tank missiles], you get less Javelins."

"They call it a war of attrition," Marko said. "Disinformation is targeted politics of attrition."

### **Corrections**

- *An earlier version of this story said that anthrax, like smallpox, can be spread through person-to-person contact. In fact, anthrax can be transmitted organically when spores get into the body.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR – JUSTIN LING



Justin Ling is a freelance political journalist based in Ottawa. Justin Ling is a freelance journalist who specializes in covering stories untold, misunderstood, and often missed by the media. He got his start in community journalism in Nova Scotia, before working for a local online news start-up in Montreal. While there, he stumbled upon the existence of a Greek neo-Nazi party quietly fundraising within Quebec, covered civil unrest amid a province-wide student strike, and was even arrested by the city's riot cops. From there, he moved to Ottawa, joining the Parliamentary Press Gallery and joined VICE News as their Canadian political reporter, where he uncovered a massive surveillance effort by Canadian intelligence agencies on Indigenous protesters, revealed the existence of an ill-fated infiltration of a university communist group by Canadian spies, reported on major constitutional issues with federal legislation, and turned the government's treatment of the press into a national issue.

Since he arrived in Toronto, Ling has proved how a major cellphone manufacturer handed over its global decryption key to Canadian law enforcement, documented the existence of a previously-secret watchlist of travellers across the U.S-Canada border, and detailed an extensive lobbying effort in Washington, D.C. by the Trudeau government to preserve its most crucial trade deal. While there, Ling became one of the most effective users of Canada's Access to Information system, using it to consistently break major stories.

Today, Ling is investigating Russian meddling in Canadian politics, a project that has taken him from inside the headquarters of the Department of National Defence to a NATO training base in Latvia. His work has appeared in the Globe & Mail, National Post, Maclean's, VICE News, BuzzFeed News, and he has appeared on CBC, CTV, Global, CNN, the BBC, and a host of other outlets.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Mon, 24 Jan 2022 21:12:01 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** Economist - Unfinished Business.pdf  
**Attachments:** Economist - Unfinished Business.pdf

Here's the Economist essay I mentioned.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction



THE SOWIT DISUNION

# UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*Thirty years ago, the deal which dissolved the Soviet Union rested on the untested idea that Russia and Ukraine could be neighbours and nothing more. If Russia had become a democracy it might have worked.*

**A**ROUND EIGHT in the evening of Sunday December 8th 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev, the president of the Soviet Union, picked up a phone call on a top-security line. The caller was Stanislav Shushkevich, a modest physics professor whom Mr Gorbachev's reforms had placed at the helm of the Soviet Republic of Belarus a few months before. Mr Shushkevich was phoning from a hunting lodge in the magnificent Belovezh forest to tell the great reformer that he was out of a job: the Soviet Union was over.

In retrospect, its last gasp had come in August, when the KGB, hardline Communists and the army had placed Mr Gorbachev under house arrest and mounted a coup. After three days of peaceful resistance led by Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Soviet Republic, they backed down. That ruled out any return to a Soviet past. But Mr Gorbachev still clung to hopes for some sort of post-Soviet liberal successor as a way to hold at least some of the republics together. Mr Shushkevich's call killed any such aspiration.

One of its triggers was Russia's economic collapse. As Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin's top economic reformer, was later to write, it was an autumn of "grim food lines...pristinely empty stores...women rushing around in search of some food, any food...an average salary of seven dollars a month". To successfully enact the sweeping reforms Mr Gaidar was designing, Yeltsin needed a Russia which controlled its own currency. That meant leaving the USSR.

Mr Shushkevich, too, was motivated by the dreadful economy. He had invited Yeltsin to the retreat in the forest in the hope that by wining and dining him he would ensure that Russian gas and electricity would keep flowing to Belarus. It would have been a hard winter without them. The venue he chose was a lodge called Viskuli, where Leonid Brezhnev and Nikita Khrushchev had entertained themselves shooting bison and other game (hence its hard-wired connection to Moscow).

Yeltsin suggested that Leonid Kravchuk, the president of the Ukrainian republic, join them. The previous Sunday, Ukraine had voted overwhelmingly to ratify the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union which had been passed in its parliament, the Rada, immediately after the August coup.

Yeltsin did not just want what Mr Kravchuk had achieved in Ukraine for economic reasons. Independence would, he felt, be crucial to consolidating his power and pursuing liberal democracy. And Ukraine—never, until the 19th century, a well-defined territory, and home to various ethnic enclaves and deep cultural divides—becoming an independent unitary state within its Soviet borders set a precedent for Russia to define itself the same way, and refuse independence to restive territories such as Chechnya. That was why the Russian republic was one of the first three polities in the world to recognise it as an independent state.

But if a world in which Ukraine, Russia and indeed Belarus were completely independent from the Soviet Union was attractive, one in which they were not tied to each other in some other way was very troubling to a Russian like Yeltsin. It was not just that Ukraine was the second-most-populous and economically powerful of the remaining republics, its industries tightly integrated with Russia's. Nor was it the question of what was to happen to the nuclear forces stationed there but still notionally under the command of Soviet authorities in Moscow. It went deeper.

In "Rebuilding Russia", an essay published in the USSR's most widely circulated newspaper the year before, Alexander Solzhenitsyn had asked "What exactly is Russia? Today, now? And—more importantly—tomorrow?...Where do Russians themselves see the boundaries of their land?" The need to let the Baltic states go was clear—and when they left the Soviet Union in 1990, Solzhenitsyn,

Yeltsin and most of Russia rallied against revanchist attempts to keep them in. Much the same was true of Central Asia and the Caucasus; they were colonies. Belarus and Ukraine were part of the metropolitan core. The bonds which tied "Little Russians" (ie Ukrainians), "Great Russians" and Belarusians together, Solzhenitsyn argued, must be defended by all means short of war.

For centuries Ukraine had anchored Russia's identity. As the centre of the storied medieval confederation known as Kyivan Rus, which stretched from the White Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, Kyiv was seen as the cradle of Russian and Belarusian culture and the font of their Orthodox faith. Being united with Ukraine was fundamental to Russia's feeling of itself as European. In "Lost Kingdom" (2017) Serhii Plokhy, a Ukrainian historian, describes how "the Kyivan myth of origins...became the cornerstone of Muscovy's ideology as the polity evolved from a Mongol dependency to a sovereign state and then an empire." Russian empire required Ukraine; and Russia had no history other than one of empire. The idea of Kyiv as just the capital of a neighbouring country was unimaginable to Russians.

But not to Ukrainians. At the first dinner in Viskuli, with Yeltsin and Mr Kravchuk sitting opposite each other, a number of toasts were raised to friendship. The friendship Mr Kravchuk wanted, though, was of the cordial sort that comes with a decent alimony cheque, not the sort that goes with a fresh plighting of troths.

Mr Kravchuk was born in 1934 in the western Ukrainian province of Volhynia—then part of Poland, but ceded to the USSR as part of the infamous pact it made with Germany in 1939. A childhood surrounded by ethnic cleansing, repression and war had taught him, as he put it, "to walk between the raindrops". It was a skill that made him an ideal party apparatchik and then saw him turn himself into a champion of Ukrainian independence—not for any high-minded ideological reasons, but because he wanted the chance to be in charge of his own country.

The referendum had given it to him, with independence endorsed by majorities

in every part of the country, both those in the formerly Austro-Hungarian west, with its Baroque churches and coffee shops, and in the Sovietised and industrialised east, where most of Ukraine's ethnic Russians lived. There were practical things he needed from Russia, and Russian interests he recognised; he wanted a good relationship with Yeltsin and so had come to the forest meeting. But he was not interested in giving Russia an exit from the union that in any way compromised Ukrainian independence.

The agreement reached, in draft form, at 4am on Sunday morning achieved those aims with a rather neat piece of casuistry. For Russia simply to have followed Ukraine into independence would have left moot the question of the Soviet Union's residual powers. So instead they abolished the union itself.

The Soviet Union had been formed, in 1922, through a joint declaration by four Soviet republics—the Transcaucasian republic and the three represented at Viskuli. With the Transcaucasian republic long since dismembered, the presidents dissolved by fiat what their forebears had bound together. In its place they put a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—Mr Kravchuk would not allow any use of the word "union"—with few clearly defined powers which any post-Soviet state would be welcome to join. There was to be no special relationship between the Slavic three.

That afternoon the three men signed the agreement, thereby proclaiming that "The USSR as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality has ceased to exist." It then fell to the most junior of the three—who was also the least enthusiastic about what

► they had done—to inform Moscow of what had happened.

Mr Gorbachev was furious. The importance of Ukraine was not an abstract matter to him. Like Solzhenitsyn, he was the child of a Ukrainian mother and a Russian father. He grew up singing Ukrainian songs and reading Gogol, who reimagined his native country's folk magic as rich poetry after moving to St Petersburg. The Soviet Union had meant that Mr Gorbachev and others like him, whatever their parentage, could partake in both identities.

More immediately, though the failed coup had made some such break-up more or less inevitable, disassembling a multi-ethnic empire of 250m people was still a subject of huge trepidation. As Solzhenitsyn had written in "Rebuilding Russia", "The clock of communism has stopped chiming. But its concrete edifice has not yet crumbled. And we must take care not to be crushed beneath its rubble instead of gaining liberty." The fact that in that rubble, if rubble there was to be, there would be the world's largest nuclear arsenal, spread between four separate countries (the three Slavic ones and Kazakhstan), frightened statesmen around the world. When, as the economy worsened, Mr Gorbachev went to President George Bush for \$10bn-15bn, Bush's top concern was the nuclear threat. The same worry had led him to oppose Ukraine's secession in a speech given just before the August coup. "Do you realise what you've done?" Mr Gorbachev demanded of Mr Shushkevich. "Once Bush finds out about this, what then?"

The question was being answered on one of the lodge's other phone lines. Andrei Kozyrev, Russia's first foreign minister, had had trouble getting through to Bush. A State Department receptionist—Mr Kozyrev did not have the White House number with him—told the man with a Russian accent demanding that she connect someone called Mr Yeltsin to the president that she was "not in the mood for prank calls". Nor could Mr Kozyrev be called back in a way that might prove his bona fides: he had no idea of the lodge's phone number. In the end, though, he got through, and was able to act as interpreter as Yeltsin explained to Bush that the world's largest nuclear arsenal was now in the hands of something called the CIS.

If Mr Gorbachev had been unclear how Bush would react, so was Bush himself. A voice memo he recorded the next day is a string of anxious questions: "I find myself on this Monday night, worrying about military action. Where was the [Soviet] army—they've been silent. What will happen? Can this get out of hand? Will Gorbachev resign? Will he try to fight back? Will Yeltsin have thought this out properly? It is tough—a very tough situation." Similar doubt assailed the three presidents in the forest. When Yeltsin and his entourage set off back to Moscow, they joked about their plane being shot down. The laughter was not entirely free from anxiety.

Instead the shooting down of planes, along with the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, the seizure of Crimea, the reassertion that the legacy of Kyivian Rus meant the nations must be shackled together and the reversion of Belarus to dictatorship—that all came later, a sequence of events which led, 30 Decembers later, to 70,000 or more Russian troops on the border of Ukraine and, in a ghastly sideshow, thousands of Middle Eastern refugees stuck in the Belovezh forest itself. The once seemingly settled question of post-Soviet relations between the three nations has once again become an overriding geopolitical concern.

Back then, though, as he stood among the snow-capped pine trees after leaving the meeting, Yeltsin was overcome by a sense of lightness and freedom. "In signing this agreement," he later recalled, "Russia was choosing a different path, a path of internal de-

velopment rather than an imperial one...She was throwing off the traditional image of 'potentate of half the world', of armed conflict with Western civilisation, and the role of policeman in the resolution of ethnic conflicts. The last hour of the Soviet empire was chiming." Maybe the convoluted interdependency of Russia and Ukraine did not matter as much as people thought; maybe democratic nationhood was enough. Maybe the problem had been a failure of imagination.

**I**N 1994, AFTER three years of horrific economic contraction, two of the three men who had met at Viskuli fell from power. In Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, who had previously run a large collective piggery, won election over Mr Shushkevich. Mr Lukashenko told people he would sort out the economic mess by taking them back to the security they had had before. Reforms stopped—as would, at a later stage of Mr Lukashenko's now 27-year reign, competitive and fair elections. The flag, which had been changed to the red and white of the very short-lived Belarusian Republic of 1918, was turned back to one like that of the Soviet era.

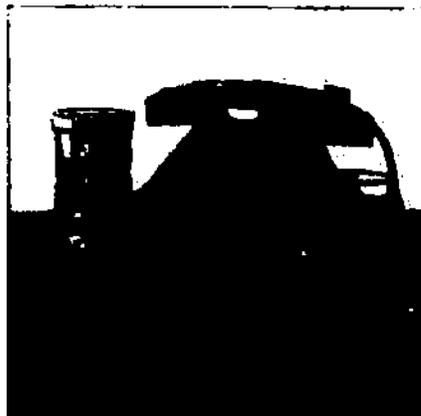
There was no such turnaround in Ukraine, where Mr Kravchuk lost the presidential election to Leonid Kuchma, a skilled Soviet-era industrial manager. Mr Kravchuk held the more nationalistic, Ukrainian-speaking west of the country; Mr Kuchma took the Russian-speaking and collectivist regions to the east. But unlike Mr Lukashenko, Mr Kuchma was not a reactionary, and he was to prove canny in wooing Ukrainians who had at first distrusted him.

Yeltsin was not required to stand for election that year. But a year earlier he and his reformists had faced down an insurgency by Communists and an assortment of anti-Western, anti-democratic factions led by the speaker of the parliament. One of their grievances was the loss of Crimea, a peninsula in the Black Sea reallocated from the Russian republic to the Ukrainian republic in 1954 but still seen as part of Russia by most Russians. A holidaying place for both the Soviet elite and for millions of ordinary people, it had been at the heart of the imperial project since the days of Catherine the Great.

The insurgency of 1993 was bloody; Yeltsin ordered the parliament building shelled by tanks. The public stood by him. A referendum held in the aftermath greatly increased the powers of the presidency. His foreign supporters stood by him too, and the following year a security agreement saw America, Britain and Russia guarantee respect for Ukraine's integrity within its existing borders—which is to say, including Crimea—in exchange for its giving up the nuclear weapons it had inherited from the Soviet Union. Ukraine was grateful; the West saw further evidence of a transition towards a liberal, democratic Russian state.

Some, though, thought this dangerously optimistic; one such was Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish-American diplomat and former national security adviser. In March 1994 Brzezinski took his own shot at Solzhenitsyn's question—the question he believed, rightly, to provoke "the greatest passion from the majority of [Russian] politicians as well as citizens, namely 'What is Russia?'" Rather than give a definitive answer, he gave an alternative one: "Russia can be either an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both."

He was right. Yeltsin's unburdened moment among the trees had been that of a man who did not want to, and did not have to, rule an empire. He consciously rejected not just the Soviet Union's ideology and central planning, but also the tools of statecraft that had held it together—repression and lies. To him, the market ►►



economy was a condition for freedom, not a substitute for it. His successor, Vladimir Putin, also embraced capitalism. But he saw no need for it to bring freedom with it, and had no problem with a state run through repression and lies. He thus reversed Yeltsin's democratic project and, though not at first territorially imperialist himself, took the country down the other side of Brzezinski's fork. It is that which puts Russia and its Slavic neighbours in such a parlous position today.

One of Brzezinski's problems with Yeltsin's Russia was "that the emerging capitalist class in Russia is strikingly parasitic". By the time Mr Putin became president in 2000 Russia was run by an oligarchic elite which saw the state as a source of personal enrichment. But when pollsters asked people what they expected of their incoming president, reducing this corruption was not their highest priority. The standing of the state was. Russians wanted a strong state and one respected abroad. As Mr Putin's successful manifesto put it, "A strong state is not an anomaly to fight against. Society desires the restoration of the guiding, organising role of the state." When, shortly after his election, Mr Putin restored the Soviet anthem, it was not as a symbol of reverting to central planning or rebuilding an empire. It was a signal that the strong state was back. State power did not mean the rule of law or a climate of fairness. It did not have, or need, an ideology. But it did have to take on some of the "geopolitical reality" that the meeting in Viskuli had stripped from the Soviet Union.

The strong state which provided an effective cover for kleptocracy in Mr Putin's Russia was not an option for Mr Kuchma's similarly oligarchic Ukraine. It had no real history as a state, let alone a strong one. Its national myth was one of Cossacks riding free. So in Ukraine the stealing was instead dressed up in terms of growing into that distinctive national identity. The essence of the argument was simple. As Mr Kuchma put it in a book published in 2003, "Ukraine is not Russia".

This was not an attack on Russia. Ukrainians liked Russia. Polls showed that they admired Mr Putin more than they did Mr Kuchma. It was just a way of defining things that put the nation first. And Mr Putin had no problem with it. Ukraine might not be Russia, but it was not significantly different from Russia, let alone threateningly so. It was just a bit more corrupt and chaotic.

The degree to which Ukraine was not Russia became clearer, though, in 2004, when a rigged presidential election saw hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians protesting in the streets. Mr Kuchma could have used force against them; Mr Putin encouraged him to do so. But various considerations, including Western opprobrium, argued against it. Perhaps most fundamental was his sense that, as a Ukrainian president, he could not thus divide the Ukrainian nation. He stayed his hand and allowed a second vote. Viktor Yushchenko, pro-Western and Ukrainian-speaking, beat Viktor Yanukovich, a corrupt thug from Donbas (the easternmost part of the country and, save Crimea, the most ethnically Russian) who had claimed victory the first time round. The "Orange revolution", as the protest came to be known, was a serious setback for Mr Putin—all the more so when a similar uprising in Georgia, the Rose revolution, put another pro-Western state on his borders.

In 2008 Mr Putin took a constitutionally enforced break from the presidency, swapping jobs with Dmitri Medvedev, his prime minister. The shift did not stop him from overseeing a war against Georgia that summer. In 2010, though, the Orange revolution became, in retrospect, a somewhat Pyrrhic victory. Mr Yushchenko proved a sufficiently poor president that in 2010 Mr Yanukovich was able to beat him in a free and fair election.

Mr Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 came at a time when the global financial crisis had choked the Russian economy. The rigging of Russia's parliamentary elections the year before, and the prospect of Mr Putin's return, had seen tens of thousands take to the streets. And the West, spooked by the increased belligerence Russia had shown in Georgia, was taking a keen interest in Ukraine. The EU offered the country an association agreement which would allow Ukrainians to enjoy the benefits of a deep and comprehensive free-trade agreement and free travel across Europe.

A year earlier a group of economists had told Mr Putin that a customs union with Ukraine would be a smart move. What was more, such a deal would preclude Ukraine's association with the EU. Pursuing it was thus a way for Mr Putin to achieve three things at once: push back against the West; give Russia a victory that would prove its importance; and help the economy.

Time for some Slavic unity. When Mr Putin flew to Kyiv for a two-day visit in July 2013, his entourage contained both his chief economic adviser and the patriarch of Russia's Orthodox Church, whose jurisdiction covered both countries. The trip coincided with the 1,025th anniversary of the conversion to Christianity of Prince Vladimir of the Kyivan Rus, and subsequently of the people as a whole, in 988: the "Baptism of Rus". With Mr Yanukovich he visited the cathedral in Chersonesus, the site in Crimea where Prince Vladimir is said to have been baptised. He and the patriarch also visited Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, a monastery founded in caves a millennium ago.

The commitment he gave there to protecting "our common Fatherland, Great Rus" was not without irony. When in 1674 monks at the Lavra published the "Synopsis", the first demotic history of Russia, the city was under threat of attack by the Ottoman empire and desperately needed support from the Russian lands to the north. The "Synopsis" sought to encourage Slavic solidarity by stressing the importance of Vladimir and his virtuous Kyivan Rus to Kyiv and Muscovy alike—something historians like Mr Plokhly now see as expedient mythmaking. Mr Putin was cynically mining a mythos itself contrived for political ends.

Mr Yanukovich did not want to be Russia's vassal. Nor did he share western Europe's values—especially when applied to matters of anti-corruption. But eventually he had to choose a side. At a secret meeting in Moscow in November 2013, as European leaders were preparing to sign their agreement with Ukraine, he was promised a \$15bn credit line with \$3bn paid up front. He ditched the European deal. And at 4am on November 30th his goons bludgeoned a few dozen students protesting against his betrayal in Kyiv's Independence Square, known as Maidan.

By "turning into Lukashenko", as one journalist put it, Mr Yanukovich crystallised the choice facing Ukraine: dignity? Or subservience? Tents sprang up on Maidan. Volunteers distributed food and clothes. Oligarchs, afraid that a deal with Russia would see their ill-gotten gains stolen from them, tried to restrain Mr Yanukovich. Mr Putin pressed him to use force. Mr Yanukovich dithered until, on February 18th, Kyiv went up in flames. Nobody agrees on who fired the first shot. But by the third day of violence around 130 people were dead, mostly on the protesters' side, and Mr Yanukovich—to everyone's surprise—had fled Kyiv.

This was far worse, for Mr Putin, than the Orange revolution. Ukraine had made geopolitical reality, to coin a phrase, of the independence it had claimed two decades before. Its demands for dignity resonated with Russia's middle class and some of its elite, making it a genuinely dangerous example. So Mr Putin annexed Crimea and started a war in Donbas.



▶ According to Russian state media, Mr Putin was not undermining a revolution against a corrupt regime quite like his own; he was protecting the Russian people and language from extermination at the hands of western Ukrainian fascists. The relevance to Russia of the issues that had led to what was being called in Ukraine “the revolution of dignity” was thus obscured. At the same time the brutality in Donbas, relentlessly televised, showed Russians the disastrous consequences of rising up: civil war.

On March 18th Russia’s ruling elite watched Mr Putin enter the Kremlin’s gilded Hall of St George in triumph as he hailed the return of Crimea and, thereby, Russia; the annexation was supported by nearly 90% of the Russian population. A year later he had a stone from Chersonesus brought to Moscow to be built into the pedestal of a giant statue of Prince Vladimir outside the Kremlin gates. In “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, a tract published in both Russian, Ukrainian and English in July 2021, Mr Putin described how the inheritors of “Ancient Rus” had been torn apart by hostile powers and treacherous elites, and how Ukraine had been turned from being “not Russia” into an anti-Russia, an entity fundamentally incompatible with Russia’s goals.

All baloney. Mr Putin did not attack Ukraine in order to honour or recreate an empire, whether Russian or Soviet. He attacked it to protect his own rule; the history is window-dressing. At the same time, following Brzezinski, for Russia to be something other than a democracy it has to at least be able to think of itself as an empire. And in Russia, empire requires Ukraine—now more deeply opposed to union with Russia than ever before.

**I**N NOVEMBER 2021 Vladislav Surkov, Mr Putin’s cynical, loyal ideologist, turned his attention to the question of empire. “The Russian state, with its severe and inflexible interior, survived exclusively because of its tireless expansion beyond its borders. It has long lost the knowledge [of]—how to survive otherwise.” The only way Russia can escape chaos, he argued, is to export it to a neighbouring country. What he did not say was that Mr Putin’s export of chaos, and violence, to that end has severed the ties between the Slavic nations and their peoples in a way which the collapse of the Soviet empire did not.

Mr Putin now talks of the collapse of the Soviet Union as “The collapse of historical Russia under the name of the Soviet Union.” But he has hardly restored its empire. Ukraine is not a province, or a colony; it is a beleaguered nation in a messy, perilous process of self-realisation. Belarus, for its part, is a grim illustration of how “severe and inflexible” things have to get in order to stop such aspirations welling up. Mr Lukashenko has met a nationalist resurgence with ever more brutal and well-orchestrated repression—a bloody irony given that he helped start it.

When Mr Putin annexed Crimea Mr Lukashenko feared his own fief might be next. So he decided to strengthen the Belarusian identity which he had previously worked to suppress. It was an opening he would regret. Social media quickly gave well-prepared liberal nationalists access to half of the country’s population. In 2018 the centenary of the Belarusian republic saw its red-and-white flag rise again.

In 2000 Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, previously apolitical, ran against Mr Lukashenko in the presidential election in place of her husband, who had been jailed, the red-and-white flag waving over her rallies. When Mr Lukashenko stole that election on August 9th it was in the same flag that protesters draped a vast statue of their motherland. Like Ukraine, Belarus had no real history of state-

hood; all that Mr Lukashenko had given it since 1994 was a rough approximation of its Soviet past, fascism with Stalinist trappings. But the idea of something better had taken hold.

Unlike the Ukrainians, though, the protesters in Belarus had no independence-friendly oligarchs to take their side. They had no equivalent to the radical fringe of western Ukrainians who had shown themselves ready to kill and ready to die on Maidan. And they were pitted against someone who would not stay his hand, as Mr Kuchma had, or cut and run, like Mr Yanukovich. Mr Lukashenko doubled down on repression, his brutality honed and guided by experts from Moscow.

For Mr Putin, the situation has become the reverse of that faced at Viskuli 30 years ago. Then a free and independent Ukraine—and, to a lesser extent, Belarus—were a necessary condition for what Russia sought to become. Now such freedom would constitute an intolerable affront to Russia staying as it is. At the same time, though, their struggles feed Mr Putin’s need for enemies. Russia’s great-power “geopolitical reality”, as sold to the people, has become that of a besieged fortress. America is the enemy-in-chief; Ukraine, and those within Belarus and Russia itself who have aspirations like those seen in the “revolution of dignity”, are its lackeys, all the more despicable for betraying their kin.

Russian propaganda outlets are baying for war. But that does not mean Mr Putin plans to take fresh territory. He has never laid claim to the western part of the country. He is probably aware that there are now enough Ukrainian patriots to fight Russian occupation in central and even eastern parts of Ukraine, and that the army he has massed on the border would prove less good at occupation than invasion. But he still needs conflict and subordination. Left unmolested a free Ukraine reopens the existential threat of an alternative to empire.

Ukraine’s struggles since 2014 have been slow, frustrating and messy. According to Evgeny Golovakha, a sociologist, this is in part because “Ukrainians love to experiment.” True to that assessment, in 2019 they elected Volodymyr Zelensky, who as a television comedian had played a history teacher accidentally elevated to the presidency, to tackle the role in real life. His biggest achievement, so far, has been to consolidate protest votes against the old elite across Ukraine, making the electoral map look more cohesive than it has ever looked in the past. That will not necessarily stop him getting voted out in two years’ time. “We find it easier to change [people in] power than to change ourselves,” says Yulia Mostovaya, the editor of *Zerkalo Nedeli*, an online news outlet.

But change is afoot; it can be seen in the way that demography increasingly trumps regional allegiance. Even in the east nearly 60% of those born since 1991 see their future as in the EU—countrywide, the figure is 75%. All told 90% want Ukraine to stay independent, and nearly 80% are optimistic about its future.

The same optimism is hard to find in Russia, let alone stricken Belarus. But the same yearnings are there, especially among the young. That is why Alexei Navalny was first poisoned and is now jailed. As the leader of the opposition to Mr Putin he has championed the idea of Russia not as an empire but as a civic nation: a state for the people. It is why Russia has recently become much more repressive. It is why Mr Putin cannot tolerate a true peace on his borders.

Unlike Ukrainians and Belarusians, Russians cannot separate themselves from Russia, so they have to change it from within. They cannot do that in a forest retreat, or with a few phone calls. But only through such change will they become truly independent of the Soviet Union. ■



**From:** Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 21:13:12 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: [URL Verdict: Suspect][Non-DoD Source] Ukrainian Health Facilities  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir:

As discussed, see the link below to an article jointly authored by Dr. Gigi Gronvall. This does a very thoughtful job of countering the Russian propaganda.

r/

Hunter

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 10:33 AM  
To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP TIIRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6) Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: [URL Verdict: Suspect][Non-DoD Source] Ukrainian Health Facilities

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

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Rob and Hunter:

I read with great interest the Wall Street Journal this past week and remember well the Russian disinformation efforts not only in Ukraine but in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

I wanted to share an article that one of our Senior Technical Advisor's contributed to that came out recently on the topic.

I thought it would be of interest to you guys. You might also remember that Gigi Gronvall served on the TRAC during my (our) time at DTRA.

Caution-<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/disarming-russias-bioweapons-disinformation> <  
Caution-<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/disarming-russias-bioweapons-disinformation> >

Hope all is well.

(b)(6)

President

CRDF Global

1776 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22209

Main: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Caution-[www.crdfglobal.org](http://www.crdfglobal.org) < Caution-<http://www.crdfglobal.org/>> |

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 22:25:23 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: 3/10 Backgrounder Questions  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

Dr. Pope and (b)(6)  
Please see below for response.  
Thanks.

V/r  
(b)(6)  
Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)  
(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)  
NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

-----Original Message-----  
From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 5:17 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(6)  
Subject: FW: 3/10 Backgrounder Questions  
Importance: High

Good afternoon (b)(6)

Was following the afternoon traffic and events surrounding Russian disinformation, and wanted to seek your help on the below taken question from (b)(6) background briefing this afternoon. He was not able to answer it, so we have to staff any taken questions to provide formal written response to the reporters.

QUESTION: Heather Mongilio, USNI News: Does the U.S. have a history of sending scientists to assist in labs like the chemical/biological labs in Ukraine?

Is this something that falls under HON Rosenblum's portfolio? If so, can you help me prepare a response?

Thank you!

v/r,

(b)(6)

DOD Spokesman, Defense Press Operations

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Pentagon, Room 2D961

E-mail (b)(6)  
Desk  
DSN  
Mobile

From (b)(6)  
<mail>

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 3:53 PM

To: OSD Pentagon PA List Press Officers <osd.pentagon.pa.list.press-officers@mail.mil>  
<mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.list.press-officers@mail.mil>

Subject: 3/10 Backgrounder Questions

**\*\*One taken question for the Senior Defense Official\*\***

10. Heather Mongilio, USNI News: Does the U.S. have a history of sending scientists to assist in labs like the chemical/biological labs in Ukraine?

This was a two-part brief, see below for the Senior Defense Official's topper and questions.

Part One

Guest briefer in attendance to talk about Russian charges that the U.S. is assisting Ukraine with a bio weapons lab: Megan Rovnak from Defense Intelligence Agency, credited on background as a Senior Intelligence Official

Senior Intelligence Official topper: The Biological Weapons Convention prohibits the development, transition, and use of biological weapons. There are 183 state parties to the convention and 4 signatories. Both the United States

and Russia have signed and ratified the treaties.

There are five biological laboratories in Kiev, focused largely on preventative medicine and vaccines that Ukraine had previously declared. The labs look at pathogens that are endemic to Ukraine.

Russia has not been transparent in its confidence-building measures in regard to this treaty. Ukraine has abided by all of the treaty's tenets. Ukraine has worked to eradicate all of the illegal Soviet biological weapons left there after the Soviet Union's collapse. There are no U.S. bio labs in Ukraine. We are working on a fact sheet and will get it to you as soon as possible.

1. Bob Burns, Associated Press: Does the U.S. have a physical presence at any of the five Ukrainian labs? Is there a written agreement describing the American presence or work at these labs?
2. Jack Detsch, Foreign Policy: Were you anticipating the Russians bringing up these false claims?
3. Luis Martinez, ABC: Are you seeing any false flag imagery on this chemical/biological front?
4. Luis Martinez, ABC: Are you seeing actual movement of some of these materials or equipment into Ukraine to indicate their potential use is on the horizon?
5. Tara Copp, Defense One: Why are you coming out with this now? What prompted you?
6. Idrees Ali, Reuters: Have these indications of a possible chemical/biological attack picked up in the last 24 hours? Is this part of the Russian order of battle?
7. Tom Bowman, NPR: You talked about eliminating remnants of the USSR program. Can you be more specific?
8. David Martin, CBS: Do you have indications of a false flag operation or indications that the Russians may use biological or chemical weapons?
9. Courtney Kube, NBC: Is there any sense that they would use these against the Russian military?

## Part Two

Senior Defense Official topper: We assess that northwest of Kyiv, Russian forces have been able to move forward closer to Kyiv by about 5 kilometers. East of Kyiv, we see Russians continue to advance. We assess that the northernmost of those two lines has reached 40 kilometers east of Kyiv. We now assess that Chernihiv is isolated. Some of the Russian lines approaching from the east including Sumy are still about 40 kilometers from the city. We continue to have reports of internet outages near Mariupol. 775 total missiles launched.

1. Bob Burns, Associated Press: Can you say whether the U.S. has continued to transfer arms in the last couple of days? Any sign of Russian effort to interfere? And if not, why not?
2. Jack Detsch, Foreign Policy: Is the advance 25 miles in the northeast of Kyiv?
3. Jack Detsch, Foreign Policy: Do you have a ballpark of when the Russians may encircle the city?

4. Matt Seyler, ABC: Why are the Ukrainians appealing to get these jets if it runs counter to their interests?
5. Joe Gould, Defense News: What are you seeing as far as Russian surface-to-air missile systems. Where are they being seen and how are they being used?
6. Joe Gould, Defense News: There is some talk about NATO avionics inside of those MIGs. Do you have some sense of what it would take to get those out?
7. Tara Copp, Defense News: Have you noticed any changes in tactics given some of the delays that Russian convoys have faced? Is there any discussion about providing Ukraine a Patriot system?
8. Idrees Ali, Reuters: The UK Defense Ministry said they've seen indications of use of a thermobaric weapon. Have you seen any use of a thermobaric weapon? Have you seen the movement of chemical or biological weapons closer to Ukraine?
9. Heather Mogilio, USNI News: Do you have a maritime update? Can you confirm a Russian patrol boat sunk in the Black Sea?
10. Heather Mongilio, USNI News: Does the U.S. have a history of sending scientists to assist in labs like the chemical/biological labs in Ukraine?
11. Dan Lamothe, Washington Post: Have you seen additional Russian troops heading to Ukraine from other parts of Russia?
12. Dan Lamothe, Washington Post: Would you still assess that Russia is at about 90 percent combat capability in Ukraine?
13. Mike Glenn, Washington Times: Have the Russians had any success combining aviation attacks with ground movement?
14. Tom Bowman, NPR: You said the Ukrainians do not have capabilities that the Russians do. Are you talking about air defense systems?
15. Jennifer Griffin, Fox News: Can you say what kind of weapons were used to take out that tank column that we've seen footage of? Can you rule out that drones were used?
16. Barbara Starr, CNN: On the bombing of the maternity hospital in Mariupol, have you been able to discern what type of weapon the Russians used? Are the Russians beginning to lay a groundwork for moving west?
17. David Martin, CBS: You said you assess Chernihiv to be isolated. Does that mean they are advancing from Chernihiv down to Kyiv? I am trying to reconcile what you are saying with a British intelligence map that shows three lines of advance from the east. Can you reconcile because you only described two lines of advance?
18. Courtney Kube, NBC: When you say the Russians are 15 kilometers outside of a city, do you mean from city center? Is there any concern about the South Ukraine power plant? Are there any indications of an amphibious assault?
19. Fadi Mansour, Al Jazeera: You said the Russians are 5 kilometers northwest of Kyiv, did they flank or push through Ukrainian positions?

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:08:38 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine)  
\_ OSD-PA edits  
**Attachments:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine).docx,  
smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Here's the version to transmit to NCB.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:08 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6) Tune, Melissa D CIV DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Chaney, Andrea C CIV DTRA J0 (USA)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Kutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

Sir, this just came in from OSD-PA through OSD-P. They took what we provided and re-ordered it. We concurred.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:55 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine)

Page 0981 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 0982 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:11:15 +0000  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Attachments:** LTG remarks UNSC Russian disinfo.docx, smime.p7s

FYSA.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM  
**To:** (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Attached are the draft remarks for LTG's use during today's UNSC meeting on Ukraine bio labs. These have been cleared/circulated at very senior levels. Sharing with you per chain below and we welcome fact checking and legal redline edits. Please send any edits by 9:00.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer | IO/UNP

O (b)(6)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:51 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

(b)(6) — see below. OSD is asking to chop on the points for tomorrow's UNSC Meeting.  
Get Outlook for iOS

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM  
**To:** (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Dolliff, Philip R  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C; (b)(6)  
**RE:** POLICY (USA); OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly (b)(6) just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best  
(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) mobile)  
(b)(6) SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) <(b)(6)>  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear (b)(6)

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal: (b)(6)  
Secure Phone (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)

Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

## ***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

**Thursday, March 10, 2022  
1800 ET**

### **SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)
- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

### **RUSSIA**

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that "Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace." (@delcyrodriguezv)

### **INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS**

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine's application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in joint

and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador's remarks. (22 OPCW The Hague 18)

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). *(UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE)*
- (SBU) The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. *(22 USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20)*
- (SBU) From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine *(22 Geneva 158)*
- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. *(European Commission Press Release)*

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov).

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**UNSC Russia Disinformation Remarks**  
**Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield,**  
United States Ambassador to the United Nations  
March 11, 2022

Thank you, Madam President.

Russia asked the Security Council for today's meeting for the sole purpose of lying and spreading disinformation.

Last month, Secretary Blinken laid out with tragic accuracy what Russia was about to do. He specifically warned that Russia would manufacture a pretext for attack, and he even predicted that Russia would fabricate allegations about chemical weapons to justify their own violent attacks against the Ukrainian people.

Today, the world is watching Russia do exactly what we warned they would. Russia is attempting to use the Security Council to legitimize disinformation and deceive people to justify President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

I will say this once: there are no Ukrainian biological weapons supported by the United States. Not near Russia's borders, not anywhere. That is categorically false.

I will spend the balance of my time stating the truth.

So here are the facts: Ukraine owns and operates its own laboratory infrastructure. These labs provide biosafety and biosecurity training. They make it possible to detect and diagnose pandemics like COVID-19.

This is work that has been done proudly, clearly, and out in the open. It has absolutely nothing to do with biological weapons.

In fact, we are deeply concerned that Russia's calling for this meeting is a potential false flag effort in action -- exactly the kind we have been warning about.

That's because Russia has a track record of falsely accusing the West of the very violations that Russia itself is perpetrating.

Russia has a well-documented history of using chemical weapons.

It is Russia that has long maintained a biological weapons program in violation of international law.

And now, we are concerned that Russia may be planning to use chemical or biological agents in Ukraine.

(b)(5)

s a reminder, Russia is a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits use of RCAs as a method of warfare.

Nevertheless, according to [~~CITE PRESS SOURCE~~], Russian military forces have already used chemical agents against civilians in Ukraine.

We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, on large crowds of civilians, as part of another staged or false flag incident, or to support tactical military operations.

[pause]

From the beginning, our strategy to counter Russia's tactics has been to share what we know with the world transparently. And candidly, we have been right more often than we'd like.

We're not going to let Russia get away with gaslighting the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council's purpose by using it as a venue for legitimizing its violence.

And despite Russia's best efforts, the media -- and everyday Ukrainians -- are documenting the truth on the ground.

Russia can't paint over the front page of the New York Times, which on Sunday featured the bodies of a Ukrainian mother and her two children -- refugees who had died while trying to cross a bridge outside Kyiv.

Russia cannot cover up the work of AP news photographers who captured a doctor attempting to resuscitate an 18-month-old, Kirill, who died from Russian shelling in Mariupol.

Russia cannot suppress the Facebook post, confirmed and amplified by CBS News, that told the story of the 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who fled to Slovakia, by himself, with only a passport, a plastic bag, and a phone number scrawled on his hand.

Russia cannot silence the NBC News video footage of terrified Ukrainians rushing to packed train stations -- of mothers asking strangers to pass babies through the crowd and onto the trains bound for safety.

Russia is failing in its quest to create an alternate reality. In fact, not even Russian diplomats can keep their propaganda straight.

Just yesterday, the Kremlin's spokesman said that he didn't have clear information about the Russian forces who fired on a maternity hospital..

Then the Russian Foreign Minister denied Russia attacked Ukraine at all, right before admitting that Russia deliberately targeted this maternity hospital.

(b)(5)

Their story didn't matter, because the world had already seen the searing images from CNN's on-the-ground footage of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated from the scene.

Even Russia's own citizens are tiring of such lies.

Russian athletes are writing "No war" on their shoes and on TV cameras. Russian citizens are marching in the streets and protesting Putin's war of choice. And even Russian state TV pundits -- Putin's own propaganda arm -- have called for Putin to stop the military action.

This is why we didn't object to holding today's meeting. Today's meeting has confirmed our predictions, revealed Russia's objectives to the world, and exposed Russia's lies for what they are.

Unlike the Russian government -- whose first instinct is to silence -- we are confident that truth and transparency will prevail.

[*pause*]

In recent weeks, many have asked whether Russia should have a place on this Council. Whether a nation that subverts and undermines the UN Charter should continue to occupy a position of permanent leadership.

I believe these are legitimate questions to ask. And Russia owes us answers.

###

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 19:41:59 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)<sup>(b)(6)</sup>  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Interagency Disinformation Discussion  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir – FYSA. Notes from Randy from an Interagency meeting that just concluded.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

CUI//NF

Sir, see below. Summary of a call we had with OSD Policy, NCB, State ISN, and State AVC. Subject was disinformation in UKR, specifically the labs.

- We discussed the need to have common messaging with regard to the current wave of RUS disinfo, focusing specifically on the labs in UKR. (note: we are all in sync here).
- State AVC and ISN have a copy of our “break glass” product; they used it to put together TP’s for State’s PA; we chopped on their product. (Note – it is good, but surprising more pointed than DoD’s)
- DASD Johnson will reach out to the NSC on this topic and request a small group discussion – for both awareness, and for synchronizing the PA approach.
- Using our break glass product, USD Kahl is holding a meeting with Kirby today to urge Kirby to say something proactively, vice waiting for the questions to come in. Kirby MAY say something today or tomorrow.
- State ISN and AVC asked DoD PA to lash up directly with State PA on this topic, to ensure what Kirby says or what State says are in sync.
- Per OSD-P concurrence, State ISN will share our break glass product with the NSC / small group discussion.

Page 0993 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 13:56:07 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** High

Dr. Pope,  
I've locked in 1:30pm EST for the WSJ interview with (b)(6). She says that they've already interviewed James Tegnalia, Andrew Weber, Daniel Gerstein and Darren Galloway. They are also reaching out to some of the Ukrainians who have participated in the International Biothreat symposia sponsored by DTRA for input. I now have the call in phone number and Andi is setting up the group call so that the normal CTR "media team" (Andi, Randy, etc) can listen in and get notes. Finally, for your awareness, the Strat team at NCB has been notified of the engagement.

V/r,  
(b)(6)  
Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)  
(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)  
NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR: (b)(6)  
JWICS: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----  
From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 9:19 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
Subject: [URL Verdict: Unknown][Non-DoD Source] Re: DTRA Interview - Biological threat reduction

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Hi (b)(6)

1 pm or later is great; just let me know what time works for Dr. Pope.

So far, I've interviewed James Tegnalia, Andrew Weber, Daniel Gerstein and Darrell Galloway. One of our science reporters is also reaching out to some of the Ukrainians who have participated in the International Biothreat symposia sponsored by DTRA.

Please let me know if there's anything else you need from my side, and thanks for helping make this happen on short notice.

Best,

(b)(6)

NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR

<Caution-http://images.dowjones.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2015/10/26125732/wsj-large.png> < Caution-http://www.wsj.com/ >

O: (b)(6)

E: (b)(6)

A: 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 800 | Washington, D.C. 20036

<Caution-http://images.dowjones.com/company/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2015/10/DJ\_small-logo-retina.png> < Caution-http://www.dowjones.com/ >

Sign up for WSJ's free Capital Journal newsletter here < Caution-http://on.wsj.com/CapitalJournalSignup > .

On Mon, Mar 14, 2022 at 9:04 AM (b)(6)

Caution-mailto:(b)(6) wrote:

Good morning (b)(6)

Thank you for reaching out to me via LinkedIn yesterday. I spoke with Dr. Robert Pope, our expert here at DTRA and he will be happy to conduct an interview with you regarding the current situation in Ukraine, the false information that's circulating and the overall history of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. He is traveling today, but has time to talk after 1pm EST. Dr. Pope is happy to contribute to the story and if you are still interested in an interview, we can make it happen.

I have a couple of quick questions for us on our end to prep is this by phone, Skype or Zoom? A phoner would be the best option due to his travel. Also, could you possibly let us know about the other interviewees for our awareness?

Looking forward to the discussion and I'm standing by to hear back from you. Thanks.

V/r

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)

SIPR

(b)(6)

JWIC



**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:35:23 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

FYSA (b)(6) included us on a couple of notes. We're working with Policy to ensure he has the right version of the fact sheet to provide to the press.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:24 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Taylor, David M  
SES OSD (USA) (b)(6); Cramer, Paul D SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
(b)(6); Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6) Walsh, Jennifer C  
SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Cooper, Laura K SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)  
(b)(6) Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)  
Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
<osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.cooperative-threat-reduction-ctr@mail.mil>; (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet

These are good products. Thanks, (b)(6)

My desire would be to get the fact sheet into the hands of the press during the backgrounder this afternoon, as (b)(6) joins me to discuss this issue.

Many thanks.

K

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:12 PM  
**To:** Kirby, John F SES (USA) (b)(6); Taylor, David M SES OSD (USA)  
(b)(6); Cramer, Paul D SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
(b)(6); Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6); Walsh, Jennifer C  
SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA) (b)(6);  
(b)(6); Cooper, Laura K SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)  
(b)(6); Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)  
Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
<osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.cooperative-threat-reduction-ctr@mail.mil>; (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Pone, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) <kingston.a.reif.civ@mail.mil>; (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet

All,

Apologies if this is now OBE – I've been in back-to-back meetings since our discussion with SDCOS this morning -- attached is the draft fact sheet/TPs I referenced on our earlier call for your respective chops.

We are strongly in favor of getting ahead of the Russian narrative on this as soon as we can.

Best,

(b)(6)

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:37:53 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet  
**Attachments:** 20220310 Talking Points on Russian Disinformation on Ukrainian Biological Activities v.docx, 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine).docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams – FYSA, final update from Policy to Mr. Kirby.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:32 PM  
**To:** (b)(6); Kirby,  
John F SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Taylor, David M SES OSD (USA) (b)(6)  
Cramer, Paul D SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6) Rosenblum, Deborah G HON  
OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6) Walsh, Jennifer C  
SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Cooper, Laura K SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)  
(b)(6) Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)  
Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
<osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.cooperative-threat-reduction-ctr@mail.mil> (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet

Thanks (b)(6)

Per (b)(6) on Mr. Kirby's team, forwarding the latest version of the fact sheet. Please use this version.

V/r

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:12 PM

**To:** Kirby, John F SES (USA) <(b)(6)> (b)(6)

(b)(6) Taylor, David M SES OSD (USA)

(b)(6) Cramer, Paul D SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)

(b)(6) Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6) Walsh, Jennifer C  
SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6) Cooper, Laura K SES OSD OUSD POLICY (USA)

(b)(6) Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)

Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
<osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.cooperative-threat-reduction-ctr@mail.mil> (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) <(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Russian Disinfo Re: Biolabs in Ukraine - Press Points and Fact Sheet

All,

Apologies if this is now OBE – I've been in back-to-back meetings since our discussion with SDCOS this morning -- attached is the draft fact sheet/TPs I referenced on our earlier call for your respective chops.

We are strongly in favor of getting ahead of the Russian narrative on this as soon as we can.

Best,

(b)(6)

Page 1002 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1003 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1004 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1005 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1006 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Mon, 28 Feb 2022 23:10:28 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Time sensitive request: response to NSC staff inquiry re: Ukraine bio labs  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA -- CT received a request from NCWMD-P today for DTRA to assist in responding to an NSC staff query asking if the bio lab directors in Ukraine have a security plan in the face of any disruptions, and whether any of them have reached out to the United States for assistance. In response, we provided NCWMD-P and NCB(TRAC) with essentially the information I provided to you yesterday (repeated below).

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:57 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Pope,  
Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Time sensitive request: response to NSC staff inquiry re: Ukraine bio labs

(b)(6) Let's respond with below. This was Dr. Pope's note to Dr. Williams yesterday, with some additional details added for this response. Let them know I can push something on SIPR too, if they want it.

(CUI) We received a report from our partners about a 26 Feb Ukraine Ministry of Health order to all labs for them to destroy their pathogen holdings. Excluded were labs in Lviv, Kyiv, and Odessa, which each have significant strain collections. We (DTRA) urged them to do the same with those labs. Our contact indicated Ukraine has no concerns and have extra forces (i.e., National Guard, self-defense forces, and departmental security) guarding those labs. Quote from our UKR partners: "Employees of these facilities also have instructions in case of an emergency or a threat of evacuation."  
(NFI)

(CUI) This also does not address pathogens outside the human health system -

e.g. those held by the veterinary and food safety organizations.

(CUI) So not a full reduction of the threat, but good steps in the right direction.

(CUI) They have not responded to any further questions.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Monday, February 28, 2022 12:22 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: Time sensitive request: response to NSC staff inquiry re: Ukraine bio labs

(broadening out the distro to include more Ukraine folks)

DTRA colleagues,

I received an inquiry from NSC staff this morning asking if the bio lab directors in Ukraine have a security plan-i.e. a plan for maintaining command and control in the face of any disruptions, and whether any of them have reached out to us for assistance.

Per our EUCOM conversation earlier, my understanding is that most if not all of the labs should have security protocols in place for sample disposition (e.g., rapid inactivation, consolidation, etc.) in the event of a power failure or structural issues, but we do not know how many have or could execute those plans. I'm also not tracking that anyone has reached out to us specifically for assistance, though I understand that communications have been challenging and most of our partners are no longer working in their labs.

On behalf of CTR Policy leadership, could you please either confirm the information above is accurate or make corrections per your current understanding of the situation at our partner labs? As this is an NSC staff request I'd appreciate a response as soon as feasible, even if it has to be relatively vague and high level.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Policy Advisor (ANSER)  
OUSD(P)/HD&GS/NCWMD/CTR-Policy

Pentagon 5C746

NIPR (b)(6)

SIPR

<mai

Desk:

(she/her "Sup-nah")

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 16:50:11 +0000  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); Warshaw, (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6) (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** finalnoteverbaletrans.pdf, Briefing 17.03.22.docx, smime.p7s

Sirs, FYI below per Dr. Williams.

BLUF: due to the recent RUS "Note Verbale" presented 2 days ago at the BWC in Geneva (PDF file attached), and RUS presentation this morning (Word doc attached) at the UN Security Council claiming the US is developing bio weapons in UKR, the NSC (Beth Cameron) has reached out directly to DTRA (specifically Dr. Pope) for a quick conversation on this issue for preparation of an upcoming sub-IPC. This conversation will take place at 1600 today.

OSD-P and NCB/TRAC have both been looped in and Policy is leading the discussion for DoD. I have been asked to participate; I invited CT's rep to the CORT so he can back-brief them; and the IOFC (Ana) is welcome to attend as well. Note, Policy wants to keep this discussion limited. Will keep everyone informed as to the outcome of the discussion. Ms. Cameron will not participate; it will be her staff on the NSC.

Unless Policy wants DTRA representation, we will likely not be invited to the IPC on Monday, as Policy has been attending those on this topic and is the gatekeeper.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 11:47 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

ACK. I just did a quick scan of the attached. Follow the policy lead on this and also loop in TRAC. I will send a note to ASD/NCB for SA. Also, please loop in OI Leadership/CORT and PA.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:35:21 AM  
To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Cc: "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT  
REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sir, FYI - NSC (b)(6) reached out to Rob. NSC wants to help with disinformation, given the RUS Note Verbale they presented at the BWC 2 days ago, and now RUS apparently did the same at the UN Security Council this morning. Attached is what was presented at the BWC, and we are trying to find out what RUS presented this morning. It is likely the same product.

I looped in my Policy comrades for the discussion the NSC wants to have with us this afternoon at 1600. Not sure if we (DTRA) will be invited to the sub/IPC on Monday. Will keep you posted.

Frankly, the NSC is way behind here. But we will support them as needed/required, unless you have other guidance.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:21 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
<mailto: >  
Cc: <mailto: >  
(b)(6)  
Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

+ OSD Policy (b)(6)

(b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

H (b)(6), happy to talk with you at 4pm. If we can include our Policy comrades on that discussion, that would be great. They have been attending the series of sub/IPCs on this topic.

Attached is what the Russians presented at the BWC, translated into English. It is very weak argument, frankly, and I expected better. If they present the same material at the UNSC this morning, we certainly can work together to debunk this nonsense.

(b)(6) ny thoughts?

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)

C:

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

<mailto:(b)(6)>

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 8:45 AM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

<mailto:(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Thanks (b)(6)

Hi, (b)(6)

Russia is convening the UNSC again this morning to launder its disinformation and to malign U.S. support for biological facilities and laboratories in Ukraine.

It's not going away anytime soon in the media or in international fora (BWC, UNSC, etc.), so we'd like explore with you some fresh, creative approaches to turning Russian disinformation upside down. As a starting point, I'm going to get the "evidence" that Russia furnished for the UNSC convening this morning.

NSC Democracy is hosting a subIPC on Monday @ 1:00 PM on countering disinformation regarding the U.S., Ukraine, and CBW (for example: <https://tass.com/politics/1423129>). I'll make sure you get that invite, and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you beforehand - either 4:00 PM today or Monday morning 9:30 or 10?

Many thanks!

Best,

(b)(6)

Global Health Security & Biodefense  
National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6)

(SIPR)  
ICS)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 15:35:17 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** finalnoteverbaletrans.pdf, smime.p7s

Sir, FYI - NSC (b)(6) reached out to Rob. NSC wants to help with disinformation, given the RUS Note Verbale they presented at the BWC 2 days ago, and now RUS apparently did the same at the UN Security Council this morning. Attached is what was presented at the BWC, and we are trying to find out what RUS presented this morning. It is likely the same product.

I looped in my Policy comrades for the discussion the NSC wants to have with us this afternoon at 1600. Not sure if we (DTRA) will be invited to the sub/IPC on Monday. Will keep you posted.

Frankly, the NSC is way behind here. But we will support them as needed/ required, unless you have other guidance.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:21 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
Cc:

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

+ OSD Policy (b)(6)

(b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

Hi (b)(6) happy to talk with you at 4pm. If we can include our Policy comrades on that discussion, that would be great. They have been attending the series of sub/IPC's on this topic.

Attached is what the Russians presented at the BWC, translated into English. It is very weak argument, frankly, and I expected better. If they present the same material at the UNSC this morning, we certainly can work together to debunk this nonsense.

(b)(6), any thoughts?

(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)

C:

-----Original Message-----

> V/r,  
> Rob  
>  
> Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
> Director  
> Cooperative Threat Reduction  
>  
>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: (b)(6)  
> Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2022 8:35 PM  
> To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
> Cc: (b)(6)  
> (b)(6)  
> Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
>

> One quick follow up — if there are details that would be helpful for broader USG messaging, can we work together on that? It's a great set of data. (b)(6) over to you pending what State says. Thanks all  
>  
>>

>> On Mar 17, 2022, at 6:28 PM, Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6) wrote:

>> (b)(6). Yes, feel free to share with State, with the caveat that this is intended to be an internal document to inform the USG, and not a messaging document.  
>>

>> V/r,  
>> Rob  
>>

>> Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
>> Director  
>> Cooperative Threat Reduction  
>>  
>>

>> -----Original Message-----

>> From: (b)(6)  
>> Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2022 5:44 PM  
>> To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
>> Cc: (b)(6)  
>> (b)(6)  
>> Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
>>

>> Hi (b)(6) — I think you're traveling this week, but I wanted to touch base to see whether we can share this document with State. As you know things are heating up with allegations. I'm also out of the office today but adding (b)(6) to provide more detail — both know the caveats in your email below.  
>>  
>>  
>>  
>>

>> On Mar 11, 2022, at 4:57 PM, Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6) wrote:

>>  
>>  
>> (b)(6)  
>>  
>>

>> It was good speaking with you. Below are the two summary paragraphs on BTRP  
>> from DoD CTR's draft Annual Report to Congress, which OSD should transmit to  
>> Congress in the next few weeks.

>>

>> (CUI) The BTRP is in its 15th year of engagement with Ukraine, which  
>> remains a top priority due to its active struggle against Russia and scarce  
>> resources to assure health security. This engagement has four bio threat  
>> reduction goals: 1) Cooperatively consolidate and secure Ukraine's EDP  
>> collections; 2) Enhance Ukraine's BRM systems to meet international  
>> guidelines; 3) Enhance Ukraine's BSV system and reporting capabilities; and  
>> 4) Promote Ukraine as a transparent and effective contributor in the  
>> international scientific community. DoD CTR has suspended work with Ukraine  
>> due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

>>

>> (CUI) To date, the BTRP has assisted 46 human and veterinary disease  
>> laboratories, diagnostic sites, and facilities ; procured three mobile  
>> diagnostic units; implemented a national EIDSS system; supported African  
>> swine fever (ASF), brucellosis, anthrax, and tularemia regional bio  
>> surveillance studies to detect these locally-occurring pathogens; supported  
>> manuscript publications in high-impact and peer-reviewed journals; trained  
>> 60 field epidemiology residents; and for five years has hosted an annual  
>> symposium targeting early- to mid-career scientists to promote transparency  
>> and integration into the international community.

>>

>> Acronyms:

>> BTRP - Biological Threat Reduction Program

>> EDP - Especially Dangerous Pathogens

>> BRM - Biorisk Management

>> BSV - Biosurveillance

>> EIDSS - Electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance System

>>

>> I have also attached a longer summary of what we know of the labs in  
>> Ukraine. I ask you to not share this document widely in its unclassified  
>> form, not to attribute it to DoD CTR, and to offer DoD an opportunity to  
>> review any use of this material that may be used for further disinformation  
>> about the DoD CTR program.

>>

>> V/r,

>> Rob

>>

>> Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

>> Director

>> Cooperative Threat Reduction

>>

>>

>>

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 22 Mar 2022 19:33:14 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** finalnoteverbaletrans.pdf, 2022-03-21b INFO PAPER response to rus note verbale - BTRP.docx, smime.p7s

Sir, per your request, see attached word document that picks apart the Note Verbale presented by the Russians at the BWC in Geneva, the UN Security Council in NY, and the OSCE. If you are ok with this product, we will send to the State AVC folks, NCB, and Policy so that we can prepare for the upcoming BWC Planning Conference in Geneva (4-8 April). State specifically asked for it.

Also, we are revising some testimony questions that you will probably get based on all the media reporting over the last few weeks, touching on the UKR Bio labs narrative.

Finally, we have 30 minutes with you on Thursday to "get you smart" on BTRP, with a focus on UKR, per your request.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022 12:51 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**AC**  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**CIV**  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

Attached is the draft information paper on the Note Verbale that you requested on 3/18/2022. I am standing by to answer any of your questions.  
Respectfully,

(b)(6)

EUCOM CENTCOM Division Chief for the  
DoD's Biological Threat Reduction Program  
Office (b)(6)

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 12:40 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN  
DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

I know this is preaching to the choir... but remind the NSC (or have policy do it) that there is a lot of previously cleared messaging that can be used (and should be used for the POTUS NATO visit next week). So the wheel doesn't have to be re-invented.

That said, I assume your staff is picking apart the specifics in the Russian note verbal.... Once that is done, I would like to see it - I will need it for my testimony background.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

## INFORMATION PAPER

March 22, 2022

TO: Dr. Rhys Williams, Acting Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

FROM: (b)(6) Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR)

SUBJECT: Response to Russian Note Verbale Dated 16 March 2022

### BACKGROUND:

- Russian Federation conveyed a Note Verbale to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, for circulation to State Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.
- The Note Verbale contains significant disinformation about the Biological Threat Reduction Program's partnership with Ukraine that warrants a robust, elevated response.

### DISCUSSION:

- Contrary to Russia's intent, the Note Verbale informs the international community of the value of the Biological Threat Reduction Program's investments and partnerships. Until Russia's invasion, Ukraine was detecting pathogens and reporting disease occurrence to the WHO or OIE, to the benefit of Ukraine's neighbors, including Russia.
- The information Russia conveyed is neither sensitive nor hidden from public view. (Appendix A) Antithetical to the allegations of secretive projects, CTR encourages transparency and accountability with its partners, including Ukraine.
  - CTR regularly supports biosurveillance study participants to present their findings at public fora using posters like the ones Russia has shared in this package.
  - CTR supported over 100 early- and mid-career Ukrainian scientists in developing and submitting their findings to peer-reviewed, international journals.
- Russia blames the occurrence of disease outbreaks on CTR programs. (p. 3, 8<sup>1</sup>)
  - After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's public health infrastructure and its ability to detect infectious diseases deteriorated significantly. BTRP programs successfully increased Ukraine's ability to detect/diagnose infectious diseases.
  - The increase in detected cases (not an increase in actual cases) is evidence that Ukraine's public health system was strengthened through cooperation with BTRP.
- Russia illegally took possession of laboratories in Crimea and Luhansk in 2014, yet these laboratories do not feature on Russia's map of laboratories and in eight years have provided no evidence of the development of biological weapons. The assertion that all of the other BTRP-assisted labs in Ukraine is illogical, but very convenient for Russia.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pagination according to PDF file page number.

- Russia benefitted from CTR assistance at their biological laboratories since 1997 up to 2013, yet never asserted that CTR sought to abscond with biological materials or leverage their laboratories for biological weapons research.
- Russia states that destruction of laboratory material is evidence of violations of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons (slide 5). To the contrary, the World Health Organization advised Ukraine to destroy strains maintained for its legitimate biosurveillance purposes ahead of the Russian invasion in order to prevent them from (1) being accidentally released by the indiscriminate Russian bombing or dangerous actions of Russia's troops or mercenaries.<sup>2</sup>

Attachment(s):

1. Russian Note Verbale Analysis
2. Note Verbale (March 16, 2022)

Prepared by: (b)(6) Department Chief Biological Threat Reduction Program, 703-767-XXXX

---

<sup>2</sup> "WHO says it advised Ukraine to destroy pathogens in health labs to prevent disease spread." Reuters. 11 March 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/exclusive-who-says-it-advised-ukraine-destroy-pathogens-health-labs-prevent-2022-03-11/>

## Appendix A: Russian Note Verbale Analysis

PDF Page	Title	Description
p. 9	Ministry of Health of Ukraine decree	The Ministry's decree was issued upon recommendation from the World Health Organization to mitigate the risk that Russia's military attack could result in destruction of laboratories containing biological materials that Ukraine needs to assure the quality of their diagnostic results.
p. 11, 40-46	Images from biosurveillance studies	These images appear to be screen shots from posters presented by Ukrainian partners at international conferences. Not only did CTR support the study, but it also supported Ukrainian scientists in sharing their results in public fora such as conferences.
p. 37-40	A study proposal	These pages display a study proposal for a grant that was recently awarded, but work has not yet begun. This study plans to aid Georgia and Ukraine in understanding the role of bats as a natural reservoir for pathogens in Ukraine and Georgia, to build capacity to create a sustainable surveillance system that may help to detect, prevent and predict disease emergence. The project will focus on detection and geographic range of viral and bacterial agents with potential relevance for human and animal health in Georgia and Ukraine, which also accrues benefit to both nations' neighbor including Russia.
p. 12-23	Normal correspondence among partners	While not public knowledge, the correspondence provides only mundane topics such as announcing projects, approving entry of visiting scientists, and other matters.
p. 24-27	Clinical protocols	The protocols substantiate CTR's commitment to transparency and bioethics oversight in biosurveillance studies in accordance with international guidelines and clearly outline responsible parties.
p. 28-36	Administrative documentation	These documents do not appear to be related to any CTR projects, but the document seems to appear to substantiate the transfer of samples for sequencing to third-party

		partners (Germany and Australia) in support of Ukraine. The Russian Federation conveniently failed to highlight the text on page 35 that indicates none of the material transferred was infectious or posed any risk to humans or animals.
p. 44-47	Scientific results	The results of UP-4, presented in a public forum, provide important information for Ukraine and its neighbors to understand the risk of spread of pathogens via wild avian. The benefit accrued to Ukraine is shared by its neighbors, including Russia. We lament that as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they have lost one of their best opportunities for early detection of outbreaks that spread across avian flyways.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 7 Apr 2022 23:04:21 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** FW: Update Bio Lab Disinfo Narrative April 3-6 2022 -press on today's UNSC  
**Attachments:** aria6apr22.pdf, smime.p7s

Rhys -- FYSA, here's the Russian press release from yesterday's UNSC Arria  
Format event. Your name and my photo are on pg 25.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 00:48:34 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Fwd: DTRA Media: Sharing a PA Product on Disinformation  
**Attachments:** Break Glass\_UKR\_Final DTRA\_Pol\_NCB\_20220301.docx

Dr. Williams, Dr.Pope,  
The Break Glass product is in OSD PA's hands.  
Todd's team runs the pressers so we are as close as we can get for information inclusion in Mr. Kirby's briefings and engagements.  
Have a good evening.

Vr,

(b)(6)

**From:** "Breasseale, LTodd SES OSD PA (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:05:09 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Fwd: DTRA Media: Sharing a PA Product on Disinformation

Hey (b)(6) Yes. Of course. It's so good hearing from you.  
This is a really solid product. Thank you for passing it to us here in sleepy OSD. I think we will definitely be able to get some use out of it, especially given this bizarro world misinformation narrative that is being cranked out of Moscow.  
I'm adding in some folks from the team - (b)(6) who runs press operations and his deputy, (b)(6)  
Again, thanks.  
And, thank you for thinking about us.

(b)(6)

DATSD (Media Operations)  
Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs  
The Pentagon, Room 2E974  
Email: (b)(6)  
Desk (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 6:51:33 PM

**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** DTRA Media: Sharing a PA Product on Disinformation

Hi (b)(6)

I hope all is well! This is (b)(6) the Chief of PA at DTRA. You may remember, we served together in uniform in OCPA about 10 years ago when I worked as (b)(6) XO. That seems like it's been an eternity!

I am reaching out to you now to share one of our unclassified products here, called "Break Glass." The document was created by the Cooperative Threat Reduction directorate here at DTRA, which is part of the DOD CTR program. It is an excellent supplement for media-related questions about what's happening right now. The background information alone is invaluable.

We've shared the product with our higher headquarters leaders (A&S and NCB) and we've worked several media queries on this topic. Members of the senior leadership here have also shared it with Policy over the past couple of days. Our OSD PA portfolio manager, Jess Maxwell is out of the loop for the past few days and I don't know who's covering down for her, so I decided to reach out to you for timeliness purposes. I am re-sharing it with you in case there are some TPs or nuggets of information that may be helpful for inclusion for upcoming press briefings. It may have already made its way to you or our teams.

BLUF: DTRA is continuing to push out our factual statements on the work we do with the UK labs and our international partners, but we want to make sure OSD PA has the right additional information that may be useful in combatting false information at the strategic level.

Please let me know if there's anything else we can do to assist.

Best always,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

**Sent:** Fri, 1 Apr 2022 11:38:03 +0000

**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

**Cc:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Latest Disinformation Dump from Russia Includes DTRA Personnel

**Attachments:** BriefMarch312022.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, yesterday's propaganda dump from Russia includes several DTRA personnel by name, face, and bio, including Joanna Wintrol (former DTRO Kyiv, now a division chief in CT), you, and me, as well as some of our implementing contractors.

Adding DTRA's security and counterintelligence leaders on the cc line for situational awareness.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

! USUA 𐄂 Briefing by Igor Kirillov, Chief of the NBC Protection Forces, on the results of the analysis of documents relating to US military biological activities in Ukraine

- The Ministry of Defense of Russia continues to study materials on the implementation of military-biological programs of the United States and its NATO allies on the territory of Ukraine.

Earlier, we gave a diagram of the interaction of state bodies and the current military-political leadership of the United States with Ukrainian biological facilities. In particular, the involvement of the investment fund, which is headed by Hunter Biden, in the financing of biological programs in Ukraine was noted.

- Before you is the correspondence of the son of the current President of the United States with employees of the Threat Reduction Administration of the US Department of Defense and contractors of the Pentagon in Ukraine. The presence of these materials is confirmed by the Western media.

The content of the letters shows that Hunter Biden played an important role in creating a financial opportunity to work with pathogens in Ukraine, providing fundraising for Black and Veatch and Metabiota.

- Published correspondence indicates that the true goals of the Pentagon in Ukraine are far from scientific. Thus, in one of the letters, the vice president of Metabiota notes that the company's activities will be aimed at ensuring "... cultural and economic independence of Ukraine from Russia...", which is rather strange for a biotechnology company.

Today we have the opportunity to cite the names of specific officials who took part in the creation of biological weapons components on the territory of Ukraine.

- One of the key figures is Robert Pope, at that time an employee of DTRA and director of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, the purpose of which was to draw the states of the post-Soviet space into military-biological activities. He is also the author of the idea of creating a Central Depository of Especially Dangerous Microorganisms in Kiev.

In his letter to the Minister of Health Ulyana Suprun (by the way, a US citizen), Pope highly appreciates the activities of the head of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, especially noting the provision of access of American specialists to Ukrainian biological facilities and the beginning of work on the formation of a depository of microorganisms.

Let me remind you how such activity ended: according to available information, all pathogenic biomaterials from the storage facility in early February 2022 were taken by military transport aircraft to the United States through Odessa.

- Coordination of military-biological projects in Ukraine and the selection of performers was led by Joanna Wintrol, head of the DTRA office in Ukraine. Under her direct control, the American projects UP-4, UP-6, UP-8 were implemented to study deadly pathogens, including anthrax, Congo-Crimean fever, leptospirosis.

- In continuation - the Ukrainian division of the company Black and Veatch, which is headed by Lance Lippencott. He is also the main contact person for officials of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

The company has been working on behalf of the Pentagon since 2008 as part of projects to study potentially dangerous bioagents. Among them is the UP-1 project to study rickettsia and tick-borne encephalitis virus in arthropods in northwestern Ukraine. In order to globally monitor the biological situation, during the UP-2 project, the company introduced a remote monitoring system for the incidence of tularemia and anthrax at Ukrainian biological facilities.

- Biomonitoring and information transfer were overseen by David Mustra, who is closely associated with another Pentagon contractor, Metabiota. Previously, he led military-biological projects in Ukraine and Eastern Europe under the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

- It should be noted that the activities of the company "Black and Veatch" caused many questions even among the Ukrainian special services.

So, back in 2017, the Kherson department of the SBU in its memorandum indicated: "... Recently, the potential threat of deterioration of the epidemic situation in our country has become relevant, due to the intentions of DTRA through black and Veatch to establish control over the functioning of microbiological laboratories of Ukraine conducting research on pathogens of especially dangerous infections that can be used to create or modernize new types of biological weapons ...".

- Metabiota is known for its developments in predicting outbreaks of infectious diseases. In addition, it was involved by the Pentagon in modeling the epidemic situation in the post-Soviet space. In Ukraine,

Metabiota was presented by Mary Guttieri, vice president of the company and a confidant of Hunter Biden, which is confirmed by the materials of their correspondence.

- The modernization of the laboratories was overseen by Scott Thornton, who also advised local staff on the management of highly hazardous pathogens in the framework of Ukrainian DTRA projects.

! The information obtained demonstrates the direct involvement of the US military department and their contractors in the planning and implementation of Pentagon projects in Ukraine. We believe that these officials should answer questions about the true goals of these works.

- Earlier, we drew attention to the facts of the development in the United States of technical means of delivery and use of biological weapons.

Thus, the US Patent and Trademark Office issued document No. 8,967,029 for an unmanned aerial vehicle for the spread of infected insects in the air. The description of the patent states that with the help of this device, enemy troops can be destroyed or disabled without risk to the US military.

- Other patents that appear on the slide show different types of munitions for delivering chemical and biological formulations.

Their description notes the characteristics: "... low unit cost of destruction and no need for contact with the enemy's manpower...". This is consistent with Washington's concept of "contactless warfare."

The possibility of equipping capsules with toxic, radioactive, narcotic substances, as well as pathogens of infectious diseases is shown.

- We remind you that these documents came to the attention of the public in connection with the investigation of the activities of another biological project of the Pentagon – the Lugar Center in Tbilisi.

In 2018, the Russian Foreign Ministry appealed to the US State Department with a request to give a legal assessment of the development of such technical devices from the standpoint of compliance with the Conventions on the Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons.

The US administration limited itself to a formal retraction, cynically thanking the Russian side for drawing attention to this issue and pointing out that "... the development and production of biological and chemical weapons are prohibited by national legislation, but the decision to grant a patent does not violate U.S. obligations under the BTWC and the CWC..."

In the context of the above, attention is drawn to the request of the Ukrainian enterprise "Motor Sich" to the Turkish manufacturer of unmanned aerial vehicles "Bayraktar".

I want to emphasize that this document is dated December 15, 2021.

Its essence: is it possible to equip this UAV with systems and mechanisms for spraying aerosols with a capacity of over 20 liters.

! With the flight range of such a UAV - up to 300 km and equipping containers with biological formulations - there is a real threat of large-scale use of biological weapons on the territory of the Russian Federation.

In fact, we are talking about the development by the Kiev regime of technical means of delivery and use of biological weapons with the possibility of their use against the Russian Federation.

▪An important result of the special operation of the Russian Armed Forces was the termination of the activities of five Kiev biological laboratories, in which work was carried out with pathogens of anthrax, tularemia, brucellosis, cholera, leptospirosis, African swine fever.

Part of the collection was taken to the United States, the remaining strains were urgently destroyed in accordance with the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine of February 24.

▪The facts of the participation of these laboratories in carrying out work commissioned by the US military department were confirmed. At one of these biological facilities - the Center for Public Health of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine - several UP projects were implemented at once with a total funding of more than \$ 30 million.

▪Please pay attention to the decision signed by the head of the ethics committee of the said Center on June 12, 2019 within the framework of the UP-8 project. The document indicates the conduct of studies with an unknown risk to the life and health of the participants, as well as the concealment of the identity of the subjects.

Previously, we cited the research program of this project and it involves only a standard procedure for blood sampling. The question arises: what life-threatening tests are we talking about, if the document prescribes that "... minor volunteer incidents should be reported to the U.S. Bioethics Committee 72 hours after the incident, and serious incidents, including the death of subjects, within 24 hours..."?

We do not exclude that the official research program is only the "visible part of the iceberg", while in practice volunteers were infected with the Congo-Crimean fever virus, hantaviruses and the causative agent of leptospirosis.

▪Such a dismissive attitude towards the citizens of Ukraine well characterizes the pragmatic approach of the United States to the organization of military-biological research. Developing countries are considered as a testing ground for components of biological weapons and medicines.

▪We believe that the incoming documents indicate an actual violation by the United States and Ukraine of obligations under Article 4 of the BTWC and UN Security Council Resolution No. 1540 of April 28, 2004.

▪We will continue to analyze documentary evidence of violations by the US administration and the Kiev regime of international agreements on the non-proliferation of biological weapons and will inform you

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 21 Mar 2022 17:34:38 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
(USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Media Engagement Opportunity  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir,

A (b)(6) is on leave today, she asked I send this information on her behalf. I have already talked with Randy and Dr. Pope and they support the following media engagement.

BLUF: Justin Ling, an independent journalist, has contacted us a few times in hopes to get an interview with Dr. Pope regarding the bio labs. As you are aware, Dr. Pope and the CTR folks have participated in numerous media engagements (phone and email) over the past few weeks. Justin first reached out around March 3 but we weren't conducting as many engagements at the time, and frankly, his last name was questionable. After some research, we saw he was publishing content that supported the true narrative that Russia was spreading lies about the biolabs. See his recent article and tweets below.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/02/ukraine-biolabs-conspiracy-theory-qanon/>

[https://twitter.com/justin\\_ling/status/1504421256552226821](https://twitter.com/justin_ling/status/1504421256552226821)

I spoke to him this morning and he is now representing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and has been asked to get an interview with a DTRA senior spokesperson, in a documentary style engagement. Dr. Pope is TDY this week and you know how the news cycle is. They are pushing stories pretty quickly (within 24 hours), so we want to jump on this one quickly.

Dr. Pope (b)(6) agree you might be the best representation for this engagement, if you want to participate. Justin also said they want to come film in the building to show, in his words, "this is not a shady, bioweapons agency. They do work that prevents pandemics, not create them."

CTR and PAO endorse this engagement, but wanted to punt to you for final decision. The journalist is also supposed to get back to me later this afternoon on timeline. More to follow as details emerge, but wanted to give you the heads up, that this is in the que.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks!

(b)(6)  
Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (main line)

(b)(6) (cell)

Facebook: Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Twitter: @doddtra

YouTube: @doddtra

Instagram: @doddtra

[www.dtra.mil](http://www.dtra.mil)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 9 Mar 2022 22:52:46 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);(b)(6);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** New Article Released - Matt Field  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and Dr. Pope,  
Gentlemen, the latest new article with Matt Field has been published and posted. BLUF: Solid, relevant quotes by Dr. Pope. The article is helping to the quell some of the false information.

Here is the article link: <https://thebulletin.org/2022/03/in-ukrainian-cities-under-russian-attack-us-linked-research-labs-could-provide-fodder-for-future-russian-disinformation/>

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In Ukrainian cities under Russian attack, US-linked research labs could provide fodder for future Russian disinformation  
By Matt Field | March 9, 2022

With Russian President Vladimir Putin showing no sign of backing down on his country's assault on Ukraine, US officials are trying to prevent the Russian military from capturing pathogens stored in US-affiliated research labs in Ukraine, where they could potentially mischaracterize activities at the facilities. It's an urgent task, given that the director of the US military program that works with Ukrainian public and animal health labs said some are in cities now under attack.

At the end of February, Robert Pope, the director of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, said his program had lost contact with the Ukrainian labs. In an update on Friday, he said that officials had communicated with authorities responsible for facilities run by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health but not the with those overseeing the veterinary health institutions the US government also partners with in the country.

Several of those labs are in cities being attacked now, Pope said. "Should Russian forces occupy a city with one of these facilities, we are concerned that Russia will fabricate 'evidence' of nefarious activity in an attempt to lend credibility to their ongoing disinformation about these facilities."

On the veterinary health side, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency supports 14 facilities and diagnostic laboratories, Pope said. "Most of these facilities are regional diagnostic veterinary laboratories that provide Ukraine with animal sample collection ability and basic laboratory capabilities for initial diagnostics of potential diseases in Ukraine's animal population. They are part of the network of labs that help Ukraine prevent, detect, and respond to animal diseases like African swine fever," he said.

Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland echoed Pope's concerns about the security of the US-linked labs at a Senate hearing Tuesday. "Ukraine has biological research facilities, which, in fact, we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of, so we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach," she said.

Pope's fears that the invasion will expose the labs to new disinformation narratives does not appear far-fetched. Already at least one figure with links to the Russian disinformation ecosystem is broadcasting plans to bring journalists into war-torn Ukraine to tour US-affiliated labs there.

John Mark Dougan, a former American police officer who claims to have political asylum in Russia, has put up at least five videos on YouTube in recent days saying that Ukraine is hosting US bioweapons labs; some of the videos have been viewed nearly 30,000 times. In one video, he claims to have secured permission to go to the labs. "I said, 'Look, I want to get a bunch of journalists, truth seeking journalists together, and I want to do a tour of these laboratories,'" Dougan said, inviting journalists to contact him for the supposed trip.

John Mark Dougan on his YouTube channel. YouTuber John Mark Dougan, an American living in Russia, claims he will bring journalists to US-linked laboratories in Ukraine. Credit: YouTube.

In his videos, Dougan points to fact sheets on Ukrainian facilities that once were on the US embassy in Kyiv's website, but have since been taken down as evidence of US government malfeasance. The documents list general information about US support for various labs as well as state whether labs have received permits to work with pathogens, according to an archival search. While the links on the Kyiv embassy site are not functional, they nonetheless remain prominently displayed. "Are they maybe trying to hide evidence of their bioweapons program?" Dougan asks in a Feb. 26 video. Dougan also claims a whistleblower who once worked in a veterinary clinic in Ukraine has provided him with information.

In a Dec. 10 video, Dougan mentions a Ukrainian who "dropped off some documents" with "interesting stuff." Throughout the video, he displays pictures of documents, laboratories, or officials, often drawing from publicly available sources such promotional material about the Defense Threat Reduction Agency or the 2005 agreement that dictates the terms of the arrangement between Ukraine and the agency. He also refers to a program called UP-8. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency told the Bulletin that UP-8 involved voluntary blood draws to see what antibodies troops were exposed to in nature. Previous allegations picked up in Russian state media have targeted the program, including claims that the blood draws could have caused death among Ukrainian troops.

After being sought by the FBI for releasing the addresses of thousands of judges and other officials in Florida online, Dougan fled the United States in 2016, according to an investigation by The Daily Beast in 2019.

Once in Russia, Dougan apparently caught the interest of some of the country's most prolific disinformation producers, state-controlled outlets RT and Sputnik. RT, which researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute once labeled "one of the most important organizations in the global political economy of disinformation," even produced a 51-minute-long documentary on Dougan.

In an email, Dougan questioned the Bulletin's objectivity, asked why the State Department would delete documents if it weren't a "clean up campaign," and questioned the Defense Department's funding for biological research. "I've been around the block a few times, and I know when someone is trying to write a con-job article in defense of the indefensible," he said. "And I worked in law enforcement long enough to know when the government is trying to hide something."

The labs in Ukraine are not bioweapons facilities, nor are they run by the US government, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has said; they are operated by partner countries. In fact, the Cooperative

Threat Reduction Program that manages the US partnerships with labs worked extensively with the Russian government after the fall of the Soviet Union to secure weapons of mass destruction, including the remnants of the massive Soviet bioweapons program. But despite media investigations and independent experts debunking claims against the US-affiliated labs over the years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has re-ignited the disinformation attacks on the program.

A research lab in Kyiv. A research lab in Kyiv, Ukraine built by the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Credit: Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
Russian state media, alleged Kremlin proxy media outlets, and influencers like Tim Kirby, another American expat with ties to RT, began to focus once again on the lab disinformation as Russia moved troops toward the Ukrainian border. That trend appears to have intensified since the invasion. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov mused about the labs in a recent state-TV interview, and the Russian embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina posted on Facebook that the United States was building labs in Ukraine to destroy "the Russian people at the genetic level."

In a briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian lent support to the Russian accusations. "In particular, the United States, as the party that knows the laboratories best, should release relevant specific information as soon as possible, including what viruses are stored and the research that has been carried out," the spokesman said, according to Chinese state-media company Xinhua.

And in a twist, the Russian accusations appear to be gaining traction among the hard-right in the United States, with an assist from Dougan, who went on QAnon influencer Zak Paine's RedPill78 podcast to discuss the lab conspiracy theory. A few days later, Paine re-visited the topic to say that the Russians were "attacking biological weapons facilities funded by the United States" and run, in part by Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a frequent target of the right wing.

Putin, Pope said, may want to use the Ukrainian labs as a rationale for the war. "We know Putin lied when he said he wasn't preparing to invade Ukraine," the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program director said, "and we are confident that Russia is willing to lie to try to justify their invasion."

-----  
Will notify NCB STRAT team/OSD PA of the article.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:41:04 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

H (b)(6)

Adding a few others from USUN to confirm, but I believe USUN has incorporated this edit.

Thank you,

(b)(6)  
Multilateral Affairs Officer | IO/UNP  
O: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:12 AM  
**To:** (b)(6) Johnson, Richard C (b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6) Johnson, (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6) We will have at least one critical comment from the DAS-level. Final chops are still coming in, but will get you something in 20 mins.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) SVOIP)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM

**To:** (b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)

(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6) Johnson,

Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Attached are the draft remarks for LTG's use during today's UNSC meeting on Ukraine bio labs. These have been cleared/circulated at very senior levels. Sharing with you per chain below and we welcome fact checking and legal redline edits. Please send any edits by 9:00.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer I IO/UNP

(b)(6)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:51 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Fwd: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

(b)(6) — see below. OSD is asking to chop on the points for tomorrow's UNSC Meeting. Get Outlook for iOS

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM

**To:** (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C; (b)(6)  
RE (b)(6)

POLICY (USA); OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly, (b)(6) just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear (b)(6)

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)  
Secure Phone: (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (***IO, RIA Novosti***)

Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED



## EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

### ***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

Thursday, March 10, 2022

1800 ET

#### **SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)
- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

#### **RUSSIA**

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that "Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace." (*@delcyrodriguezv*)

## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine's application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador's remarks. (22 OPCW The Hague 18)

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). (*UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE*)
- (SBU) The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20)
- (SBU) From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (22 Geneva 158)
- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (*European Commission Press Release*)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov).

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:44:50 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(USA);Johnson, Richard C SES (USA);Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Reif, Kingston A SES (USA);Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks, folks, for the quick review. Copied below is the latest version. We have amended to make it clear that we refute the claim that Ukraine has any BW program. I think this should work for everybody but please let us know if there are any further flags.

Cheers,

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor, U.S. Mission to the United Nations (Washington office)  
USUN/W, U.S. Department of State (HST Room 6633)  
Office: (b)(6)

### **UNSC Russia Disinformation Remarks**

**Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield,**

United States Ambassador to the United Nations

March 11, 2022

Thank you, Madam President. And thank you to our briefers for your remarks this morning.

Russia asked the Security Council for today's meeting for the sole purpose of lying and spreading disinformation.

Last month, Secretary Blinken laid out with tragic accuracy what Russia was about to do. He specifically warned that Russia would manufacture a pretext for attack, and he even predicted that Russia

would fabricate allegations about chemical weapons to justify its own violent attacks against the Ukrainian people.

Today, the world is watching Russia do exactly what we warned it would. Russia is attempting to use the Security Council to legitimize disinformation and deceive people to justify President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

I will say this once: Ukraine does not have a biological weapons program, and there are no Ukrainian biological weapons laboratories supported by the United States. Not near Russia's borders, not anywhere. Any claims to the contrary are categorically false.

So here are the facts: Ukraine owns and operates its own laboratory infrastructure. These labs provide biosafety and biosecurity training. They make it possible to detect and diagnose pandemics like COVID-19.

This is work that has been done proudly, clearly, and out in the open. It has absolutely nothing to do with biological weapons.

In fact, we are deeply concerned that Russia's calling for this meeting is a potential false flag effort in action -- exactly the kind we have been warning about.

That's because Russia has a track record of falsely accusing the West of the very violations that Russia itself is perpetrating.

Russia has a well-documented history of using chemical weapons.

It is Russia that has long maintained a biological weapons program in violation of international law.

It was Russian operatives who poisoned Aleksey Navalny, and Sergey and Yulia Skripal, with nerve agents.

And now, we are concerned that Russia may be planning to use chemical or biological agents in Ukraine.

As a reminder, Russia is a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a State Party and Depository to the Biological Weapons Convention.

Russia's convening of today's session coincides with Russia's ominous letter to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons yesterday, suggesting falsely that Ukraine was preparing to use chemical weapons itself.

The intent behind these lies seems clear, and it is deeply troubling. We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, on large crowds of civilians, as part of another staged or false flag incident, or to support tactical military operations.

[pause]

From the beginning, our strategy to counter Russia's tactics has been to share what we know with the world transparently. And candidly, we have been right more often than we'd like.

We're not going to let Russia get away with gaslighting the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council's purpose by using it as a venue for legitimizing its violence.

And despite Russia's best efforts, the media -- and everyday Ukrainians -- are documenting the truth on the ground.

Russia can't paint over the  
front

page of the New York Times, which on Monday featured the bodies of a Ukrainian mother and her two children -- who died while trying to cross a bridge outside Kyiv in their attempt to flee to safety.

Russia cannot cover up the work of  
AP

news photographers who captured a doctor attempting to resuscitate an 18-month-old, Kirill, who died from Russian shelling in Mariupol.

Russia cannot suppress the Facebook post, confirmed and amplified by  
CBS News,

that told the story of the 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who fled to Slovakia, by himself, with only a passport, a plastic bag, and a phone number scrawled on his hand.

Russia cannot silence the  
NBC

News video footage of terrified Ukrainians rushing to packed train stations -- of mothers asking strangers to help pass their babies through the crowd and onto trains bound for safety.

Russia is failing in its quest to create an alternate reality. In fact, not even Russian diplomats can keep their propaganda straight.

Just yesterday, the Kremlin's spokesman said that he didn't have clear information about the Russian forces who fired on a maternity hospital...

Then the Russian Foreign Minister denied Russia attacked Ukraine at all, right before admitting that Russia deliberately targeted this maternity hospital.

Their story didn't matter, because the world had already seen the searing images broadcast on CNN of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated from the scene.

Even Russia's own citizens are tiring of such lies.

Russian athletes are writing "No war" on their shoes and on TV cameras. Russian citizens are marching in the streets and protesting Putin's war of choice. And even Russian state TV pundits -- Putin's own propaganda arm -- have called for Putin to stop the military action.

This is why we didn't object to holding today's meeting. Today's meeting has confirmed our predictions, revealed Russia's objectives to the world, and exposed Russia's lies for what they are.

It is a page directly out of the Russian playbook -- and it will not convince us one bit. Russian troops should be concerned about the impact of their potential use of chemical weapons and how they will be viewed by the world.

Unlike the Russian government -- whose first instinct is to silence -- we are confident that truth and transparency will prevail.

We call on President Putin to end this unprovoked, unconscionable war against the Ukrainian people and return sincerely to the negotiating table.

###

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor, U.S. Mission to the United Nations (Washington office)

USUN/W, U.S. Department of State (HST Room 6633)

Office: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:41 AM

**To:** (b)(6)

Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Hi (b)(6)

Adding a few others from USUN to confirm, but I believe USUN has incorporated this edit.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer | IO/UNP

O: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:12 AM

**To:** (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C

(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6) Johnson,

Richard C (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6) We will have at least one critical comment from the DAS-level. Final chops are still coming in, but will get you something in 20 mins.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) mobile)  
(b)(6) SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM

**To:** (b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6); Johnson,  
Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Attached are the draft remarks for LTG's use during today's UNSC meeting on Ukraine bio labs. These have been cleared/circulated at very senior levels. Sharing with you per chain below and we welcome fact checking and legal redline edits. Please send any edits by 9:00.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer LIO/UNP

O: (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:51 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Fwd: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

(b)(6) – see below. OSD is asking to chop on the points for tomorrow’s UNSC Meeting.  
Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM

**To:** (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard

C; (b)(6)  
RE  
PC

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly, (b)(6) just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I’ll share the latest once we’ve got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) > Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) <(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear (b)(6)

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)  
Secure Phone: (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6) Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)

Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <[EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <[EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT  
*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

***TFUA01 - Ukraine  
SitRep  
No. 72***

**Thursday, March 10, 2022**

**1800 ET**

**SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 *USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*)
- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000

U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)

- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

## **RUSSIA**

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that “Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace.” (@delcyrodriguezv)

## **INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS**

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine’s application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador’s remarks. (22 OPCW The Hague 18)

## **HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION**

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 18:30:39 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Directors; DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP:Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); Warsaw, (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** NSC - Ukraine TPs and Press Guidance  
**Attachments:** NSC Press Guidance - Sanctions.docx, NSC Press Guidance - China and Russia 3.22.docx, NSC Press Guidance - Cyber 3.22.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,  
Sir, attached are additional TPs from the NSC for messaging. These separate TPs go a bit deeper into the cyber aspect, China and Russia topline messages and sanctions.  
While most of the DTRA leaders are not engaged in the current media relations activities, the information is still invaluable for "top down" message-sharing purposes. The TPs are being provided for all of our leaders to know the approved posture and associated narrative.

V/t,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(Work Cell)

NIPRC: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS

- Gennady Timchenko's 132-foot superyacht was seized in San Remo, Italy.
  - Andrey Melnichenko's 469-foot, \$578 million superyacht was seized in Trieste, Italy.
  - Sergei Chemezov's \$140 million superyacht was seized in Barcelona, Spain
  - Igor Sechin's 280-foot yacht was impounded in France.
  - Alisher Usmanov's \$18 million resort compound was impounded in Sardinia.
- As long as President Putin continues this war, the United States and our allies and partners are committed to ensuring the Russian government feels the compounding effects of our current and future economic actions.

**Q: What more can you do?**

- We have hit hard at the things Putin cares about the most, degrading his military, access to cutting edge technology, chipping away at his chokehold on energy, and ability to project power and influence. But we will continue to intensify them further and we are not going to run out of options anytime soon. For example, we can:
  - Broaden sanctions to new targets
  - Deepen the severity of sanctions on existing target
  - Further eject Russia from international economic order
  - Further deny Russia the capacity to modernize and diversify his economy
  - Further expose and hold to account the kleptocracy
- We will provide Ukraine the arms to fight, provide direct humanitarian and financial support, and ratchet up the pressure on Putin's crumbling economy to make him pay the price and weaken his position and isolate him from the world, while strengthening the hand of the Ukrainians and the international community. Our efforts are working and we will keep going – it is up to Putin what he does next.

**Q: Why not secondary sanctions on other countries who help Russia?**

- We have applied an enormous amount of economic pressure. And in order to sustain and escalate that pressure over time, part of that is about new designations, new targets, but a big part of it is about

effective enforcement and evasion — applying the lessons that we've learned from other circumstances where we have, in fact, imposed sanctions on other countries. So, stay tuned for that.

**Q: Status on SWIFT?**

- Key sanctioned Russian financial institutions are being disconnected from the SWIFT international financial messaging network. The EU is implementing a regulation that removes seven Russian banks from SWIFT, effectively shutting them out of the world's most important financial messaging network.
- These institutions represent one-fourth of the banking sector, and include: Bank Otkritie, Novikombank, Promsvyazbank, Rossiya Bank, Sovcombank, Vnesheconombank (VEB), and VTB Bank.
- As you all know, this happens institution by institution like it was with Iran. Institutions will continue to be de-swifted through the EU process. I defer to the EU on any more details.

**Q: Will you sanction X or Y?**

- We don't preview our sanctions. Our sanctions are unprecedented — in no other circumstance have we moved so swiftly and so significantly to impose costs on any other country as we have done to Russia. Our sanctions have already landed a debilitating hit, one that is intensifying every day. We will continue to impose costs with allies and partners.

**Q: Regime change?**

- No. Our sanctions are intended to target Putin's war machine for his war of choice. The Russian people will make their own choices.

**Q: Energy prices? SPR release?**

- This is Putin's price hike. Since Putin began his military buildup on Ukrainian borders, the price of gas at the pump in America went up 75 cents.
- There is widespread consensus that the sharp runup of energy prices since January was caused by the building of Putin's troops at Ukraine's border.

- **President Biden is doing everything he can to minimize Putin's Price Hike here at home. I don't have further actions to preview at this time.**
  - The Administration has already announced its releasing more than 90 million barrels from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve this fiscal year.
  - It is simply not true that the Biden administration's policies are holding back domestic energy production. U.S. oil and gas production is approaching record highs and pumped more oil in President Biden's first year than Trump's, even while thousands of drilling permits on federal lands go unused. *And*, nearly 60% of leased/permitted acres remain non-producing. That's a lot—in the range of 20 million acres. **The oil and gas industry and their financiers doesn't need an invitation from the President to keep up with demand.**
  - And, the United States comes into this crisis from a position of strength: Under President Biden, the strength and resiliency of the U.S. economy has been clear with the fastest economic growth in 40 years. Real GDP rose 7%, paired with the greatest year of job growth in American history
- We must walk and chew gum – address supply in the short term because families need to take their kids to school, and go to work, get groceries and go about their lives – and often that requires gas.
- But in the long term we must speed up – not slow down – our transition to a clean energy future. The President has proposed credits to make EVs more affordable and weatherize homes and businesses that will cut energy costs and save American families an average of \$500 a year. When we have electric cars powered by clean energy, we will never have to worry about gas prices again. And autocrats like Putin won't be able to use fossil fuels as weapons against other nations.

## **China and Russia**

### **Q: Have you seen any indications that China will or will not provide assistance to Russia?**

- I can't make predictions going forward. What I can tell you is we have not seen the provision of military equipment by China to Russia since Russia's war against Ukraine. But this is something we are monitoring closely.
- And the President made clear to President Xi the implications and consequences of any such provision of equipment, and they very well understand one another.

### **Q: Where does China fall on the agenda during the trip? Will there be an effort to try to put specific concrete steps in place if China does provide that assistance?**

- The President will certainly consult on the question of China's potential provision of support for Russia's war against Ukraine while he's in Brussels. He'll do so with NATO. He'll also do so when he addresses the 27 leaders of the European Union because on April 1st, the European Union is having a summit with China.
- So, the trip will be an opportunity for the United States and our European partners to coordinate closely on what our message is. Without getting ahead of the conversations, I expect President Biden to read out his direct, substantive, and detailed call with President Xi.
- We believe we're very much on the same page with our European partners and we will be speaking with one voice on this issue.

### **Q: Will any action be taken together to hold China accountable together?**

- China's alignment with Russia and our shared concerns will be one topic of discussion. This is not about any deliverable of this trip.
- We will continue monitoring closely and speaking directly with China and with our allies and partners.

**Q: What consequences could China face?**

- I'm not going to publicly lay out our options. We will communicate directly to China and with our allies and partners.

**Q: Can China serve as an effective mediator in this crisis?**

- We are making no such ask or request of China. Our concerns about China's alignment with Russia are clear.

**Q: Taiwan?**

- President Xi raised Taiwan in his call with President Biden. President Biden reiterated our One China policy based on the Taiwan Relations Act, Three Communiqués, and Six Assurances and underscored concerns about Beijing's coercive and provocative actions across the Taiwan Strait.
- He made clear that we remain opposed to any unilateral changes to the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, and that we have concerns about Beijing's coercive and provocative actions. President Biden himself voted for the Taiwan Relations Act and he is firmly committed to the principles in it, including supporting Taiwan's self-defense.
- The Biden Admin has consistently demonstrated rock-solid support for Taiwan, and we will continue to do so.

## **NSC Press Guidance – Cyber**

- We have previously warned about the potential for Russia to conduct malicious cyber activity against the United States, including as a response to the unprecedented economic costs we've imposed in response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine or other actions of support.
- We are reiterating those warnings. And we are doing so based on evolving intelligence that the Russian Government is exploring options for potential cyberattacks on critical infrastructure in the United States.
- This is a call to action and a call to responsibility for us all. We all must take the steps within our control to harden our cyber defenses to protect against any threats.
- The majority of our critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector – and those owners and operators have the ability and responsibility to harden our cyber resilience. We urge the private sector to take the steps within your control – to act immediately to protect the services millions of Americans all across the country rely on.
- The Administration has worked extensively over the last year so that we would be prepared to meet precisely this sort of threat.
  - Last week, federal agencies convened more than 100 companies to share new cybersecurity threat information in light of evolving intelligence. During those meetings, we also shared resources and tools available to help partners harden their security - like advisories sourced from sensitive intelligence, and hands on support from local FBI field offices and CISA Regional offices.
  - Last week's meeting is a continuation of the extensive cyber resilience efforts we accelerated last fall. Energy, EPA, Treasury, and DHS have hosted both classified and unclassified cybersecurity briefings with hundreds of owners and operators of privately-owned critical infrastructure.

- The NSA, FBI, and CISA have published several cybersecurity advisories that set out protections the private sector can deploy to improve security.
- The President has also directed Departments and Agencies to use all existing government authorities to mandate new cybersecurity and network defense measures. You've seen us do that where we have the authority to do so, as with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security directives for pipelines, railroads, and rail transit.
- And as the President has said, the United States is not seeking confrontation with Russia. But he has also said that if Russia conducts disruptive cyber-attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure, we will respond in a time and manner of our choosing.

## **Q&A**

### **Q: Has the President warned Putin not to cyberattack US?**

- The President has been clear to President Putin since he met him face to face in Geneva last year: If the Russian government engages in disruptive cyberattacks against the United States, we will respond in a time and manner of our choosing.
- The President reiterated that warning in his statement today. The Kremlin will not doubt the seriousness of our warning.
- In every conversation President Biden has had with President Putin, he has been very clear that the United States will respond if the Russian government engages in disruptive cyberattacks against the U.S.

### **Q: When did you get this threat warning?**

- We've been warning for months about the potential for Russia to engage in malicious cyber activity against the United States. We've gotten evolving intelligence in the past several days that Russia may be exploring options for potential cyberattacks.

- We shared this information with critical infrastructure owners and operators including steps to harden their security immediately and we will continue to share information.

**Q: Why haven't they attacked yet?**

- I won't get into why something hasn't happened that could. I can speak to what we have done and can do.
- We can warn the American public and the private sector about the evolving intelligence that the Russian Government is exploring options for potential cyberattacks.
- We have taken strong steps to strengthen our cybersecurity and we will continue to do so.

**Q: What changed? What do you think made them take more forward leaning actions?**

- I can't speak for the Kremlin, I can speak for the evolving intelligence we are seeing.

**Q: Are we continuing the cyber channel with Russia?**

- No. Russia is engaged in a brutal and unjustified war against Ukraine, so our channel on criminal ransomware actors is not active.

**Q: Why are you doing this now?**

- We wanted to share the information as soon as we could. We shared information with the private sector last week to help them act immediately and are reiterating those warnings with the American public. The President will also speak to this at his BRT event as well.

**Q: Would a cyberattack constitute an act of war?**

- I won't speculate on something that hasn't happened yet. As the President has said, the United States is not seeking confrontation with Russia. But he has also said that if Russia conducts disruptive

cyber-attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure, we will respond in a time and manner of our choosing.

**Q: Does a cyberattack trigger Article 5?**

- Last June, when the NATO leaders gathered for the NATO Summit, President Biden consulting with them, we put out a statement that spoke to cyberattacks and their relationship to Article 5. And we could see circumstances in which a collective response by the Alliance to a cyberattack would be called by an Ally. That is absolutely something where we and other countries could bring capabilities to bear to help a country both defend itself and respond to a particular cyberattack.
- Now, that's not necessarily the same thing as a military response. That response could take many different forms. But we have made clear through NATO that cybersecurity is an Alliance issue where NATO is prepared to pull together both to enhance resilience, enhance defenses, and, if necessary, use the appropriate tools to respond.

**Q: We've seen reports of recent cyber incidents. Isn't Russia already conducting cyberattacks against US?**

- We have not made any new attributions of cyberattacks by the Russian government. What we would distinguish between is gaining access to a system, which could be used for a variety of purposes — intelligence collection or mere preparation for a future attack — and the actual disruptive, destructive type of attack of the kind you saw that shut down the Colonial Pipeline last year. And we have not seen that.
- The distinction the President was making was the distinction between all of that preparatory work, which has been ongoing for years and the type of destruction or disruption that would result in the kinds of physical effects we've seen in past attacks.

**Q: How will you respond if Russia does move forward and cyberattacks the U.S.?**

- The President has been very clear: we will respond in a time and manner of our choosing.

**Q: Will you cyberattack back?**

- I won't preview our response and can't get into our offensive capabilities from here – but the Kremlin knows how strong they are.

**Q: Which companies received the threat briefings last week?**

- I can't go into specifics but can say that experts at the FBI, CISA, DOE, and other sector risk management agencies took a risk-based approach to develop the participant list.

**Q: Are you looking for new authorities? What kinds of authorities?**

- Congress recently passed the Cyber Incident Reporting Act, which mandates critical infrastructure owners to report cyber incidents to the Federal Government.
- We always work with Congress to address our shared goals and will continue to do so.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 21:20:27 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** QAnon Embraces Russia Conspiracy Theories on Ukraine Labs  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir -- FYSA -- you mentioned you weren't tracking the penetration of Russian disinformation on labs into QAnon. Here's a report on that from Newsweek today:

<https://www.newsweek.com/qanon-embraces-russia-conspiracy-theories-ukraine-labs-1686816>

"Evidence also shows many members of QAnon believe a "baseless" theory that the Russian war is actually a secret mission backed by former President Donald Trump to destroy clandestine bioweapon labs created by Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical advisor to President Joe Biden. NBC reported on March 4 that the theory was being spread during the American offshoot of the "Freedom Convoy" of protesting truckers in Washington, D.C., by members of QAnon."

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 03:12:43 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA); (b)(6); (b)(6); OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Re: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Attachments:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine)\_NSC v5.docx, smime.p7s

Thanks (b)(6)

As promised, here's our latest fact sheet.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:59 PM  
**To:** (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA); (b)(6); (b)(6); (b)(6); OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR <osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.cooperative-threat-reduction-ctr@mail.mil>  
**Subject:** [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Re: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

I've forwarded your message on to USUN and IO/UNP, who are wrangling this. We're keeping to a relatively high level and dismissing the credibility of allegations outright, along the lines taken by the White House and Ned Price in the last day or so — and voicing our concern about possible Russian CBW use.

We dont know for sure what the Russians are going to raise - my guess is that at least in part they'll focus on the new allegations levied today.

CJP

Get Outlook for iOS < Caution-<https://aka.ms/o0ukef> >

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM  
**To:** (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C; (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); OSD Pentagon  
OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly, Liz Sherwood Randall just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)

(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear Rob,

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal: (b)(6)  
Secure Phone: (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

mailto:(b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU)Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (***IO, RIA Novosti***)

Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >  
**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT  
*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

## ***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

Thursday, March 10, 2022  
1800 ET

### **SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any

strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 *USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-

<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >

- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 *USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

## RUSSIA

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that "Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace." (@*delcyrodriguezv*)

## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine's application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador's remarks. (22 *OPCW The Hague 18*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20OPCW%20THE%20HAGUE%2018%22> >

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). (*UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE*)
- (SBU)The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. (*22 USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (SBU)From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (*22 Geneva 158*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20GENEVA%20158%22> >
- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (*European Commission Press Release*)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov) < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > .

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Page 1078 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1079 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:19:33 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Scholl, Ryan B  
RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_  
OSD-PA edits  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Hold please. Minor updates coming in a minute...

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:08 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6) (b)(6)  
>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
>; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
> Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
>  
**Subject:** FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

Sir, this just came in from OSD-PA through OSD-P. They took what we provided and re-ordered it. We concurred.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:35 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:13:48 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR  
(USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_  
OSD-PA edits  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

Thank you copy all - sending now to A&S/NCB.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

(Work)

(Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)

SIPR:

JWIC:

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:08 PM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

>; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)

> Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)

Subject: FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

Sir, this just came in from OSD-PA through OSD-P. They took what we  
provided and re-ordered it. We concurred.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:35 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:10:37 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_  
OSD-PA edits  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir,

Thank you. We will push ASAP!

Respectfully,

(b)(6)

Military Assistant to the Acting Director  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

Comm/Mobile: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:09 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

**Subject:** FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

(b)(6)

Here's the version to transmit to NCB.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:08 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
>; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
>lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
>

Subject: FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

Sir, this just came in from OSD-PA through OSD-P. They took what we  
provided and re-ordered it. We concurred.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:35 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program  
(Ukraine)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:20:47 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits  
**Attachments:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine).docx, smime.p7s

Minor but important changes. Thanks (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:20 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6) (b)(6)  
>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
>; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
> Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
>

**Subject:** RE: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

Hold please. Minor updates coming in a minute...

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**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6) (b)(6)  
>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
>; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
> Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
>

**Subject:** FW: 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine) \_ OSD-PA edits

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(b)(6)

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**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:35 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)  
**Subject:** 20220310\_Fact Sheet\_DoD Biological Threat Reduction Program (Ukraine)

Page 1085 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1086 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:31:02 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6) OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Attachments:** LTG remarks UNSC Russian disinfo (DoD).docx, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

We appreciate the opportunity to review. Attached reflects one critical edit that DASD Johnson and our lawyers insist on changing before LTG deliver these remarks (we'd get you higher level clearance if we had more than an hour to staff this). Please let us know if you don't intend to take that edit in particular, and we will elevate accordingly.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) mobile)  
(b)(6) SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM  
**To:** (b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
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**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear Rob,

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I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)  
Secure Phone: (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM

(b)(6)

To: (b)(6)  
Cc: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6) Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

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Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>  
**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED



EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT  
*Operations Center Crisis Management and Strategy*

## ***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

Thursday, March 10, 2022  
1800 ET

### **SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)

- (U) Ukraine’s MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine’s International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 USOffice Ukraine Affairs Unit 20)
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

## RUSSIA

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that “Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace.” (@delcyrodriguezv)

## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine’s application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador’s remarks. (22 OPCW The Hague 18)

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). (*UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE*)
- (SBU) The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. (*22 USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20*)
- (SBU) From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (*22 Geneva 158*)
- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (*European Commission Press Release*)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov).

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**UNSC Russia Disinformation Remarks**  
**Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield,**  
United States Ambassador to the United Nations  
March 11, 2022

Thank you, Madam President.

Russia asked the Security Council for today's meeting for the sole purpose of lying and spreading disinformation.

Last month, Secretary Blinken laid out with tragic accuracy what Russia was about to do. He specifically warned that Russia would manufacture a pretext for attack, and he even predicted that Russia would fabricate allegations about chemical weapons to justify their own violent attacks against the Ukrainian people.

Today, the world is watching Russia do exactly what we warned they would. Russia is attempting to use the Security Council to legitimize disinformation and deceive people to justify President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

I will say this once: there are no Ukrainian biological weapons labs, and the United States supporting the development of biological weapons by the Ukraine or anywhere else in the world supported by the United States. Not near Russia's borders, not anywhere. That is categorically false.

I will spend the balance of my time stating the truth.

So here are the facts: Ukraine owns and operates its own laboratory infrastructure. These labs provide biosafety and biosecurity training. They make it possible to detect and diagnose diseases, including pandemics like COVID-19.

This is work that has been done proudly, clearly, and out in the open. It has absolutely nothing to do with biological weapons.

In fact, we are deeply concerned that Russia's calling for this meeting is a potential false flag effort in action -- exactly the kind we have been warning about.

That's because Russia has a track record of falsely accusing the West of the very violations that Russia itself is perpetrating.

Russia has a well-documented history of using chemical weapons.

It is Russia that has long maintained a biological weapons program in violation of international law.

And now, we are concerned that Russia may be planning to use chemical or biological agents in Ukraine.

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, on large crowds of civilians, as part of another staged or false flag incident, or to support tactical military operations.

[pause]

From the beginning, our strategy to counter Russia's tactics has been to share what we know with the world transparently. And candidly, we have been right more often than we'd like.

We're not going to let Russia get away with gaslighting the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council's purpose by using it as a venue for legitimizing its violence.

And despite Russia's best efforts, the media -- and everyday Ukrainians -- are documenting the truth on the ground.

Russia can't paint over the front page of the New York Times, which on Sunday featured the bodies of a Ukrainian mother and her two children -- refugees who had died while trying to cross a bridge outside Kyiv.

Russia cannot cover up the work of AP news photographers who captured a doctor attempting to resuscitate an 18-month-old baby, Kirill, who died from Russian shelling in Mariupol.

Russia cannot suppress the Facebook post, confirmed and amplified by CBS News, that told the story of the 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who fled to Slovakia, by himself, with only a passport, a plastic bag, and a phone number scrawled on his hand.

Russia cannot silence the NBC News video footage of terrified Ukrainians rushing to packed train stations -- of mothers asking strangers to pass babies through the crowd and onto the trains bound for safety.

Russia is failing in its quest to create an alternate reality. In fact, not even Russian diplomats can keep their propaganda straight.

Just yesterday, the Kremlin's spokesman said that he didn't have clear information about the Russian forces who fired on a maternity hospital...

Then the Russian Foreign Minister denied Russia attacked Ukraine at all, right before admitting that Russia deliberately targeted this maternity hospital.

Their story didn't matter, because the world had already seen the searing images from CNN's on-the-ground footage of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated from the scene.

Even Russia's own citizens are tiring of such lies.

Russian athletes are writing "No war" on their shoes and on TV cameras. Russian citizens are marching in the streets and protesting Putin's war of choice. And even Russian state TV pundits -- Putin's own propaganda arm -- have called for Putin to stop the military action.

This is why we didn't object to holding today's meeting. Today's meeting has confirmed our predictions, revealed Russia's objectives to the world, and exposed Russia's lies for what they are.

Unlike the Russian government -- whose first instinct is to silence lie -- we are confident that truth and transparency will prevail.

(b)(5)

[*pause*]

In recent weeks, many have asked whether Russia should have a place on this Council. Whether a nation that subverts and undermines the UN Charter should continue to occupy a position of permanent leadership.

I believe these are legitimate questions to ask. And Russia owes us answers.

###

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:43:53 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thank you.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:17 AM  
To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
Subject: FW: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

FYSA (b)(6) is obviously tracking. Also, FYSA. Kingston pushed the thread to ASD/NCB.

Rhys M. Williams, PhD  
Director (Acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 8:12 AM  
To: (b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Col. Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6) Johnson, Richard  
C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(6)  
Subject: RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6) We will have at least one critical comment from the DAS-level. Final chops are still coming in, but will get you something in 20 mins.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy

Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6)  
(office)  
(mobile)  
(SVOIP)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM  
To: (b)(6) Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6); Johnson, Richard  
C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: (b)(6)  
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Attached are the draft remarks for LTG's use during today's UNSC meeting on Ukraine bio labs. These have been cleared/circulated at very senior levels. Sharing with you per chain below and we welcome fact checking and legal redline edits. Please send any edits by 9:00.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer IO/UNP

O: (b)(6)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:51 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: Fwd: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

(b)(6) - see below. OSD is asking to chop on the points for tomorrow's UNSC Meeting.

Get Outlook for iOS  
<<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faka.ms%2Fo0ukef&data=04%7C01%7CMusgroveKA%40state.gov%7C485286aa306f4853dfc408da030a00e0%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637825638735549005%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAilCjQljojV2luMzIiLjBjBTil6Ik1haWwILCjXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sddata=nvUDtuG%2BxCAjFGmS8WIHyOW2PVVD0AliwWFj0HbU0Yk%3D&reserved=0>>

---

From: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM  
To: (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
Cc: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) OSD Pentagon OUSD Policy List  
Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
Subject: RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly (b)(6) just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM  
To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
>  
Cc: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)  
Chief, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6)  
Inson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear Rob,

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs

Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation

U.S. Department of State

Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)

Secure Phone: (b)(6)

Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.

From: Popc, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6) nson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6) >; Jay, Aaron M (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Subject: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?  
Importance: High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

\* (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (IO, RIA Novosti)

Best regards,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

From: EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov <<mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>> >  
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM  
To: EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov <<mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>> >  
Subject: (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72

Thursday, March 10, 2022

1800 ET

SITUATION ON THE GROUND

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<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mm%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22>>

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<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mm%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22>>

\* (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian

fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (CNN)

## RUSSIA

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## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

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<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mm%3a%2222%20OPCW%20THE%20HAGUE%2018%22>>

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

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<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mm%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22>>
- \* (SBU) From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (22 Geneva 158)  
<<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mm%3a%2222%20GENEVA%20158%22>>
- \* (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (European Commission Press Release)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov)  
<<mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov>> .

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 19:26:31 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** OUSD A-S (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Rovnak, Megan  
F SES DIA (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: CTR Disinformation Talking Points  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

In receipt and I will pass on.

Vr

(b)(6)

Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Public Affairs  
RM 2D932

- NIPR (b)(6)
- SIPR:
- COM
- CELL:
- SVOI

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 2:25 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**CC:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
(b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** CTR Disinformation Talking Points

(b)(6)

Ma'am, please find attached for inclusion and consideration the information that supports (b)(6) upcoming press briefings. The information has been coordinated with OSD Policy for message alignment.

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 23:35:19 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: CTR Media Summary 3/9  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Rob,  
Thanks. Whom else outside DTRA/CTR is this shared? May be useful for OSD/P and TRAC (in the near term) to see the breadth and trend of the reporting.  
Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Date:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 6:08:25 PM  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Cc:** "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>, "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6), "Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Subject:** CTR Media Summary 3/9

Dr. Williams – FYSA, one member of our team produces a short summary of the previous day's media reporting on the lab disinformation. Here is yesterday's, which shows progress on countering the Russian narrative, but also the continued efforts we see from Russia and China.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 5:36 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
R C  
**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] CTR Media Clip Summary 3/9

Hi all,

Please see attached for the 3/9 media clip summary. Russian and Chinese accusations continue, but there at least a few more media outlets running stories to debunk fabrications and falsehoods.

Warmly,

(b)(6)

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Sent:** Wed, 16 Feb 2022 17:05:23 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Directors; DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Deputy Directors (b)(6); DTRA Ft Belvoir Org List DTRA Directorate Chiefs of Staff  
**Subject:** RE: Disinformation: "U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022"  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Plus DTRA Senior leaders

Rob,  
ACK - tracking.

For others that haven't been tracking this as closely, do ensure that your staff understand this Russian disinformation campaign. It has likely second and third order effects from a DTRA force protection, cyber security as well as press/PAO overlay. So staff should be increasingly vigilant. Funnel incoming items to the CORT.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 16, 2022 10:29 AM  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Disinformation: "U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022"

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, the report below from Politforums.ru accuses DTRA (and or Ft Detrick) of planning a BW provocation with smallpox in Kharkiv, Ukraine. We're tracking down information on the reach of this outlet and will watch to see how it propagates to other outlets.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

Source: Politforums.ru

Date of release: 02/15/2022 11:22

Title: US biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

U.S. biological attack in Ukraine, March 2022

Vasily Aksyonov

9 89 14:22 15.02.2022

Theme Rating: +2

On February 10, 2022, the US Department of Defense sent samples of the smallpox virus by a special military board to its military biological laboratory in Kharkiv.

The US State Department is preparing a provocation with the use of biological weapons in Kharkiv. According to Western sources, the White House ordered the military to transport and prepare the smallpox virus for its use in combat operations and crisis situations.

Thanks to the leak of information, it became known that the US military plans to unleash a regional war in Ukraine at the beginning of March 2022, where they will conduct a provocation with the use of biological weapons. The media will spread information that some Russian saboteurs destroyed a biological laboratory from where the active strain of the smallpox virus leaked.

Recall that in 2013, the US Department of Defense on the basis of the Institute of Experimental and Clinical Veterinary Medicine built a biological laboratory, where it began to bring dangerous strains of viruses. The laboratory itself is located at the address: Kharkiv, Pomerka district, Pushkin street, 83.

The contractor was the American engineering company Black & Veatch, the same one that has already built biological laboratories for the Pentagon in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since 2001.

Facilities are carried out by a special unit of the Pentagon, called the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). In Ukraine, this activity is supervised by the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

Over the past two months, 7 special cargoes have been sent to the Kharkiv Biological Laboratory of the United States, under the guise of military assistance to Ukraine. It is noteworthy that the sender is the CENTER for biological research of the US Army "Fort Detrick" in Maryland. Local residents nicknamed this place "House of Death".

Not surprisingly, because on the territory of this military town, Pentagon microbiologists are modernizing deadly infections, including smallpox, bubonic plague, tropical fever, as well as anthrax, increasing their resistance to modern vaccines and drugs.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 17:22:03 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI  
(USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir,

There appear to be many unique articles from different media outlets. For example, there are 901 hits in the categories shown below for (DTRA OR Pentagon) AND "biological lab" for the last 24 hours:

Moscow News Agencies  
33  
Moscow Online Media  
137  
Moscow TV and Radio  
38  
Regional Newspapers and magazines  
1  
Regional news agencies  
7  
Regional Online Media  
182  
Regional TV and Radio  
9  
Non-Russian Newspapers and Magazines  
2  
Non-Russian News Agencies  
10  
Non-Russian Online Media

83

Non-Russian TV and Radio

9

News Aggregators

242

Archives of Moscow Media

3

Archives of Regional Media

1

Archives of Governmental Organizations

2

Industrial Online Publications

142

Many more once you consider the Chinese publications and searches on other related terms.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:17 PM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

Cc: DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra\_belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) <(b)(6)>; Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Disinformation Update

Rob,

Just so I'm tracking, are the 1000 articles/day separate, disparate articles or "re-tweets" of previous (or recent) articles?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD

Director (acting)

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:09 PM

To: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Cc: DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP

<dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6) Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: Disinformation Update

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, our media monitors are seeing a substantial uptick in disinformation on DTRA CTR BTRP's projects in Ukraine -- from an average of 50 articles per day to over a thousand in the last 24 hours. Russia is blaming DTRA for a number of outbreaks in the region, as well as for crafting an offensive BW program in Ukraine.

We have also seen reporting from China's Foreign Ministry spokesman echoing Russian charges, which has received extensive coverage in both the Chinese and Russian news and social media circles.

State AVC has a press statement they plan to put out today that OSD provided us an opportunity to review. It hits the right points and draws from the "Break Glass" book DTRA provided to OSD PA and State last week.

We heard today from journalist Matt Field at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Working with DTRA PA, we answered some questions for him last Friday and he stated his intent to submit an article to his editor today. We will watch for it.

Finally, if you have four minutes, here's a briefing on DTRA's activities in Ukraine from the Russian Ministry of Defense, with English subtitles:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_q0qgqCLK0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_q0qgqCLK0)

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 20:05:59 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** Re: Disinformation Update  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Thanks Rhys. This is very troubling in its strategic intent. Please continue to keep me apprised.  
Deborah

**From:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 12:55:33 PM

**To:** "Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)"

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** "Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)", "Vann, Brandi

C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)" <(b)(6)>, "Pope, Robert S

SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" <(b)(6)>

"Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (US

**Subject:** FW: Disinformation Update

Ma'am,

No direct action - SA only - please see below. I'm sure Kingston is tracking this through his staff. I'll provide an update on our EUCOM/NATO support during our lvl tomorrow.

v/r,  
Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 12:09 PM

**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP

<dra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)

Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: Disinformation Update

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, our media monitors are seeing a substantial uptick in disinformation on DTRA CTR BTRP's projects in Ukraine -- from an average of 50 articles per day to over a thousand in the last 24 hours. Russia is blaming DTRA for a number of outbreaks in the region, as well as for crafting an offensive BW program in Ukraine.

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We heard today from journalist Matt Field at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Working with DTRA PA, we answered some questions for him last Friday and he stated his intent to submit an article to his editor today. We will watch for it.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Johnson, Richard C SES (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 15 Mar 2022 21:05:59 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Campbell, Craig P CIV OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: DTRA - RFI on CTR from JCS  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

(b)(6)

-----  
Richard C. Johnson  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Nuclear and CWMD Policy  
(he/him)  
Pentagon, 5C746

(b)(6)  
NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR: (b)(6)  
JWICS (b)(6)

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 4:54 PM  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN  
DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** DTRA - RFI on CTR from JCS

Ma'am,  
Mostly FYSA. We received a quick turn request from JCS.

According to the information we have via the JCS/J2 (actual), the Chairman has testimony (NFI) tomorrow. The J2, who's working some of the background points for the C/JCS book asked for Ukraine CTR information (on SIPR). We've directed him to the previously cleared statements/fact sheet but are pushing them again to JCS. RMDL Scholl will be doing that in a bit. I've asked him to Cc this group for SA

to ensure A&S and OSD/P leadership awareness. Knowing we have a Ukraine touch point at 0830 tomorrow, I'll bring the note along in hard copy.

v/r,  
Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 8 Mar 2022 19:58:11 +0000  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Interagency Disinformation Discussion  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

One quick add: The IOFC participated in the Interagency discussion below. We (CTR only) had a follow up call with the IOFC to ensure parallel paths of effort. (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2022 2:42 PM

**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP

<dra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI

(USA) (b)(6); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** FW: Interagency Disinformation Discussion

Sir - FYSA. Notes from (b)(6) from an Interagency meeting that just concluded.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

CUI/NF

Sir, see below. Summary of a call we had with OSD Policy, NCB, State ISN, and State AVC. Subject was disinformation in UKR, specifically the labs.

- We discussed the need to have common messaging with regard to the current wave of RUS disinfo, focusing specifically on the labs in UKR. (note: we are all in synch here).
- State AVC and ISN have a copy of our "break glass" product; they used it to put together TP's for State's PA; we chopped on their product. (Note - it is good, but surprising more pointed than DoD's)
- DASD Johnson will reach out to the NSC on this topic and request a small group discussion - for both awareness, and for synchronizing the PA approach.
- Using our break glass product, USD Kahl is holding a meeting with Kirby today to urge Kirby to say something proactively, vice waiting for the questions to come in. Kirby MAY say something today or tomorrow.
- State ISN and AVC asked DoD PA to lash up directly with State PA on this topic, to ensure what Kirby says or what State says are in sync.
- Per OSD-P concurrence, State ISN will share our break glass product with the NSC / small group discussion.
- AMB Bonnie Jenkins is meeting with UK and German counterparts to discuss disinformation in UKR, and will likely raise the topic of the labs. State AVC may ask OSD-P and DTRA for a quick turn chop on their TP's tomorrow, due at 1200.
- OPCW reports the Russians will likely bring up the bio labs in UKR very soon, in the next OPCW meeting. (Note: this is out of scope for the OPCW, but two points: 1) the RUS may bring up concerns about "American PMC's using chemical weapons or giving them to UKR"; 2) State anticipates an on-slaught of Russian messaging about the bio labs in UKR in any international forum in which they participate).

No action for DTRA at the moment, but we are standing by for Q&A's from State (AMB Jenkins request) and possibly Q&A's from the Kahl/Kirby meeting today.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 22 Mar 2022 11:09:38 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Chaney, Andrea C CIV DTRA J0 (USA)  
**Cc:** Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Re: Media Engagement Opportunity  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir — Copy; will do.

**From:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 12:04:10 PM

**To:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Cc:** "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Re: Media Engagement Opportunity

Rob,

I mentioned to Randy yesterday at the end of the opSync that CTR is the best positioned for this. So having you take the interview - audio and or VTC (no in person in the building/filming) seems the best COA.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:14:12 PM

**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Cc:** "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)"

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Re: Media Engagement Opportunity

I'm willing if I'm the best rep for this.

**From:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Monday, March 21, 2022 at 7:35:13 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)"

(b)(6)

"Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT  
(USA)" <(b)(6)>

W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Media Engagement Opportunity

(b)(6)

Given that, my sense is to have CTR do this interview. An alternative is to bounce this up to NCB - DASD Reif (but that will take it out of the DTRA realm). And I'd prefer to minimize the pictures/filming of the Agency. I'm primarily thinking about a force protection issue - even though the Agency's location is known.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 21, 2022 2:04 PM  
To: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

Cc: Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Pope,

Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Media Engagement Opportunity

Sir,

I do have a good sense with this one, especially since we can see his previously published work goes against the Russian propaganda. Before the Tucker Carlson segment when LOTS of media came to us for comment, this guy was trying to get DTRA's side of the story, or the facts, early on. Now he has a bigger platform to get out the message.

From talking to him a few times, I would say the main angle will be the labs in Ukraine but they want to highlight DTRA as an agency, as well. It's platform to get our message out broadly and not look like the secretive agency the conspiracy theorists are trying to make us.

He owes me more information so I will pass that along once I receive it.

Thanks for the quick response, Sir.

V/R

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 21, 2022 1:53 PM

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Pope,

Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Media Engagement Opportunity

(b)(6)

Do you have a sense of the trust of this interview? Is it DTRA specific or is it more CTR and Ukraine (with DTRA as the execution agency)?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sent: Monday, March 21, 2022 1:35 PM

To: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

Cc: Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)

(b)(6)

Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: Media Engagement Opportunity

Sir,

As (b)(6) is on leave today, she asked I send this information on her behalf. I have already talked with (b)(6) and Dr. Pope and they support the following media engagement.

BLUF: Justin Ling, an independent journalist, has contacted us a few times in hopes to get an interview with Dr. Pope regarding the bio labs. As you are aware, Dr. Pope and the CTR folks have participated in numerous media engagements (phone and email) over the past few weeks. Justin first reached out around March 3 but we weren't conducting as many engagements at the time, and frankly, his last name was questionable. After some research, we saw he was publishing content that supported the true narrative that Russia was spreading lies about the biolabs. See his recent article and tweets below.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/02/ukraine-biolabs-conspiracy-theory-qanon>

/

[https://twitter.com/justin\\_ling/status/150442125655222682](https://twitter.com/justin_ling/status/150442125655222682)

1

I spoke to him this morning and he is now representing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and has been asked to get an interview with a DTRA senior spokesperson, in a documentary style engagement. Dr. Pope is TDY this week and you know how the news cycle is. They are pushing stories pretty quickly (within 24 hours), so we want to jump on this one quickly.

Dr. Pope, (b)(6) agree you might be the best representation for this engagement, if you want to participate. Justin also said they want to come film in the building to show, in his words, "this is not a shady, bioweapons agency. They do work that prevents pandemics, not create them."

CTR and PAO endorse this engagement, but wanted to punt to you for final decision. The journalist is also supposed to get back to me later this afternoon on timeline. More to follow as details emerge, but wanted to give you the heads up, that this is in the que.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks!

(b)(6)

Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(b)(6)

(office)

(main Line)

(cell)

Facebook: Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Twitter: @doddtra

YouTube: @doddtra

Instagram: @doddtra

[www.dtra.mil](http://www.dtra.mil) <<http://www.dtra.mil/>>

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 01:28:59 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6)  
DTRA J0 (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

Update: Tucker Carlson led off with UKR/ bio labs as his lead story tonight. 20 minutes of coverage. Kirby answered 2 questions, weak answers, isolated video from his presser. State department issued a jacked up written statement to Fox News after nulands debacle. Rubio refuses to come on air and answer questions. Tulsi Gabbard says we should be very concerned. Carlson and Gabbard claim DoD is lying and covering it up. Carlson showed videos of RUS and China making statements. Both ask why is the DoD doing this? State tweeted real time during Carlson's diatribe babbling on about US compliance with the BWC/CWC. Get ready tomorrow.... (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 19:54:15  
**To:** (b)(6); "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6); "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6); "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
R C  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

There are key aspects we (CTR) need to tighten up here with future media inquiries and we will work that with PA. But largely a good article. Especially at the end. That was done purposely. FYI- Jen psaki tweets in attachment below. Both Fox News and CNN covered it tonight. The former had Senator Ron Johnson who acknowledged previous CTR efforts, but claimed he is unaware of current DoD efforts with UKR labs. He said we (senate) will "get to the bottom of this." Apologies for getting ahead of DTRA PA updates, be assured we are working very close together and wanted to share near real time. Will let them run from here. (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 17:52:47  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6); "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6); (b)(6); "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** New Article Released - Matt Field

Dr. Williams and Dr. Pope,

Gentlemen, the latest new article with Matt Field has been published and posted. BLUF: Solid, relevant quotes by Dr. Pope. The article is helping to quell some of the false information.

Here is the article link: <https://thebulletin.org/2022/03/in-ukrainian-cities-under-russian-attack-us-linked-research-labs-could-provide-fodder-for-future-russian-disinformation/>

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In Ukrainian cities under Russian attack, US-linked research labs could provide fodder for future Russian disinformation

By Matt Field | March 9, 2022

With Russian President Vladimir Putin showing no sign of backing down on his country's assault on Ukraine, US officials are trying to prevent the Russian military from capturing pathogens stored in US-affiliated research labs in Ukraine, where they could potentially mischaracterize activities at the facilities. It's an urgent task, given that the director of the US military program that works with Ukrainian public and animal health labs said some are in cities now under attack.

At the end of February, Robert Pope, the director of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, said his program had lost contact with the Ukrainian labs. In an update on Friday, he said that officials had communicated with authorities responsible for facilities run by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health but not the with those overseeing the veterinary health institutions the US government also partners with in the country.

Several of those labs are in cities being attacked now, Pope said. "Should Russian forces occupy a city with one of these facilities, we are concerned that Russia will

fabricate ‘evidence’ of nefarious activity in an attempt to lend credibility to their ongoing disinformation about these facilities.”

On the veterinary health side, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency supports 14 facilities and diagnostic laboratories, Pope said. “Most of these facilities are regional diagnostic veterinary laboratories that provide Ukraine with animal sample collection ability and basic laboratory capabilities for initial diagnostics of potential diseases in Ukraine’s animal population. They are part of the network of labs that help Ukraine prevent, detect, and respond to animal diseases like African swine fever,” he said.

Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland echoed Pope’s concerns about the security of the US-linked labs at a Senate hearing Tuesday. “Ukraine has biological research facilities, which, in fact, we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of, so we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach,” she said.

Pope’s fears that the invasion will expose the labs to new disinformation narratives does not appear far-fetched. Already at least one figure with links to the Russian disinformation ecosystem is broadcasting plans to bring journalists into war-torn Ukraine to tour US-affiliated labs there.

John Mark Dougan, a former American police officer who claims to have political asylum in Russia, has put up at least five videos on YouTube in recent days saying that Ukraine is hosting US bioweapons labs; some of the videos have been viewed nearly 30,000 times. In one video, he claims to have secured permission to go to the labs. “I said, ‘Look, I want to get a bunch of journalists, truth seeking journalists together, and I want to do a tour of these laboratories,’” Dougan said, inviting journalists to contact him for the supposed trip.

John Mark Dougan on his YouTube channel. YouTuber John Mark Dougan, an American living in Russia, claims he will bring journalists to US-linked laboratories in Ukraine. Credit: YouTube.

In his videos, Dougan points to fact sheets on Ukrainian facilities that once were on the US embassy in Kyiv’s website, but have since been taken down as evidence of

US government malfeasance. The documents list general information about US support for various labs as well as state whether labs have received permits to work with pathogens, according to an archival search. While the links on the Kyiv embassy site are not functional, they nonetheless remain prominently displayed. “Are they maybe trying to hide evidence of their bioweapons program?” Dougan asks in a Feb. 26 video. Dougan also claims a whistleblower who once worked in a veterinary clinic in Ukraine has provided him with information.

In a Dec. 10 video, Dougan mentions a Ukrainian who “dropped off some documents” with “interesting stuff.” Throughout the video, he displays pictures of documents, laboratories, or officials, often drawing from publicly available sources such promotional material about the Defense Threat Reduction Agency or the 2005 agreement that dictates the terms of the arrangement between Ukraine and the agency. He also refers to a program called UP-8. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency told the Bulletin that UP-8 involved voluntary blood draws to see what antibodies troops were exposed to in nature. Previous allegations picked up in Russian state media have targeted the program, including claims that the blood draws could have caused death among Ukrainian troops.

After being sought by the FBI for releasing the addresses of thousands of judges and other officials in Florida online, Dougan fled the United States in 2016, according to an investigation by The Daily Beast in 2019.

Once in Russia, Dougan apparently caught the interest of some of the country’s most prolific disinformation producers, state-controlled outlets RT and Sputnik. RT, which researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute once labeled “one of the most important organizations in the global political economy of disinformation,” even produced a 51-minute-long documentary on Dougan.

In an email, Dougan questioned the Bulletin’s objectivity, asked why the State Department would delete documents if it weren’t a “clean up campaign,” and questioned the Defense Department’s funding for biological research. “I’ve been around the block a few times, and I know when someone is trying to write a con-job article in defense of the indefensible,” he said. “And I worked in law enforcement long enough to know when the government is trying to hide something.”

The labs in Ukraine are not bioweapons facilities, nor are they run by the US government, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has said; they are operated by

partner countries. In fact, the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program that manages the US partnerships with labs worked extensively with the Russian government after the fall of the Soviet Union to secure weapons of mass destruction, including the remnants of the massive Soviet bioweapons program. But despite media investigations and independent experts debunking claims against the US-affiliated labs over the years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has re-ignited the disinformation attacks on the program.

A research lab in Kyiv. A research lab in Kyiv, Ukraine built by the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Credit: Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Russian state media, alleged Kremlin proxy media outlets, and influencers like Tim Kirby, another American expat with ties to RT, began to focus once again on the lab disinformation as Russia moved troops toward the Ukrainian border. That trend appears to have intensified since the invasion. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov mused about the labs in a recent state-TV interview, and the Russian embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina posted on Facebook that the United States was building labs in Ukraine to destroy “the Russian people at the genetic level.”

In a briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian lent support to the Russian accusations. “In particular, the United States, as the party that knows the laboratories best, should release relevant specific information as soon as possible, including what viruses are stored and the research that has been carried out,” the spokesman said, according to Chinese state-media company Xinhua.

And in a twist, the Russian accusations appear to be gaining traction among the hard-right in the United States, with an assist from Dougan, who went on QAnon influencer Zak Paine's RedPill78 podcast to discuss the lab conspiracy theory. A few days later, Paine re-visited the topic to say that the Russians were “attacking biological weapons facilities funded by the United States” and run, in part by Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a frequent target of the right wing.

Putin, Pope said, may want to use the Ukrainian labs as a rationale for the war. “We know Putin lied when he said he wasn't preparing to invade Ukraine,” the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program director said, “and we are confident that Russia is willing to lie to try to justify their invasion.”

---

Will notify NCB STRAT team/OSD PA of the article.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 00:54:15 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6) Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Chaney (b)(6)  
DTRA J0 (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 17:52:47  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
"Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) "Lutinski, Hunter F SES  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** New Article Released - Matt Field

Dr. Williams and Dr. Pope,

Gentlemen, the latest new article with Matt Field has been published and posted. BLUF: Solid, relevant quotes by Dr. Pope. The article is helping to the quell some of the false information.

Here is the article link: <https://thebulletin.org/2022/03/in-ukrainian-cities-under-russian-attack-us-linked-research-labs-could-provide-fodder-for-future-russian-disinformation/>

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In Ukrainian cities under Russian attack, US-linked research labs could provide fodder for future Russian disinformation

By Matt Field | March 9, 2022

With Russian President Vladimir Putin showing no sign of backing down on his country's assault on Ukraine, US officials are trying to prevent the Russian military from capturing pathogens stored in US-affiliated research labs in Ukraine, where they could potentially mischaracterize activities at the facilities. It's an urgent task, given that the director of the US military program that works with Ukrainian public and animal health labs said some are in cities now under attack.

At the end of February, Robert Pope, the director of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, said his program had lost contact with the Ukrainian labs. In an update on Friday, he said that officials had communicated with authorities responsible for facilities run by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health but not the with those overseeing the veterinary health institutions the US government also partners with in the country.

Several of those labs are in cities being attacked now, Pope said. "Should Russian forces occupy a city with one of these facilities, we are concerned that Russia will fabricate 'evidence' of nefarious activity in an attempt to lend credibility to their ongoing disinformation about these facilities."

On the veterinary health side, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency supports 14 facilities and diagnostic laboratories, Pope said. "Most of these facilities are regional diagnostic veterinary laboratories that provide Ukraine with animal sample collection ability and basic laboratory capabilities for initial diagnostics of potential diseases in Ukraine's animal population. They are part of the network of labs that help Ukraine prevent, detect, and respond to animal diseases like African swine fever," he said.

Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland echoed Pope's concerns about the security of the US-linked labs at a Senate hearing Tuesday. "Ukraine has biological research facilities, which, in fact, we are now quite concerned Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of, so we

are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach,” she said.

Pope’s fears that the invasion will expose the labs to new disinformation narratives does not appear far-fetched. Already at least one figure with links to the Russian disinformation ecosystem is broadcasting plans to bring journalists into war-torn Ukraine to tour US-affiliated labs there.

John Mark Dougan, a former American police officer who claims to have political asylum in Russia, has put up at least five videos on YouTube in recent days saying that Ukraine is hosting US bioweapons labs; some of the videos have been viewed nearly 30,000 times. In one video, he claims to have secured permission to go to the labs. “I said, ‘Look, I want to get a bunch of journalists, truth seeking journalists together, and I want to do a tour of these laboratories,’” Dougan said, inviting journalists to contact him for the supposed trip.

John Mark Dougan on his YouTube channel. YouTuber John Mark Dougan, an American living in Russia, claims he will bring journalists to US-linked laboratories in Ukraine. Credit: YouTube.

In his videos, Dougan points to fact sheets on Ukrainian facilities that once were on the US embassy in Kyiv’s website, but have since been taken down as evidence of US government malfeasance. The documents list general information about US support for various labs as well as state whether labs have received permits to work with pathogens, according to an archival search. While the links on the Kyiv embassy site are not functional, they nonetheless remain prominently displayed. “Are they maybe trying to hide evidence of their bioweapons program?” Dougan asks in a Feb. 26 video. Dougan also claims a whistleblower who once worked in a veterinary clinic in Ukraine has provided him with information.

In a Dec. 10 video, Dougan mentions a Ukrainian who “dropped off some documents” with “interesting stuff.” Throughout the video, he displays pictures of documents, laboratories, or officials, often drawing from publicly available sources such promotional material about the Defense Threat Reduction Agency or the 2005 agreement that dictates the terms of the arrangement between Ukraine and the agency. He also refers to a program called UP-8. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency told the Bulletin that UP-8 involved voluntary blood draws to see what antibodies troops were exposed to in nature. Previous allegations picked up in

Russian state media have targeted the program, including claims that the blood draws could have caused death among Ukrainian troops.

After being sought by the FBI for releasing the addresses of thousands of judges and other officials in Florida online, Dougan fled the United States in 2016, according to an investigation by The Daily Beast in 2019.

Once in Russia, Dougan apparently caught the interest of some of the country's most prolific disinformation producers, state-controlled outlets RT and Sputnik. RT, which researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute once labeled "one of the most important organizations in the global political economy of disinformation," even produced a 51-minute-long documentary on Dougan.

In an email, Dougan questioned the Bulletin's objectivity, asked why the State Department would delete documents if it weren't a "clean up campaign," and questioned the Defense Department's funding for biological research. "I've been around the block a few times, and I know when someone is trying to write a con-job article in defense of the indefensible," he said. "And I worked in law enforcement long enough to know when the government is trying to hide something."

The labs in Ukraine are not bioweapons facilities, nor are they run by the US government, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has said; they are operated by partner countries. In fact, the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program that manages the US partnerships with labs worked extensively with the Russian government after the fall of the Soviet Union to secure weapons of mass destruction, including the remnants of the massive Soviet bioweapons program. But despite media investigations and independent experts debunking claims against the US-affiliated labs over the years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has re-ignited the disinformation attacks on the program.

A research lab in Kyiv. A research lab in Kyiv, Ukraine built by the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Credit: Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Russian state media, alleged Kremlin proxy media outlets, and influencers like Tim Kirby, another American expat with ties to RT, began to focus once again on the lab disinformation as Russia moved troops toward the Ukrainian border. That trend appears to have intensified since the invasion. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov mused about the labs in a recent state-TV interview, and the Russian embassy in

Bosnia and Herzegovina posted on Facebook that the United States was building labs in Ukraine to destroy “the Russian people at the genetic level.”

In a briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian lent support to the Russian accusations. “In particular, the United States, as the party that knows the laboratories best, should release relevant specific information as soon as possible, including what viruses are stored and the research that has been carried out,” the spokesman said, according to Chinese state-media company Xinhua.

And in a twist, the Russian accusations appear to be gaining traction among the hard-right in the United States, with an assist from Dougan, who went on QAnon influencer Zak Paine’s RedPill78 podcast to discuss the lab conspiracy theory. A few days later, Paine re-visited the topic to say that the Russians were “attacking biological weapons facilities funded by the United States” and run, in part by Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a frequent target of the right wing.

Putin, Pope said, may want to use the Ukrainian labs as a rationale for the war. “We know Putin lied when he said he wasn’t preparing to invade Ukraine,” the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program director said, “and we are confident that Russia is willing to lie to try to justify their invasion.”

-----

Will notify NCB STRAT team/OSD PA of the article.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

(Work)

(b)(6)

(Work Cell)

NIPR

(b)(6)

SIPR:

JWIC

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thu, 10 Mar 2022 02:12:17 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA J0 (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

Update: Jennifer Griffen from Fox News read our fact sheet on the air, Sean Hannity show. No spin and a solid explanation for what we do. A minor win. Randy

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 20:28:59  
**To:** (b)(6); "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6); "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
R C  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

Update: Tucker Carlson led off with UKR/ bio labs as his lead story tonight. 20 minutes of coverage. Kirby answered 2 questions, weak answers, isolated video from his presser. State department issued a jacked up written statement to Fox News after nulands debacle. Rubio refuses to come on air and answer questions. Tulsi Gabbard says we should be very concerned. Carlson and Gabbard claim DoD is lying and covering it up. Carlson showed videos of RUS and China making statements. Both ask why is the DoD doing this? State tweeted real time during Carlson's diatribe babbling on about US compliance with the BWC/CWC. Get ready tomorrow.... (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 19:54:15  
**To:** (b)(6); "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6); "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
R C  
**Subject:** Re: New Article Released - Matt Field

There are key aspects we (CTR) need to tighten up here with future media inquiries and we will work that with PA. But largely a good article. Especially at the end. That was done purposely. FYI- Jen psaki tweets in attachment below. Both Fox News and CNN covered it tonight. The former had Senator Ron Johnson who acknowledged previous CTR efforts, but claimed he is unaware of current DoD efforts with UKR labs. He said we (senate) will “get to the bottom of this.” Apologies for getting ahead of DTRA PA updates, be assured we are working very close together and wanted to share near real time. Will let them run from here. (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 17:52:47  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
"Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6) "Lutinski, Hunter F SES  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** New Article Released - Matt Field

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A research lab in Kyiv. A research lab in Kyiv, Ukraine built by the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Credit: Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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Will notify NCB STRAT team/OSD PA of the article.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Sun, 27 Feb 2022 20:21:48 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Press  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

FYSA – The Director for Biopreparedness from the EU Commission contacted me on LinkedIn because of the article. I plan to verify his bona fides on Monday and discuss with our TRAC and NCWMD-P what info we may want to share with our EU colleagues.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 10:17 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6); (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: Press

(b)(6)

ACK - no questions. But as media queries come in, please keep me in the loop - for SA only.

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Date:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 at 10:11:02 AM  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Cc:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6); (b)(6); "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Press

Dr. Williams,  
Sir, I agree. We actually received a query Friday morning from the Associated

Press (AP). It came in after the Weekly Report submission. The AP reporter was "fact checking" and looking for a list of labs/location of the labs in Ukraine and wanted us to verify the information. We did not respond and have forwarded the query to our OSD PA portfolio manager, Ms. Maxwell. Of note, In keeping w/OSD Social Media Posture, all DOD components have been asked to "pause all CBDP-related digital media posting until further notice." In addition, OSD has directed the PAOs/Comms Directors at the Agencies and Commands to carefully re-evaluate any content we may have scheduled, take a more diminished posture and to only re-share (not rewrite) top level messaging from OSD. For now, my team is standing down on all social media postings. For Dr. Pope's media engagement, the higher headquarters was looped in, however as a courtesy I've flagged the article for the NCB STRAT team so that they are aware of the article. I listened to the raw recording and believe the reporter captured Dr. Pope's statements/interview accurately in his story. As for future media engagements, we will pause as well for the moment. This will mostly like be the next OSD-directed guidance. Please let me know if there are questions.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2022 6:11 AM

To: (b)(6)

Cc: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

(USA) (b)(6) Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: Press

(b)(6)

I saw that the interview with Dr Pope by the reporter from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist ran yesterday. I expect it will generate a number of inquiries and may hit the PTN clips.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 11:59:58 -0400  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** Re: Russia - BWC and UNSC  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s  
**Importance:** Normal

Ma'am - already done.

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)"

(b)(6)

**Date:** Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:56:16 AM

**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

**Cc:** "Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA)"

"Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)"  
RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)

**Subject:** RE: Russia - BWC and UNSC

Thanks Rhys – Please remind that DOD has put pages and pages of messaging out already as has the WH, State etc...

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 11:54 AM  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Russia - BWC and UNSC

Ma'am,

FYSA. As you may be aware, the Russians dropped another note this morning at the UN on CTR/BTRP. DTRA is again called out specifically... Very similar (if not the

same) as done at the BWC two days ago. NSC (b)(6) is putting together a call for later today at the AO level. OSD/P is looped in. (b)(6) will be on the call for us - Rob is TDY. I understand there may be an IPC on Monday.

My sense is NSC is still trying to get ahead of the messaging. We are helping policy where able and appropriate.

Kingston - Our staff is keeping TRAC in the loop.

v/r,

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD

Director (acting)

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Wed, 30 Mar 2022 21:00:43 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: Speaking Engagement at Biological Weapons Convention Side Event Panel,  
April 4-11 - additional review requested  
**Attachments:** smime.p7m

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Sun, 6 Mar 2022 19:17:50 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center  
**Subject:** RE: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

Copy. We've been communicating with many of our partners on the disinformation since before the Russian invasion. We will continue to do so and assess how we may need to adjust messaging or prioritization in anticipation of this latest Russian lie gaining traction.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:15 PM  
**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6); DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center <dtra.belvoir.oi.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil>  
**Subject:** Re: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Rob,  
Thanks. Unfortunately, not unexpected. This may have spin off impacts on other CTR and BTRP programs as partners possibly question US participation in their countries. Have you considered how to directly message to our other partners?

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
**Date:** Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 2:06:52 PM  
**To:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** "DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP" <dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>

<mailto:dtra.belvoir.dir.list.dtra-cmd-gp@mail.mil>, "Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)"

(b)(6)

"DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center" <dtra.belvoir.o1.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil  
<mailto:dtra.belvoir.o1.mbx.joint-ops-center@mail.mil> >

Subject: The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, Russian MOD's Telegram channel media is reporting that they have "evidence" of U.S. bioweapons activities in Ukraine (see below and attached). Our media monitor is looking for any additional reporting on the subject.

Wall Street Journal is asking for comment on the following: "Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov claimed, without providing evidence, that Russia has uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the U.S. defense ministry that was destroyed on February 24, when Moscow launched its assault."

DASD Johnson and DASD Rcif are tracking (DASD Johnson received tip-off of the reporting from another OSD office and alerted us). DASD Johnson and OSD PA have DTRA's "Break Glass" book for this. No action for DTRA at this time.

V/r,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES

Director

Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biolaboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all biological laboratories to urgently eliminate stored stocks of dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present the results of the analysis of the received documents. Some of them, in particular, the

instructions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on the destruction of pathogens and the acts of destruction in the Poltava and

Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now: <https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 18:10:49 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir, I have the BTRP team reviewing the document and will provide an update early next week.

Thanks, (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) <(b)(6)>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 1:24 PM  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); (b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

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Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** "Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)" <(b)(6)>  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
**Date:** Friday, March 18, 2022 at 1:12:19 PM  
**To:** (b)(6); "Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA)" <(b)(6)>  
(b)(6)

(b)(6), "Lutinski, Hunter F  
SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
Cc: "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<(b)(6)>, (b)(6)  
<(b)(6)> "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)"  
(b)(6) > "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"  
<rhys.m.williams.civ@mail.mil> (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

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From: (b)(6)  
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Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 12:50 PM  
To: Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>; Cooper,  
Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)  
(b)(6) > Lutinski, Hunter

F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
Cc: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6) >; Bevin, Ana A CIV DTRA RD  
(USA)  
(b)(6) >; Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR  
(USA)  
(b)(6) >; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR  
(USA)  
(b)(6) >; James, Adam P MAJ USARMY  
HQDA DTRA (USA)

(b)(6)

Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:47 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) <(b)(6)>  
<mailto:(b)(6)>; Pope,  
Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) <(b)(6)>  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

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Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: (b)(6)  
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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:35:21 AM  
To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" <(b)(6)>  
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<mailto:(b)(6)>  
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<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT  
REDUCT (USA)" <(b)(6)>  
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To: (b)(6)

<ma

Cc: (b)(6)

<ma

(b)(6)

<mail

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

+ OSD Policy (b)(6)

-(b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

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(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)  
C: (b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)  
<mail

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 8:45 AM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THIRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)  
<mail (b)(6)>  
<ma (b)(6)>  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<ma (b)(6)>  
<ma (b)(6)>  
<m (b)(6)>

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NSC Democracy is hosting a subIPC on Monday @ 1:00 PM on countering disinformation regarding the U.S., Ukraine, and CBW (for example: <https://tass.com/politics/1423129>). I'll make sure you get that invite, and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you beforehand - either 4:00 PM today or Monday morning 9:30 or 10?

Many thanks!

Best,

(b)(6)

Global Health Security & Biodefense  
National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6) (SIPR)  
(b)(6) (JWICS)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 21:50:52 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); Warshaw, (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir(s), update from the NSC call today. IOFC attended, as well as 2 other SME's from CTR.

- Goal of the meeting was to help prep NSC for the sub-IPC on Monday at 1300, and solicit good ideas from DoD on how to deal with the problem.
- It was led by one junior staffer who recognized the problem - but was not deep at all on the topic. The entire discussion was about a narrow public affairs approach to the problem.
- NSC shared some ideas they have, most of them good ideas and most of which we (DTRA) are either doing or tracking.
- Staffer wanted to know if DoD has any good ideas. Policy (Aaron Jay) shared some examples, and I did as well about enhancing our PA messaging through DTRA platforms and media interviews.
- Staffer shared Rep Majorie Taylor Greene is going to sponsor a bill in Congress that will "stop US Bio programs around the world."
- I added as an alibi and recommended the NSC look at this holistically, and not just as a public affairs problem. The "light" and "dark side" need to work in sync. Staffers said she would loop in other NSC folks to the discussion on Monday.
- Sub IPC will be held on Monday 3/21; Policy (Aaron) will attend; DTRA will not be asked to support the IPC.
- The Sub IPC will be held on Govt Zoom, unclassified. (I will with-hold further comment on this point).

v/r, (b)(6)

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**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 1:24 PM  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) <(b)(6)>; Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) <(b)(6)>; Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) <(b)(6)>  
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**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

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Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)  
C: [Redacted]

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<mail> [Redacted]

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To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)  
<mail> [Redacted]

(b)(6)  
<mail> [Redacted]

Cc: (b)(6)  
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National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6)

(SIPR)

(b)(6)

(JWICS)

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Sun, 6 Mar 2022 19:06:51 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Tune, Melissa D CIV DTRA DIR (USA)<sup>(b)(6)</sup>  
DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);DTRA Ft Belvoir OI Mailbox Joint Ops Center  
**Subject:** The Official Russian MOD Statement of "Proof" of DoD Bioweapons Labs in Ukraine  
**Attachments:** Russian Ministry of Defense.pdf, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

FYSA, Russian MOD's Telegram channel media is reporting that they have "evidence" of U.S. bioweapons activities in Ukraine (see below and attached). Our media monitor is looking for any additional reporting on the subject.

Wall Street Journal is asking for comment on the following: "Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov claimed, without providing evidence, that Russia has uncovered a biological weapons program in Ukraine funded by the U.S. defense ministry that was destroyed on February 24, when Moscow launched its assault."

DASD Johnson and DASD Reif are tracking (DASD Johnson received tip-off of the reporting from another OSD office and alerted us). DASD Johnson and OSD PA have DTRA's "Break Glass" book for this. No action for DTRA at this time.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

-----Original Message-----

In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biolaboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all biological laboratories to urgently eliminate stored stocks of dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present the results of the analysis of the received documents. Some of them, in particular, the instructions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on the destruction of pathogens and the acts of destruction in the Poltava and Kharkiv biological laboratories, we are publishing right now:  
<https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw>

:

16:20Z 6Mar2022

Группировки войск Луганской и Донецкой народных республик, при огневой поддержке российских Вооруженных Сил, продолжают наступательные действия.

Подразделения народной милиции Донецкой республики успешно развивают наступление в городской черте Мариуполя с северо-западного и восточного направления.

Вооруженные Силы Российской Федерации наносят удары по объектам военной инфраструктуры Украины.

6 марта высокоточным оружием большой дальности выведен из строя аэродром военно-воздушных сил Украины в ВИННИЦЕ.

Истребительной авиацией и ПВО ВКС Россиибито в воздухе ещё три украинских истребителя Су 27 и три беспилотных летательных аппарата.

Всего за вчерашний и неполный сегодняшний день военно-воздушные силы Украины потеряли 11 боевых самолетов и 2 вертолета.

Практически вся боеспособная авиация киевского режима уничтожена.

Вместе с тем, нам достоверно известно об украинских боевых самолетах, ранее перелетевших в Румынию и другие приграничные страны.

Обращаем внимание, что использование аэродромной сети этих стран для базирования украинской боевой авиации с последующим применением против российских вооруженных сил, может рассматриваться как вовлечение данных государств в вооруженный конфликт.

Российскими высокоточными средствами большой дальности выводятся из строя вооружение и военная техника Украины.

Киевский режим националистов заставляет сотрудников предприятий оборонно-промышленного комплекса Украины восстанавливать поврежденную военную технику для последующего направления в районы боевых действий.

В рамках выполнения задачи по демилитаризации Украины российские вооруженные сил

Groupings of troops of the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics, with the fire support of the Russian Armed Forces, continue offensive operations.

The units of the people's militia of the Donetsk Republic are successfully developing an offensive in the city of Mariupol from the north-western and eastern directions.

The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are striking at the military infrastructure of Ukraine.

March 6 high precision long range weapons put out of action the airfield of the air force of Ukraine in VINNITSA.

Fighter aircraft and air defense of the Russian Aerospace Forces shot down three more Ukrainian Su 27 fighters and three unmanned aerial vehicles in the air.

In total, yesterday and incomplete today, the Ukrainian Air Force lost 11 combat aircraft and 2 helicopters.

Almost all combat ready aviation of the Kiev regime has been destroyed.

At the same time, we know for certain about Ukrainian combat aircraft that had previously flown to Romania and other border countries.

Please note that the use of the airfield network of these countries for basing Ukrainian military aviation with subsequent use against the Russian armed forces can be regarded as the involvement of these states in an armed conflict.

Russian high-precision long-range weapons and military equipment of Ukraine are disabled.

The Kyiv regime of nationalists forces employees of enterprises of the military-industrial complex of Ukraine to restore damaged military equipment for subsequent deployment to the areas of hostilities.

As part of the task of demilitarizing Ukraine, the Russian armed for

ы будут наносить высокоточным оружием поражение украинским предприятиям оборонно-промышленного комплекса. Во избежание угрозы жизни работникам предприятий украинского ОПК заблаговременно предупреждаем о планируемых ударах по таким объектам. Призываем персонал украинских заводов ОПК не идти на поводу у киевского режима националистов и покинуть территории своих предприятий. В ходе проведения специальной военной операции вскрыты факты экстренной зачистки Киевом режимом следов реализуемой на Украине военно-биологической программы, финансируемой Минобороны США. Нами получена от сотрудников украинских биологических лабораторий документация об экстренном уничтожении 24 февраля особо опасных патогенов возбудителей чумы, сибирской язвы, туляремии, холеры и других смертельных болезней. Связанные документы анализируются российскими специалистами войск радиационной, химической и биологической защиты. Очевидно, что с началом специальной военной операции, у Пентагона возникли серьезные опасения в раскрытии ведения секретных биологических экспериментов на территории Украины. Полученные документы подтверждают, что в украинских биологических лабораториях, в непосредственной близости от территории России, осуществлялась разработка компонентов биологического оружия. Для недопущения вскрытия фактов нарушения США и Украиной статьи I Конвенции ООН о запрещении бактериологического (биологического) и токсинного оружия, украинским Минздравом во все биологические лаборатории было направлено указание об экстренной ликвидации хранящихся запасов опасных патогенов. В ближайшее время мы представим результаты анализа полученных документов

ces will inflict high-precision weapons on Ukrainian enterprises of the military-industrial complex. In order to avoid a threat to the lives of employees of enterprises of the Ukrainian defense industry, we warn in advance of planned strikes against such facilities. We call on the personnel of the Ukrainian defense industry plants not to be led by the nationalist regime in Kiev and to leave the territories of their enterprises. In the course of a special military operation, the facts of an emergency cleansing by the Kiev regime of traces of a military biological program being implemented in Ukraine, funded by the US Department of Defense, were uncovered.

We have received documentation from employees of Ukrainian biological laboratories on the emergency destruction on February 24 of especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases. Now the documents are being analyzed by Russian specialists from the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection.

Obviously, with the start of a special military operation, the Pentagon had serious concerns about disclosing the conduct of secret biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine.

The received documents confirm that in the Ukrainian biological laboratories, in the immediate vicinity of the territory of Russia, the development of biological weapons components was carried out.

In order to prevent disclosure of the facts of violation by the United States and Ukraine of Article I of the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, the Ukrainian Mi

.  
Часть из них, в  
частности, указание  
Минздрава Украины  
об уничтожении  
патогенов и акты  
уничтожения в  
полтавской и  
харьковской  
биологических лабораториях, мы  
публикуем прямо  
сейчас:  
[https://disk.yandex.ru/d/  
dyWUEF3tDZGauw](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw)

Ministry of Health sent an instruction  
to all biological laboratories to  
urgently eliminate stored stocks of  
dangerous pathogens.

In the near future we will present  
the results of the analysis of the  
received documents.

Some of them, in particular, the  
instructions of the Ministry of  
Health of Ukraine on the destruction  
of pathogens and the acts of  
destruction in the Poltava and  
Kharkiv biological laboratories, we  
are publishing right now:

[https://disk.yandex.ru/d/  
dyWUEF3tDZGauw](https://disk.yandex.ru/d/dyWUEF3tDZGauw)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 21:00:13 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Transcript WSJ 3.14.22 - Pope  
**Attachments:** WSJ Dr. Pope.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,  
Sir, attached is the transcript from today's WSJ interview.  
BLUF - the interview went well and the editor gave Dr. Pope the appropriate voice to respond to the accusations about the labs. We owe Ms. Weinberger follow up information to a couple of questions, and Dr. Pope's team is formulating the appropriate answers. As far as a publication date, she will let us know, but it will most likely be very soon.  
Overall, a great engagement by Dr. Pope and his team for preparing the right TPs on such short notice. Media engagements like this one will pay dividends down the road as we take control of the narrative on this topic.  
I'll follow-up and provide the transcripts to the Strat team in Ms. Rosenblum's office.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS

**Transcript: Wall Street Journal Engagement- Sharon Weinberger interviews Dr. Robert Pope**

**Q: There have been some outrageous allegations in recent days regarding the Ukraine Invasion. I thought it would be a good time to talk about the BTRP program in Ukraine, the history and where the program is now. Could you talk about the current state of work in Ukraine up until the state of the war?**

- A. We have worked with Ukraine in this mission area since 2005, fundamentally trying to make their public health network and vet health network of laboratories and epidemiology more successful at what they do. The work CTR was doing at the time, leading up to the invasion was all about that, we were continuing to help provide upgrades to various public and animal health laboratories so the scientists had the equipment and training and facility they needed to be able to do the same diseases diagnosis and reporting that any other country does.

**Q: What are the numbers of biological sites in Ukraine...the number that DTRA and the pentagon is doing work with?**

- A. You see a lot of different numbers because it depends on what you count. A lot of the work we've done are at the small diagnostic sites. Where all you have are samples coming in and safely packaged and transferred to the diagnostic labs. If you start counting things like that, the numbers get pretty big. If you don't count those, looking at my list here, 8 major disease diagnostic labs. We've done work at the regional level and pathogen collection at the diagnostic sites.

**Q: Can you describe what the ongoing work of DTRA is with these diagnostic sites, things you are working on with the Ukrainians and what the overall goal is?**

- A. The goal is like I said, the ability for Ukraine to have a public health laboratory network that meets international health regulations and standards set by the WHO to be able to detect outbreaks and dangerous diseases so the world can react and respond before we have a global pandemic. And we work similarly on the vet side because so many animal diseases (inaudible) like ebola or covid can jump from animal to human. Being able to work on both side of that one health spectrum gives that complete early detection and reporting that the whole world benefits from. We most recently were finishing up construction and renovation at the laboratories and continuing to training personnel and sponsor biosurveillance studies to better characterize the kinds of diseases that are endemic to Ukraine.

**Q: What was the status of the construction and renovation....where were these?**

- A: For the safety of the Ukrainians working in those labs, I don't want to say specifically which ones these are right now. Russian propaganda comes back to target them. Can we side step that one? (yes)

**Q: Is there an annual conference in Ukraine sponsored by DTRA/CTR for researchers?**

A: There are a number of conferences that CTR sponsors around the world, I don't remember which one we held most recently in Ukraine. Typically if we are sponsoring a conference, it's bringing researchers together who work in bio-surveillance studies to share what they have learned together. By bringing them together in that region, you are able to share the data and results across international boundaries. Diseases don't respect those boundaries and those technicians need to understand what's going on on the other side of the border as well.

**Q: How much of a concern do you have with the security of the lab in the state of the war?**

A. Generally we work with our partners like Ukraine to build these labs and train the people who work in them to to work in a very safe way. The samples they are collecting for this work stay safely in the lab don't infect the technicians or get out into the community. I would say when a conflict starts, electrical power isn't stable, buildings may be damaged, then the risk of accidental releases is present. Last week the Who made the statement that THEY had reached out to Ukraine and suggested they neutralize their pathogen strain collection and destroy everything so it won't accidentally leak out as part of this conflict.

**Q: Has that been done or is DTRA advising that?**

A: I can't say it has been done, I hope the government of Ukraine followed that recommendation.

**Q: Are DTRA personnel still in touch with counterparts in Ukraine?**

A: We are in touch with people who have a working relationship with DTRA. For example, we still have some personnel that work for us at the embassy and we check on them every day for safety, most days we are able to reach them. There are some contract support on the ground, we aren't talking directly to them but are talking to their contract heads and understanding their situation. We've got minimal contact with the gov of Ukraine due to bigger issues they are dealing with right now.

**Q: What do you make of the outrageous claims?**

A: They are absolutely that, they are outrageous claims. It's absolutely not what the CTR program does. We were created 30 years ago to eliminate WMD, and Russia knows that. We sanitized and dismantled their facilities at Stepnagorsk and Voz island to destroy weaponized anthrax and we destroy programs like that. Worked with them on a number of other programs with them directly up to 2014, destroying missiles, bombers, submarines, chemical weapons arsenals...They know what they do, we destroy WMD. If you look anywhere else in the world where we are active, you see the work we are doing for the health and safety of the people. I'm in Cameroon right now, one of the places I went today was the public health emergency operation center we built a couple years ago and commissioned just in time to use it for COVID. They have a single point to monitor what's now 6 outbreaks of COVID and a number of other diseases. This is the work we do in the world and Russia knows that, so the claims remain preposterous.

**Q: What milestones can you share from DTRA over the past 5 years?**

A: What we've done in the past 4 to 5 years has been an extension of what we started there since the beginning of 2005. We were able to work with ministries of health and agriculture, to take a decrepit and unsafe soviet system they inherited and make it meet world class international health standards for their laboratorians to safely do the work they do diagnosing disease in Ukraine. Every time we finished a lab that got them on that step, shut down an unsafe lab, those were considered milestones for us.

**Q: Why did this work take more than 15 years? Why can it not be done in 2-3 years?**

A: A few reasons...one is the physical speed of construction and renovation takes time. Putting a building on contract, going through the construction process and all the certifications required and transferring to the host nation for use can take 3-4 years for just that one project. As we work with any partner nation, we are looking at a baseline assessment of their health system, talking to them what are mutual goals are, U.S. goals, host nation goals, and as we work in that area, we train people, we have success in projects, we go off and find the next project in line that makes sense for both us and the partner to do together, so that's why you see it taking so long.

**Q: What is the annual expenditure of the work in Ukraine?**

A: don't have that.

**Q: In terms of the release of pathogens you worried about with the conflict in Ukraine, which ones worry you the most? Is anthrax a concern?**

A: There are a number of diseases that circulate in Ukraine, anthrax is one of them, African swine fever is another, these circulate in the country so as the field epidemiologists are collecting samples and sending up through the laboratory networks for diagnosis those are the kind of things that end of stored in the labs. Since they are Ukraine labs and not U.S. labs, I can't say specifically what pathogens are there but they will be collections of the diseases that are endemic to the country.

**Q: It must be bizarre for you knowing the work DTRA has done and seeing the claims...I mean how do you react?**

A: Sadly we've seen this in a slow simmer since Russia invaded Crimean peninsula in 2014 and ramping it up since then and only recently largely played in the local, regional press close to Russia. Since Russia ceased being a cooperative partner with the CTR program and started taking their aggressive actions in Ukraine, they have also decided to create this narrative and has recently exploded. I'm not happy at all.

**Q: It's surprising to me that it's had traction in each parts of the U.S. Has it made the U.S. rounds in media before?**

A: I haven't seen it in U.S. sites until recently, but recognizing that Russia comes from the soviet lineage of 70 years of honed expertise in propaganda and disinformation. They understand the psychology of their audiences they understand the kinds of outrageous claims that resonate. They have found a claim that activates some audiences here in the U.S. that believe bad things about their government.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

A: Not at this time, Sharon, it sounds like you've talked to the right people that know our work well and you are building an accurate and positive picture of our work.

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Sent:** Wed, 16 Feb 2022 19:17:41 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Cc:** DTRA Ft Belvoir DIR List DTRA CMD GP;Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Long, Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** Ukraine CTR "Break Glass" Messaging Product  
**Attachments:** Break Glass\_UKR\_Final DTRA Draft021622.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams,

For your review and concurrence, here is the proposed Ukraine CTR "break glass" messaging product. We have also sent to NCWMD-P and TRAC for their review.

V/r,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

Page 1173 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1174 of 2455

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Page 1175 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1176 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Page 1177 of 2455

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 02:58:53 +0000  
**To:** Insley, Kathryn E; Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6); OSD Pentagon OUSD  
Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Re: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

I've forwarded your message on to USUN and IO/UNP, who are wrangling this. We're keeping to a relatively high level and dismissing the credibility of allegations outright, along the lines taken by the White House and Ned Price in the last day or so — and voicing our concern about possible Russian CBW use.

We dont know for sure what the Russians are going to raise - my guess is that at least in part they'll focus on the new allegations levied today.

CJP

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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM  
**To:** (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Johnson, Richard C; (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); OSD Pentagon  
OUSD Policy List Cooperative Threat Reduction CTR  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

DASD Johnson wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly (b)(6) just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear Rob,

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)  
Secure Phone (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) <(b)(6)> Caution-mailto:(b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) <(b)(6)> < Caution-mailto:(b)(6)> Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU)Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. *(IO, RIA Novosti)*

Best regards,  
Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM

**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >

**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

Thursday, March 10, 2022

## SITUATION ON THE GROUND

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 *US Office Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 *US Office Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

## RUSSIA

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)
- (U) Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that "Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace." (@delcyrodriguezv)

## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine's application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador's remarks. (22 *OPCW The Hague 18*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20OPCW%20THE%20HAGUE%2018%22> >

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1%
Hungary	214,160	5.4%
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8%
Romania**	84,671	-0.9%
Russia**	97,098	-2.2%
Belarus	765	29.2%
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downwards as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). (*UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE*)
- (SBU)The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. (*22 USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (SBU)From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (*22 Geneva 158*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20GENEVA%20158%22> >
- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (*European Commission Press Release*)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov) < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > .

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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Mar 2022 13:46:00 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
POLICY (USA);Johnson, Richard C SES (USA);Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Re: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

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Works here.

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**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:44:50 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C (b)(6); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)  
(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks, folks, for the quick review. Copied below is the latest version. We have amended to make it clear that we refute the claim that Ukraine has any BW program. I think this should work for everybody but please let us know if there are any further flags.

Cheers,

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor, U.S. Mission to the United Nations (Washington office)  
USUN/W, U.S. Department of State (HST Room 6633)  
Office: (b)(6)

**UNSC Russia Disinformation Remarks**  
**Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield,**

As a reminder, Russia is a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a State Party and Depository to the Biological Weapons Convention.

Russia's convening of today's session coincides with Russia's ominous letter to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons yesterday, suggesting falsely that Ukraine was preparing to use chemical weapons itself.

The intent behind these lies seems clear, and it is deeply troubling. We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, on large crowds of civilians, as part of another staged or false flag incident, or to support tactical military operations.

[pause]

From the beginning, our strategy to counter Russia's tactics has been to share what we know with the world transparently. And candidly, we have been right more often than we'd like.

We're not going to let Russia get away with gaslighting the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council's purpose by using it as a venue for legitimizing its violence.

And despite Russia's best efforts, the media -- and everyday Ukrainians -- are documenting the truth on the ground.

Russia can't paint over the front page of the New York Times < Caution-  
<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.nytimes.com%2F2022%2F03%2F06%2Fworld%2Fukraine-family-killed-war.html&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=DC8XnbXjpVfM9jg4ZfnzMuXclgmTmA%2FIFU%2F5qG%2BJits%3D&reserved=0> > , which on Monday featured the bodies of a Ukrainian mother and her two children -- who died while trying to cross a bridge outside Kyiv in their attempt to flee to safety.

Russia cannot cover up the work of AP news photographers < Caution-  
<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fapnews.com%2Farticle%2Frussia-ukraine-europe-bcd85a150cec0ae681a0a1a55672f368&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=L0xMq7FnArLNzqe6VOaKcXRKBke%2FwjsnrP0s4rXOLx4%3D&reserved=0> > who captured a doctor attempting to resuscitate an 18-month-old, Kirill, who died from Russian shelling in Mariupol.

Russia cannot suppress the Facebook post, confirmed and amplified by CBS News, < Caution-  
<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.cbsnews.com%2Fnews%2F11-year-old-ukrainian-boy-flees-to-slovakia-with-phone-number-scrawled-on-hand%2F&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=fVzzWzryjIMEk0YrLkB3gOO9ddpJFKaQHazXp171L70%3D&reserved=0> >  
that told the story of the 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who fled to Slovakia, by himself, with only a passport, a plastic bag, and a phone number scrawled on his hand.

Russia cannot silence the NBC News video footage < Caution-  
<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.nbcnews.com%2Fvideo%2Fterrified-crowds-rush-to-escape-kyiv-by-train-as-russian-attack-intensifies-134607941642&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=e0KwiLkUENqHYiM5gliVwecJiGtyZWps0BCIVzHlvZ8%3D&reserved=0> >  
of terrified Ukrainians rushing to packed train stations -- of mothers asking strangers to help pass their babies through the crowd and onto trains bound for safety.

Russia is failing in its quest to create an alternate reality. In fact, not even Russian diplomats can keep their propaganda straight.

Just yesterday, the Kremlin's spokesman said that he didn't have clear information about the Russian forces who fired on a maternity hospital...

Then the Russian Foreign Minister denied Russia attacked Ukraine at all, right before admitting that Russia deliberately targeted this maternity hospital.

Their story didn't matter, because the world had already seen the searing images broadcast on CNN < Caution-  
<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D0LvLSifQWzU&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=KWkSNgCj9soMkbAK7AJfAVms2VxhPjkrhpXqXxtT4w%3D&reserved=0> >  
of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated from the scene.

Even Russia's own citizens are tiring of such lies.

Russian athletes are writing "No war" on their shoes and on TV cameras. Russian citizens are marching in the streets and protesting Putin's war of choice. And even Russian state TV pundits -- Putin's own propaganda arm -- have called for Putin to stop the military action.

This is why we didn't object to holding today's meeting. Today's meeting has confirmed our predictions, revealed Russia's objectives to the world, and exposed Russia's lies for what they are.

It is a page directly out of the Russian playbook -- and it will not convince us one bit. Russian troops should be concerned about the impact of their potential use of chemical weapons and how they will be viewed by the world.

Unlike the Russian government -- whose first instinct is to silence -- we are confident that truth and transparency will prevail.

We call on President Putin to end this unprovoked, unconscionable war against the Ukrainian people and return sincerely to the negotiating table.

###

-----  
**Josh Black**

*Senior Advisor, U.S. Mission to the United Nations (Washington office)*

USUN/W, U.S. Department of State (HST Room 6633)

Office: (202) 647-7943 Mobile: (202) 415-8101

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:41 AM

**To:** (b)(6)

Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Hi (b)(6)

Adding a few others from USUN to confirm, but I believe USUN has incorporated this edit.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer | IO/UNP

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
mailto:(b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 8:12 AM

**To:** (b)(6)  
mai

mailto:(b)(6) >; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

(b)(6) >; Reif, Kingston A SES  
{USA} <(b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** (b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6) We will have at least one critical comment from the DAS-level. Final chops are still coming in, but will get you something in 20 mins.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
(b)(6) (mobile)  
(b)(6) (SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
mailto:(b)(6)

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 7:18 AM

**To:** (b)(6)  
mai

(b)(6) >; Williams,

Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) < Caution-

mailto:(b)(6) >; Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6) >; Johnson, Richard C SES

(USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

DoD colleagues,

Attached are the draft remarks for LTG's use during today's UNSC meeting on Ukraine bio labs. These have been cleared/circulated at very senior levels. Sharing with you per chain below and we welcome fact checking and legal redline edits. Please send any edits by 9:00.

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Multilateral Affairs Officer | IO/UNP

(b)(6)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:51 PM

To: (b)(6)  
ma  
ma

Subject: Fwd: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

(b)(6) see below. OSD is asking to chop on the points for tomorrow's UNSC Meeting.

Get Outlook for iOS < Caution-

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faka.ms%2Fo0ukef&data=04%7C01%7CParkCh2%40state.gov%7C4be6e25b14a3407baf6c08da036550e4%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637826030919364812%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAilLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=AOOZGVXFU156MWBaRpSVslk9M5N2YXXysMIODsqytok%3D&reserved=0> >

From: (b)(6)  
mailto:

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:18 PM

To: (b)(6) Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Thanks (b)(6)

(b)(6) wants to take a quick chop on those products. He feels strongly that USUN needs to get this aligned and messaging needs to be seamless.

Relatedly, Liz Sherwood Randall just came back to us with edits to our fact sheet. I'll share the latest once we've got the edits reconciled.

Best,

(b)(6)

Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy  
Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)

(b)(6) (office)  
mobile)  
SVOIP)

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 8:15 PM

**To:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

mailto:(b)(6)

mailto:(b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6); Caution-

mailto:(b)(6); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6); Johnson, Richard C SES

(USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** [Non-DoD Source] RE: Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

Dear Rob,

We're tracking and appreciate the messaging products your team sent earlier today.

I'm copying (b)(6) who have the lead on this. They provided PG and related guidance to USUN earlier today and can speak to the latest, including whether any additional DTRA or OSD inputs are needed.

Thanks so much,

(b)(6)

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Acting), Nonproliferation Programs  
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation  
U.S. Department of State  
Voice, Text, WhatsApp, Signal (b)(6)  
Secure Phone (b)(6)

*Our schedules are all different. Please do not feel obliged to respond to this message outside of your working hours.*

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6) ution-mailto (b)(6)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:52 PM

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) Caution-mailto (b)(6) > >; Reif, Kingston A SES (USA)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Any DoD Info Needed for Friday UNSC Mtg on Ukraine Bio Labs?

**Importance:** High

(b)(6)

I just saw that Russia has requested a UNSC meeting tomorrow to discuss the Ukraine labs. We previously sent DTRA's "Break Glass" messaging product to you and I know AVC has put together some talking points. Do you need further info from DoD to support the U.S. delegation tomorrow?

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (***IO, RIA Novosti***)

Best regards,

Rob

Robert S. Pope, Ph.D., SES  
Director  
Cooperative Threat Reduction

**From:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >

**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2022 1:00 AM

**To:** EUR Crisis Coordination <EURCrisisCoord@state.gov < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > >

**Subject:** (SBU//FOUO) TFUA01: Ukraine Task Force SitRep No. 72 03.10.2022 1800 ET

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED



EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

*Operations Center - Crisis Management and Strategy*

## ***TFUA01 - Ukraine SitRep No. 72***

Thursday, March 10, 2022  
1800 ET

### **SITUATION ON THE GROUND**

- (SBU) Fighting continued around the major cities in the north, in the Donbas, in Mariupol, and near Mykolayiv. Attacks diminished slightly and neither side made any strategic progress, but Russian forces continued to bombard civilian targets. (22 *US Office Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (U) Ukraine's MFA announced 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have enlisted in Ukraine's International Legion. Press reports said that number includes as many as 3,000 U.S. citizens. Ukraine Border Guards reported that 215,000 Ukrainians have returned to the country since the war began. (22 *US Office Ukraine Affairs Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (U) Ukraine State Emergency Services released a video showing staff defusing a bomb from a downed Russian fighter jet in the northern city of Chernihiv. (*CNN*)

### **RUSSIA**

- (SBU) Russia requested a UN Security Council meeting for Friday, March 11, to discuss its false allegations of a U.S. biological weapons program in Ukraine. (*IO, RIA Novosti*)
- (U) JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs said they are planning to exit Russia, while Citigroup said it is evaluating its future. (*Wall Street Journal*)

- (U)Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez met with FM Lavrov in Turkey. She tweeted after the meeting that “Venezuela reaffirmed the principle of sovereign equality of states as a way to preserve balance for the sake of peace.” (@delcyrodriguezv)

## INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

- (U) EU heads of state, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Versailles, were cautious regarding Ukraine’s application for EU membership. (*Reuters*)
- (U) At the Executive Council Session of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), dozens of countries condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in joint and national statements, including Latin American nations that normally shy away from political confrontation in the group. The United States organized a walkout during the Russian ambassador’s remarks. (22 *OPCW The Hague 18*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20OPCW%20THE%20HAGUE%2018%22> >

## HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE SITUATION

UNHCR Reported Refugee Estimates as of March 9		
Country	Arrivals from Ukraine since Feb 24	% Increase in the past 24 hours
Poland	1,412,503	9.1% <sup>o</sup>
Hungary	214,160	5.4% <sup>o</sup>
Moldova*	82,762	-
Slovakia	165,199	7.8% <sup>o</sup>
Romania**	84,671	-0.9% <sup>o</sup>
Russia**	97,098	-2.2% <sup>o</sup>
Belarus	765	29.2% <sup>o</sup>
Movement onward toward other European countries	258,844	9.8% <sup>o</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,316,002</b>	<b>7.5%<sup>o</sup></b>
*UNHCR reporting from Moldova has not been updated since March 6.		
**UNHCR continues to revise some counts downward as they refine their reporting and account for onward refugee movement.		

- (U) On March 9, an additional 12,978 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania from Moldova (a decrease of 2 percent from the previous day). (*UNHCR, M/SS Center for Analytics, EUR/CE*)
- (SBU)The UNHCR High Commissioner said the next wave of refugees would likely be more vulnerable than the first, with fewer resources and connections. (22 *USOffice Ukraine Affair Unit 20*) < Caution-  
<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20USOFFICE%20UKRAINE%20AFFAIRS%20UNIT%2020%22> >
- (SBU)From March 6-8, ICRC carried out more than 35 humanitarian assistance operations across Ukraine. Many planned activities had to be postponed due to security risks, such as ongoing shelling. A high number of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine (22 *Geneva 158*) < Caution-

<http://repository.state.gov/searchcenter/Results.aspx?k=mrn%3a%2222%20GENEVA%20158%22> >

- (U) The European Commission launched a webpage containing information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival, and information about onward travel. (*European Commission Press Release*)

Please include TFUA01 as the first item on the subject line for all cables and other documents related to the Ukraine Task Force. Please direct questions or feedback to the Ukraine Task Force at [EURCrisisCoord@state.gov](mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov) < Caution-mailto:EURCrisisCoord@state.gov > .

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 11:33:12 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)  
**REDUCT (USA)**  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Wall Street Journal Interview - Biological threat reduction  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Good morning Dr. Williams,

Sir, for your awareness, this morning we will coordinate a media interview with the WSJ. The WSJ is preparing an article on the history of the Biological Threat Reduction Program. They'd like an interview with Dr. Pope for an article on countering false claims that have been put out about weapons work in Ukraine. Dr. Pope is supporting and has agreed to engage.

The WSJ has interviewed others for the story already. I researched the Editor on this piece, Sharon Weinberger, and her reporting is balanced and non-sensational and she's worked the same topic for years.

Once I get all the solid details this morning (time, other interviewees to this point, information she's received) I will let you know as soon as possible so that the information can be provided to Ms. Rosenblum and her team.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thanks.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWIC

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 14, 2022 4:01 AM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**COO**  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Re: Wall Street Journal Interview - Biological threat reduction

I'm happy to engage. Will need to work around the 5hour time difference and my meetings here.

**From:** (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
**Date:** Monday, March 14, 2022 at 4:27:02 AM  
**To:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** Wall Street Journal Interview - Biological threat reduction

Gentlemen,

I received an email Sunday evening from the Wall Street Journal via LinkedIn. The WSJ is preparing an article on the history of the Biological Threat Reduction Program. They'd like an interview from Dr. Pope for an article on countering false claims that have been put out about weapons work in Ukraine. Sharon Weinberger is the editor who emailed me. She says that they have already done outside interviews with people who have been involved in the program, but need some official input from DTRA or DOD. Dr. Pope, I know you are traveling and would like your input when you are able to let us know. Randy, we (Andi and I) are prepared to discuss in the a.m. and options for this. I think we should seriously consider this one. The editor is thorough and has covered this topic extensively.

Thanks.  
Vr,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
(b)(6) (Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)  
SIPR:  
JWICS:

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Sunday, March 13, 2022 10:57 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Subject: [URL Verdict: Neutral][Non-DoD Source] Fwd: Biological threat reduction

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b)(6)  
Caution-mailto:messages-noreply@linkedin.com >>  
Date: Sun, Mar 13, 2022 at 6:43 PM  
Subject: Biological threat reduction

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 29 Mar 2022 15:42:53 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** Washington Post Article: The truth about Hunter Biden and the Ukrainian 'bio labs'  
**Attachments:** The truth about Hunter Biden and the Ukrainian 'bio labs' - The Washington Post.pdf, Articles.docx, smime.p7s

Gentlemen,

Attached is the Washington Post article – just released. BLUF: Good background information – DTRA coordinated quotes and the information is accurate and solid.

Please let me know if you have any concerns. We also have the extensive log of the media stories from the last month and will continue to add in. Also, we are posting the link on the external website in a new section.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

(Work)

Work Cell)

NIPR: (b)(6)

SIPR:

JWICS:

# The truth about Hunter Biden and the Ukrainian ‘bio labs’

By Glenn Kessler

Staff writer

Today at 3:00 a.m. EDT

 **Listen to article** 13 min



*“Hunter Biden’s Rosemont Seneca investment fund financed the Pentagon’s military biological program in Ukraine, said Igor Kirillov, head of the radiation, chemical and biological defense forces of the Russian Armed Forces.”*

— **RIA Novosti, Russian state-owned domestic news agency, March 24**

*“The National Pulse is reporting tonight apparently a private equity firm run by Hunter Biden funded some of the research into pathogens in these bio labs.”*

— **Tucker Carlson, remarks on his Fox News show, March 24**

*“Russia’s assertion that President Biden’s son Hunter was ‘financing ... biological laboratories in Ukraine’ was based in truth, according to e-mails reviewed by The Post.”*

— **New York Post article, March 26**

*“BOMBSHELL: Did Russia Invade Ukraine Because of the Bidens’ Biolabs? Hunter’s Laptop Says ‘Yes’”*

— **Headline on PJ Media article, March 26**

The Russian Defense Ministry knows how to stir up the interest of the right-leaning news media in the United States — just mention Hunter Biden, the president’s son.

Russia for years has been seeding the ground to claim that the United States set up biowarfare labs in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics — claims that have been revived as part of the invasion of Ukraine. As part of his media presentation, Igor Kirillov of the Russian armed forces alleged the labs were part of the U.S. plot to study the natural immunity of the population to identify the most dangerous pathogen for people in the region.

The Defense Ministry released a complex-looking flow chart with spaghetti lines depicting not only the involvement of Hunter Biden but financier George Soros in the alleged financing of “bioweapons labs.” But the reference to Hunter Biden was catnip to the right-leaning media. Reporters immediately dug into their copies of Biden’s laptop, supposedly left behind for repair in a Delaware shop in April 2019, and dredged up emails that they suggested validated the Russian report.

First of all, as we have previously documented, these are not bioweapons labs, but biological research facilities focused on better detecting, diagnosing and monitoring infectious-disease outbreaks. Second, random emails can be easily misinterpreted without additional reporting.

We’ve dug into the records and discussed the deals in question with people involved. The reporting from those news outlets is false. Hunter Biden has come under scrutiny for business deals in places such as Ukraine and China that took place while his father was vice president. But he was not “financing” these labs. In fact, he was not part of a decision to invest in a company at the center of the Russian allegations, he did not profit from it as he was kicked out of the investment firm over cocaine allegations, and the company made little money from its tiny bit of business in Ukraine.

## The Pentagon program

There are several layers to this story, so let’s peel the onion. There is a U.S.-led project, known as the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, to help former Soviet states transform old Soviet labs into state-of-the-art biological research facilities. Various American companies received contracts from the Pentagon to do that work. One of those subcontractors — a relatively minor one called Metabiota — did some work in Ukraine. That firm received an investment from a private equity firm associated with Hunter Biden.

That investment had nothing to do with the labs in Ukraine. But the Russian Defense Ministry's flow chart is a good illustration of how tenuous connections can be made to look sinister. Underneath Hunter Biden, the chart shows a box with Soros. A line then connects Soros to Gilead Sciences, a U.S. biopharmaceutical company that was a Pentagon subcontractor. The line eventually leads to the Ukrainian Health Ministry and the labs.

Soros Fund Management, an investment firm founded by Soros in 1970, as recently as 2010 owned shares of Gilead, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings, along with hundreds of other stocks. But that's it. "We have no affiliation with George Soros — any assertion otherwise is completely false," said Chris Ridley, a Gilead spokesman. His statement is confirmed by the most recent SEC filing by Soros Fund Management, as well as by Laura Silber, a Soros spokesperson.

Now let's examine the alleged Hunter Biden connection. The flow chart shows a line from Hunter Biden to "Rosemont Seneca," which in turn is connected to Metabiota, which advises governments and companies on health epidemics. There's also a line connecting Metabiota to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), an arm of the Pentagon, which initially funded the Ukrainian labs. The line from Metabiota then traces to the labs.

The DTRA line to Metabiota is a tacit admission by the Russians that Pentagon funding played a role in the company's work. The United States and Ukraine in 2005 had signed an agreement under which the Defense Department, at no cost to Ukraine, would assist the Ministry of Health in building and maintaining the labs. The United States "has invested approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005, supporting 46 Ukrainian laboratories, health facilities, and diagnostic sites," the Defense Department said in a fact sheet released this month.

## **A San Francisco technology company**

Metabiota, which is based in San Francisco, was founded by Nathan Wolfe, a prominent virologist. The firm essentially acted as a staffing agency, helping identify people who could be hired to work in high-level biological research labs and providing research mentoring, according to a company official. Another U.S. firm, Black & Veatch, was hired by the Defense Department under a contract aimed at enhancing disease diagnosis, mainly to build labs; Metabiota was one of its subcontractors.

“There are only diagnostic laboratories for routine human and animal health requirements akin to any standard U.S.-based public-facing diagnostic laboratory,” said Andrea Chaney, a DTRA spokesperson. “For many years, the companies Black & Veatch, Metabiota, and Gilead Sciences have performed a variety of training, renovation, and equipping projects competitively awarded by the Cooperative Threat Reduction program to support Ukrainian critical human and veterinarian public health infrastructure needs. The work has always centered on improving the health, safety and well-being of the Ukrainian people.”

Dangerous pathogens are kept in freezers in these labs, so U.S. officials have expressed concern that a loss of electrical power due to the war could allow for their escape — concerns that Russia has used to underscore its claims that these are biolabs.

Federal contracting records show Metabiota also received \$18.4 million from DTRA between 2014 and 2017, under a competitively bid contract. Just \$307,091 is listed as earmarked for “Ukraine research projects.” The company had a significantly bigger contract at the time with DTRA in Tanzania, focused on controlling the spread of Rift Valley fever.

## **An investment firm tied to Hunter Biden**

So where’s Hunter Biden in all of this? Let’s start with an investment vehicle called Rosemont Seneca Partners. It was founded by Hunter Biden, Devon Archer and Christopher Heinz in 2009. That firm in turn had a stake in an independent firm called Rosemont Seneca Technology Partners (RSTP), which invested in emerging technology companies.

Through his stake in Rosemont Seneca, Biden was a member of RSTP and would have benefited from successful investments. But he was not on the committee making decisions on investments, according to an investor at the time, who asked not to be identified because he was disclosing confidential business information.

When Metabiota had the DTRA contract, the company was transitioning from a nonprofit to a profit-making enterprise and sought funding from Wall Street and Silicon Valley investors. In early 2014, RSTP invested \$500,000 in what is known as the seed round — a new company’s initial effort to raise capital, according to a 2014 confidential memo on Metabiota’s investments obtained by The Fact Checker. Later that year, the memo said, RSTP contributed another \$10 million, which gave it 13.4

percent ownership of the company. The memo said Metabiota was not expected to achieve consistent profitability until 2017.

These investments were not related to the U.S.-funded labs in Ukraine. Instead, investors such as RSTP were betting on a new idea — selling insurance to protect businesses against a global pandemic.

Any company seeking to raise money in the private equity market needs “a story” to lure investors, who hope to score big if the company eventually sells shares to the public. The Ebola virus outbreak in 2014 had raised corporate fears of a global pandemic. Metabiota’s “story” was that the data collected by the firm’s epidemiologists and researchers around the world provided an early-warning system on emerging biothreats and could be used to create an insurance product that would shield companies — or even entire countries — from a global economic downturn during a pandemic.

There was not much money that could be earned with Metabiota’s contracts to place researchers in labs. But the insights that could be gained from being on the ground were considered valuable. “The DOD contract was a loss leader intended to build a knowledge base,” the investor said, using a business term for selling a product or service at a price that is not profitable in hopes of generating additional business.

Most of the company’s work was in African countries, according to the confidential deal memo. Regarding Ukraine, the 44-page memo only mentions that the company had an office in the country, which will “implement a research project in Ukraine aimed at understanding the threat of tularemia and anthrax” and “develop and implement a public awareness campaign to mitigate the threat of African swine fever.” A person familiar with the Ukraine contract at the time said it employed about five local nationals and one expat.

## Hunter Biden’s ouster

Moreover, by the time the document was written, on Nov. 18, 2014, Hunter Biden was already in hot water with his colleagues. A month earlier, the Wall Street Journal reported that he had been discharged that February from the Navy Reserve after testing positive for cocaine use. Biden had not disclosed the discharge to RSTP members and so in early 2015 he was eased out of the firm, the investor said. RSTP in 2016 rebranded itself Pilot Growth Equity.

“We were marketing our funds to investors, positioning our management as having a certain level of character,” the investor said. “We would not be able to raise money from investors” if Biden had remained a member of RSTP. So Biden was removed from the RSTP Management Company and RSTP Fund I, which included the Metabiota investment. After that point, he had no economic interest or ownership interest in either entity.

Chris Clark, an attorney for Hunter Biden, did not respond to repeated queries. Archived RSTP webpages show that Biden was removed from the “team” page between 2014 and 2015, even as his business partner Devon Archer remained.

Pilot Growth Equity invested a total of \$11.39 million in the fund and still owns 10.8 percent of Metabiota, according to a Dec. 31, 2020, investment sheet viewed by The Fact Checker. The 2014 investment memo optimistically anticipated an initial public offering by 2017, but that did not happen. Even with the coronavirus pandemic, hopes for a booming insurance market to protect companies from such events have not panned out. Wolfe, in a 2020 interview with Wired magazine, said not a single company ever bought an insurance contract.

“Our current value of the [Pilot Growth Equity] investment is \$1.1 million,” the investor said. “So this was a big money loser.”

In a statement to The Fact Checker, Metabiota said: “Metabiota worked in Ukraine until 2020, providing training to help improve local capacity to detect and respond to health threats. We’re concerned about the disinformation and the impact it may have on the safety of scientists working to support public health in Ukraine and worldwide.”

## Russian disinformation spreads

In other words, Hunter Biden was barely involved in the RSTP deal. Moreover, the investment had nothing to do with the Ukraine labs. But Hunter Biden’s laptop contains some emails that discuss the pending investment.

Those emails led to reporting in the right-wing media that did not initially mention the source of the original allegation — the Russian Defense ministry. And the journey of this false storyline from Moscow to U.S. media offers yet another reminder of how disinformation spreads in this polarized modern era.

The National Pulse, a website run by former associates of former Trump adviser Stephen K. Bannon, on Thursday published an account based on some of the laptop emails about 12 hours after the Russian Defense Ministry made its presentation. There is no mention of the Russian claim. Raheem Kassam, editor in chief, insisted to The Fact Checker that he was unaware of the Russian allegations until five minutes before publication, when he did a quick Google check.

Carlson then cited the National Pulse reporting that night on his show. He also made no mention of the Russian Defense Ministry allegations, though in another part of his monologue he said he had spoken to “someone with direct firsthand knowledge of this topic,” who claimed that the United States had moved “bioweapons research offshore” to Ukraine because it was too dangerous to conduct in the United States. Maybe it’s just a coincidence but that’s also what Kirillov, the Russian official, had claimed that morning. Carlson did not respond to a request for comment.

The Daily Mail on Friday followed up with a more detailed look at the Biden emails mentioning Metabiota. This article acknowledged the Russian presentation but declared “emails and correspondence obtained by DailyMail.com from Hunter’s abandoned laptop show the claims may well be true.” That same approach was taken by the New York Post in article published on Saturday. The New York Post did not respond to a request for comment, while a Daily Mail spokesman said: “We stand by our reporting.”

One of the laptop emails shows Hunter Biden contacting an official at Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company where he was a board director, in April 2014 about the possibility of a “science project” involving Metabiota. The reply email from the Burisma official indicates some skepticism and confusion about what Biden was pitching.

In the early months of 2014, political tensions in Ukraine had risen sharply. The Ukrainian president had resigned in February and fled to Russia. Within weeks, Russia invaded and subsequently annexed Crimea.

In response, the Defense Department issued a “stop-work” order on Black & Veatch’s contract and Metabiota was scrambling to find work for its local scientists and researchers, the person familiar with the contract said. Biden briefly tried to use his connections to help the firm, but nothing came of his outreach. The work ended in June and was not revived until the political situation calmed down a year later — after RSTP had cut ties with Biden.

(About our rating scale)

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By Glenn Kessler

Glenn Kessler has reported on domestic and foreign policy for more than three decades. Send him statements to fact check by emailing him, tweeting at him, or sending him a message on Facebook.  [Twitter](#)

1. Query and articles: Matt Field, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists
  - a. <https://thebulletin.org/2022/03/in-ukrainian-cities-under-russian-attack-us-linked-research-labs-could-provide-fodder-for-future-russian-disinformation/>
  - b. <https://thebulletin.org/2022/02/russian-media-spreading-disinformation-about-us-bioweapons-as-troops-mass-near-ukraine/>
2. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2022/03/exclusive-kremlin-putin-russia-ukraine-war-memo-tucker-carlson-fox/>
3. Query: Bradley Devlin, American conservative (nothing published yet)
4. Query: Sara Sirato, The Intercept (nothing published yet)
5. Interview request: Justin Ling, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (March 29)
6. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10615639/I-said-no-thing-Tulsi-Gabbard-denies-claiming-making-bioweapons-Ukraine-says-Mitt-Romney-RESIGN-doesnt-evidence-claims-treasonous.html>
7. Query and article: Glenn Kessler, Washington Post
  - a. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/15/often-subtle-distinction-between-anti-us-pro-putin-rhetoric/>
8. [The U.S. Government inaugurates the newly renovated Cameroon National Veterinary Laboratory and donates laboratory equipment and supplies - African Business](#)
9. <https://cmio.org/world/577315-rkfbz-the-head-of-dtra-at-the-us-embassy-was-the-curator-of-laboratories-in-ukraine>
10. <https://theintercept.com/2022/03/17/russia-ukraine-bioweapons-misinformation/>
11. Query and article: Sharon Weinberger, Wall Street Journal
  - a. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagons-work-with-ukraines-biological-facilities-becomes-flashpoint-in>
12. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/you-dont-know-about-russias-bioweapons-propaganda-in-the-ukraine-war>
13. <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-ukraine-lavrov-biolab-weapons-united-nations-pettersson-1689402>

14. Query: Glenn Kessler, Washington Post  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/29/truth-about-hunter-biden-ukrainian-bio-labs/>
15. [https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/03/ukrainian-journalist-biolabs-tucker-carlson-war-crimes.html?via=rss\\_socialflow\\_facebook](https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/03/ukrainian-journalist-biolabs-tucker-carlson-war-crimes.html?via=rss_socialflow_facebook)
- 16.

**From:**

(b)(6)

**Sent:**

Wed, 9 Mar 2022 23:36:49 +0000

**To:**

Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)

**Subject:**

WH Press Sec commented on labs

**Attachments:**

smime.p7s

Sir,

Wanted to share this with you in case you haven't seen it.

<https://twitter.com/pressec/status/1501676230617321480?s=21>

Have a good evening.

V/r,

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sun, 20 Mar 2022 16:55:33 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA);Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA);(b)(6)  
(USA);  
CT (US  
CIV DT  
(USA);  
**Subject:** WSJ Article - Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program  
**Attachments:** WSJ Article.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and Leaders,  
Sir, attached is a copy of the WSJ article. The article is behind a paywall, so I'm sharing the story, in case you or anyone else may have not seen it yet or gotten the text. Please let me know if there are any concerns/feedback. Thanks.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6)

Work)

Work Cell)

NIPR:  
SIPR:  
JWICS

(b)(6)

## Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program

The Pentagon denies Russia's accusations of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories.

*By Sharon Weinberger*

March 20, 2022 5:30 am ET

On his first official visit abroad, the new senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, was taken to a facility in Ukraine where the U.S. helped scientists working with dangerous biological materials. But rather than produce biological weapons, U.S. officials in that ramshackle building were trying to prevent lethal pathogens from falling into the hands of terrorists.

"I removed a tray of glass vials containing *Bacillus anthracis*, which is the bacterium that causes the anthrax," recalls Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official who was in charge of the U.S.-funded program that worked with the Ukrainian government. Mr. Weber said he showed the tray "to a very concerned-looking young senator."

Mr. Obama himself recalled seeing in his 2005 trip to Ukraine "test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded."

A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow has accused the Pentagon of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories. "These were not peaceful experiments," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month.

China, whose leader Xi Jinping has cultivated a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has echoed those allegations. "Russia has found during its military operations that the U.S. uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

U.S. officials have flatly denied those claims and warned that Moscow could use its allegations to justify its own use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine.

“We believe that Moscow may be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon and then falsely blame Ukraine to justify escalating its attacks on the Ukrainian people,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week. “Manufacturing events and creating false narratives of genocide to justify greater use of military force is a tactic that Russia has used before.”

The allegations have shocked those who are most familiar with the Pentagon’s post-Cold War initiative, called the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. That is because not only has Russia been aware of the Pentagon’s work securing chemical, biological and nuclear facilities across the former Soviet Union, but it had also been its beneficiary for many years.

“They’re outrageous claims,” said Robert Pope, the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, or DTRA, the arm of the Pentagon in charge of running the program. “We were created 30 years ago to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction.”

The program, which dates back to 1991 and continues today, stretches across the former Soviet Union. Since the program started, the Pentagon has spent approximately \$12 billion on securing material used in weapons of mass destruction in post-Soviet republics, according to a DTRA spokeswoman. Of those funds, about \$200 million has been spent on the biological work in Ukraine since 2005. The funds have supported dozens of labs, health facilities and diagnostic sites around the country, the DTRA spokeswoman said.

Mr. Weber, who was in charge of negotiating the initial agreement with Kyiv to work on securing the country’s biological materials and facilities, said that work expanded to Ukraine after the 9/11 attacks, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. U.S. policy makers grew worried about the potential for terrorists to steal biological materials – fears that were heightened after letters containing anthrax were sent in the U.S. mail to congressional offices and media outlets. The FBI eventually concluded that an American scientist employed at a military lab sent the letters.

The president of Ukraine at the time, Leonid Kuchma, concerned about the threat of terrorism in his own country, asked the U.S. for help. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, Ukraine had been starved of the funds needed to secure its biological facilities.

Mr. Weber put together a team that visited Ukraine's biological and chemical facilities, which ranged from large laboratories to small veterinary research centers. "We found that a number of them had dangerous pathogen collections left over from Soviet days," he said. "They were in pretty bad shape."

Ukraine's laboratories—unlike some in other former Soviet republics—weren't directly involved in the Cold War biological-weapons program, but they did have pathogens that fed into offensive work, according to Mr. Weber.

Those pathogens, like anthrax, could pose a threat if released, whether accidentally or on purpose. The focus of U.S. work in Ukraine was to consolidate that biological material, much of it related to agriculture, into secure facilities, which the U.S. would pay to build or upgrade.

Paul McNelly, who from 1995 to 2003 directed the Defense Department's chemical and biological elimination programs in Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, said he was stunned with what he saw inside the former Soviet facilities.

"You would walk into these places and the refrigerators that stored these dangerous pathogens, they had no locks on them at all," Mr. McNelly said. "There would be vials that were labeled tularemia, plague, different things like that. And these people, most of them, weren't masked. Their gowns were antiquated." He added: "It was horrible."

As part of the program, the Pentagon spent \$1 billion to build the Russians a facility in Shchuchye, Siberia, to demilitarize some two million chemical weapons. By the time it was done in 2009, ties with Moscow were growing tense. The price of oil was going up, giving Russia more revenue to wean itself off foreign assistance. At the same time, Mr. Putin was consolidating power.

As a result, the Russian government became a less-willing partner to the Pentagon's drive to secure the deadly materials, according to James Tegnalia, who served as the head of DTRA from 2005 to 2009. "They wanted our money, but they didn't want to admit that we built the facility," Mr. Tegnalia said. "You could see that they were getting ready to pull back."

Russia's Foreign Ministry had in the past praised the program. But by 2012, Moscow declined to renew cooperation, saying it could pay for the work on its own.

In 2014, the year Moscow illegally annexed Crimea and began backing separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region, the program in Russia drew to a close.

A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., didn't respond to a request for comment on the Pentagon program.

Yet even with that chapter of its cooperation over, the Russian claims about the Pentagon conducting secret weapons work in Ukraine came as a surprise not only to those who have worked on the program but also to other Western officials. The Kremlin has in the past used such charges as cover for its own actions, they say.

"We are concerned that Moscow could stage a false-flag operation, possibly including chemical weapons," North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week.

U.S. officials have declined to discuss what specific intelligence, if any, they have to indicate Russia might be preparing to deploy chemical or other unconventional weapons to Ukraine. But they say Russia has a history of using chemical weapons, including against Mr. Putin's domestic political opponents, and it has encouraged their use in Syria by President Bashar al-Assad's government.

The Russian government shot back against the U.S. allegations, denying plans to use chemical weapons. In a post last week on its official Telegram channel, the Russian Defense Ministry said the units fighting in Ukraine "do not have chemical munitions."

Mr. Tegnelia, the former DTRA director, views Russia's allegations as a path to an even more dangerous escalation. "If you see them using chemical weapons in Ukraine, watch out," he said, "because they're only one step away from nuclear weapons."

—*Warren Strobel and William Mauldin contributed to this article.*

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Sent:** Mon, 21 Mar 2022 11:35:05 +0000  
**To:** Rosenblum, Deborah G HON OSD OUSD A-S (USA)  
**Cc:** Vann, Brandi C SES OSD OUSD A-S (USA); Reif, Kingston A SES (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** Clips and DTRA  
**Attachments:** OSD Defense Morning Clips 21 Mar 2022.pdf, smime.p7s

Ma'am,

Just in case you weren't tracking the WSJ article over the weekend - where Rob Pope, amongst others including Andy Weber, had spoken with the editor – the article which ran yesterday is in the clips this morning (second article).

v/r,  
Rhys

**From:** (b)(6)

**Sent:** Mon, 11 Apr 2022 14:14:43 +0000

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6); Hann, Ronald K Jr SES DTRA RD (USA); Hersman, Rebecca K SES (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA); Miller, Craig G SES DTRA OFFICE OF THE DIR (USA); Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6); Swan, Lisa K SES DTRA AL (USA); Vizcarra, Mario G SES DTRA IT (USA); Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6); Franciszkowicz,

Marc J SES DTRA NE (USA); (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI

(USA); (b)(6)

(USA)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** DTRA Input to A&S Ukraine Assistance Daily Update - 11 Apr

**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Ma'am,

Here is an item for today's A&S Ukraine assistance update:

(U) Over the weekend, The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) aired an extensive report on Russian disinformation about Ukraine bio labs. The piece featured a face-to-face interview with Dr. Robert Pope of DTRA's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Dr. Pope articulated the history of US involvement in mitigating bio threats in Ukraine following the fall of the Soviet Union, and countered disinformation about the nature of the labs currently operating in Ukraine.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-russia-bioweapons-theory-1.6412029>

V/r,

(b)(6)

Crisis Operations Response Team Lead  
Operations & Activities Division  
Operations & Integration Directorate  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

SIPR: (b)(6)

Office  
DSN  
Cell:

(b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 16:50:11 +0000  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA);Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA);Warshaw, David Paul BG USARMY DTRA OI (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);(b)(6)  
(USA);Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);(b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** finalnoteverbaletrans.pdf, Briefing 17.03.22.docx, smime.p7s

Sirs, FYI below per Dr. Williams.

BLUF: due to the recent RUS "Note Verbale" presented 2 days ago at the BWC in Geneva (PDF file attached), and RUS presentation this morning (Word doc attached) at the UN Security Council claiming the US is developing bio weapons in UKR, the NSC (Beth Cameron) has reached out directly to DTRA (specifically Dr. Pope) for a quick conversation on this issue for preparation of an upcoming sub-IPC. This conversation will take place at 1600 today.

OSD-P and NCB/TRAC have both been looped in and Policy is leading the discussion for DoD. I have been asked to participate; I invited CT's rep to the CORT so he can back-brief them; and the IOFC (Ana) is welcome to attend as well. Note, Policy wants to keep this discussion limited. Will keep everyone informed as to the outcome of the discussion. Ms. Cameron will not participate; it will be her staff on the NSC.

Unless Policy wants DTRA representation, we will likely not be invited to the IPC on Monday, as Policy has been attending those on this topic and is the gatekeeper.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:47 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6) ope,  
Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

ACK. I just did a quick scan of the attached. Follow the policy lead on this and also loop in TRAC. I will send a note to ASD/NCB for SA. Also, please loop in OI Leadership/CORT and PA.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:35:21 AM  
To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Cc: "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT  
REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sir, FYI - NSC (b)(6) reached out to (b)(6) NSC wants to help with disinformation, given the RUS Note Verbale they presented at the BWC 2 days ago, and now RUS apparently did the same at the UN Security Council this morning. Attached is what was presented at the BWC, and we are trying to find out what RUS presented this morning. It is likely the same product.

I looped in my Policy comrades for the discussion the NSC wants to have with us this afternoon at 1600. Not sure if we (DTRA) will be invited to the sub/IPC on Monday. Will keep you posted.

Frankly, the NSC is way behind here. But we will support them as needed/required, unless you have other guidance.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:21 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
(b)(6)  
Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

+ OSD Policy (b)(6)

(b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

Hi (b)(6) happy to talk with you at 4pm. If we can include our Policy comrades on that discussion, that would be great. They have been attending the series of sub/IPCs on this topic.

Attached is what the Russians presented at the BWC, translated into English. It is very weak argument, frankly, and I expected better. If they present the same material at the UNSC this morning, we certainly can work together to debunk this nonsense.

(b)(6)

any thoughts?

(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)  
C: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 8:45 AM  
To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THIRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Thanks, (b)(6)

Hi (b)(6)

Russia is convening the UNSC again this morning to launder its disinformation and to malign U.S. support for biological facilities and laboratories in Ukraine.

It's not going away anytime soon in the media or in international fora (BWC, UNSC, etc.), so we'd like explore with you some fresh, creative approaches to turning Russian disinformation upside down. As a starting point, I'm going to get the "evidence" that Russia furnished for the UNSC convening this morning.

NSC Democracy is hosting a subIPC on Monday @ 1:00 PM on countering disinformation regarding the U.S., Ukraine, and CBW (for example: <https://tass.com/politics/1423129>). I'll make sure you get that invite, and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you beforehand - either 4:00 PM today or Monday morning 9:30 or 10?

Many thanks!  
Best,

(b)(6)

Global Health Security & Biodefense  
National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6) (SIPR)

(b)(6) (JWICS)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tue, 29 Mar 2022 09:01:04 +0000  
**To:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Possible Bio Program Disinformation Posting concerning USFK w/Suggested Ukraine Linkage  
**Attachments:** translation.docx, Suspected Malign posting by the Russian Embassy..pdf

Sir - I erroneously left you off the email.  
vr

(b)(6)

DTRA Combatant Command Representative - Korea // DTRA 주한 선임대표  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency 국방 위협 감소국  
Headquarters USFK, Room 106.17, Camp Humphreys ROK  
DSN: (b)(6)  
Comm (b)(6)  
Mobil (b)(6)  
CENTR (b)(6)

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 29, 2022 at 2:20:00 PM  
**To:** "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
"Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)" (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Possible Bio Program Disinformation Posting concerning USFK w/Suggested Ukraine Linkage

Dr. Pope et al –

BLUF, attached is an article/posting suspected by the Russian EMB “There is a U.S. Bio-chemical Warfare Lab, which contributed to the Ukraine situation, in Pusan as well!

[Youthassembly.kr/news/630847](http://Youthassembly.kr/news/630847)”

This post has not been seized upon by major media outlets but is a clear attempt to malign JPEO sensor systems on peninsula (program classified US SECRET), USFK and connect with US (CTR) in the Ukraine.

USFK/J39 is keeping us apprised. Will keep you posted.

If any questions, please let us know.

vr

(b)(6)

DTRA Combatant Command Representative - Korea // DTRA 주한 선임대표

Defense Threat Reduction Agency 국방 위협 감소국

Headquarters USFK, Room 106.17, Camp Humphreys ROK

DSN: (b)(6)

Comm

Mobil

CENTR

Some contents that are hard to have their number were posted on the official SNS site of the Russian Embassy in ROK.

24 Mar 2022, the official TWITTER account operated by the Russian Embassy in South Korea introduced a link of a news article reading “Pusan city maintains the U.S. Bio-chemical Warfare Lab that led to the Ukraine circumstance!”.

Users of SNS and online community point a finger at such a message. The online community, “The ku”, said that “So, are you going to invade South Korea as you did Ukraine?”, noting that “finally, the Russian Embassy became crazy”. This posting was removed shortly, yet another introducing the link concerned was published.

The users raised their voices, saying that “are they threatening?”, “how much money are they getting sitting there?”, “what’s wrong with the behaviors of the Embassy”.

## Russian Embassy

There is a U.S. Bio-chemical Warfare Lab, which contributed to the Ukraine situation, in Pusan as well!

[Youthassembly.kr/news/630847](http://Youthassembly.kr/news/630847)

The News coverage introduced by the Russian Embassy was posted on the site run by ROK Youth Congress Press Corps. According to the contents, 21 Mar 22, Pusan baekunpo had a protest against ROK/U.S. Combined Military Wartime Exercise.

The KCTU, Pusan district supervisor, Mr. Kim, Jaenam attending this event, made the case that chemical and biological weapons lab situation in Ukraine can also take place in South Korea, citing that today our condition is nothing short of the crisis that the Ukrainians faced, and the U.S. has operated the biochemical facilities not only at the 8<sup>th</sup> pier in Pusan but across the nation, developing activities to be able to elevate such a warfare capability ceaselessly, also on a yearly basis, the U.S. has doubled down efforts for ROK/U.S. Bio-chemical Defense Drills.

It is true that there happened bacteriological experiment related accidents in ROK, however that’s debatable on whether the official SNS channel by the Russian Embassy deals with the issue in an inflammatory manner is right or not, also what’s behind the scene.

Based on the last news report by SISA in, back in 2015, anthrax bacterium at the U.S. Airforce base in Osan, which is transported for bacteriological experiment, has been exposed to some Military service members and civilians. In 2016, it was discovered that the USFK facilities at the 8<sup>th</sup> pier of Pusan has established and run the military bio-chemical lab.

The very small amount of emission of the deadly poison may cause catastrophe. The USFK then expressed their opinions, noting that Jupiter program is designed to detect, analyze, and alert the deadly poison substances as defensive system against threats from bio-chemical warfare, yet turned out to be false. In Dec 2019, the USFK officially accepted the fact that there exists the bio-chemical weapon lab in

Pusan port. In 2000, "Media Today" has featured the article that the local news outlets have kept silent on this experiment conducted by the USFK.

## “우리나라도 침공하겠다고?” 주한러시아대사관 공식 SNS에 의문스런 글이 올라왔다

2022-03-24 14:29 한제윤 기자

러시아대사관 한국 SNS에 올라온 글  
우크라이나 사태 미국 세균실험실과 연관성 주장

주한 러시아대사관 공식 SNS에 의도를 알 수 없는 글이 게재됐다.



기사 내용과 관련 없는 자료 사진 / 뉴스1

24일 러시아대사관 한국 공식 트위터 계정에는 "우크라이나 사태의 원인 미국 생물무기연구소가 부산에도 있다!"라며 한 기사의 링크가 소개됐다.

해당 내용은 SNS와 온라인 커뮤니티 이용자 사이에서 비판을 받았다. 온라인 커뮤니티 더쿠에서는 "드디어 미X버린 러시아 대사관"이라며 "아니 그래서 우크라이나처럼 한국도 침공하겠다고?"라는 말까지 나왔다. 이 게시글은 얼마 지나지 않아 삭제됐으나, 곧바로 해당 링크를 소개하는 게시글이 또 게재됐다.

이용자들은 "지금 협박하는 건가?", "저기 앉아 있는 거 돈 얼마나 받을까?", "대사관이 하는 행동이 왜 저럴까" 등 비판의 목소리를 높였다.





Russian Embassy 🇷🇺

@RusEmb\_Korea

러시아 정부 소식

10.0K

# 우크라이나 사태의 원인 미국 생물무기연구소가 부산에도 있다!

[www.rusembly.kr/news/1333033](http://www.rusembly.kr/news/1333033)



오전 11:02 · 2022년 3월 24일 대한민국 종로구에서 · Twitter for Android

10 리트윗 50 인용한 트윗 6 마음에 들어요

현재: 삭제된 게시물 / 이하 주한 러시아 대사관 트위터





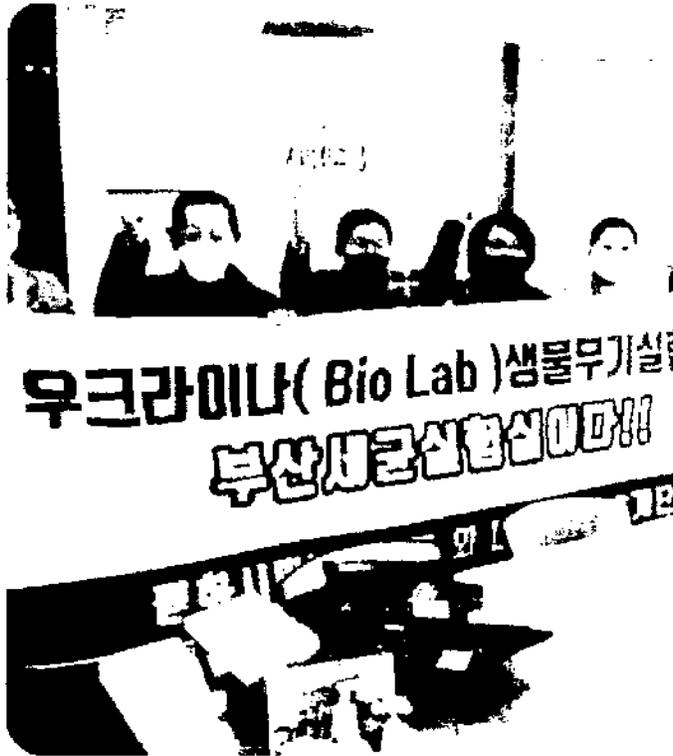
Russian Embassy 러시아 대사관

@RusEmb Korea

러시아 정부 소식

# 부상에서 있는 미국 생물무기연구소가에 대한

우크라이나 (Bio Lab) 생물무기실험실



2022년 3월 24일 네이킹과 솔루 구에서 - Twitter for Android

4 리트윗 20 인용된 트윗 2 마음에 좋아요

다시 게재된 게시물

러시아 대사관에서 소개한 기사는 대한민국청소년의회 기자단 사이트에 게재돼 있었다. 내용에 따르면 지난 21일 부산 백운포에서 한미연합군 연습중단 촉구결의 대회가 열렸다.

이 자리에 참석한 김재남 민주노총 부산지역본부장은 "멀리 우크라이나 생물무기연구소 사태가 이제는 한국에서도 일어날 수 있다. 오늘날 우리 처지는 우크라이나와 다를 바 없다. 미국은 우리나라에도 부산항 8 부두를 비롯해 전국 각지에 세균 시설을 운영하고 있으며 끊임 없이 세균전 능력을 높이기 위한 활동을 진행하고 있다. 한미합동군사 연습 기간엔 한미생물방어 연습을 해마다 강행했다"고 주장했다.



한국에서 세균실험 관련 사고가 터졌던 것은 사실이다. 하지만 러시아 대사관 공식 SNS 채널에서 선동적으로 다뤄야 하는 내용이 맞는지, 어떤 의도를 담은 것인지에 대한 의견은 분분하다.



기사 내용과 관련 없는 자료 사진. 세한 우크라이나인들의 행진. / 뉴스1

지난해 시사in에서 보도한 내용에 따르면 2015년, 경기도 오산의 미국 공군기지에 세균실험 목적으로 배송된 살아있는 탄저균에 군인과 시민이 노출됐다. 이후 2016년, 부산항 8부두의 미군 전용시설에서 군사용 세균실험실이 설치·운영되고 있던 사실도 드러났다.

맹독성 물질은 극소량이 누출되어도 대참변이 일어날 수 있다. 당시 미군 측은 "'주피터 프로그램'이 '생화학전 위협에 대비하기 위해 독성물질을 탐지·분석·경고하는 방어용 시스템'이다"라고 입장을 전했다. 이는 거짓으로 밝혀졌다. 이후 2019년 12월 주한미군은 세균무기 실험실이 부산항에 존재한다는 사실을 공식 인정했다.

2020년에는 미디어 오늘이 미군 세균전 실험을 지역언론이 침묵하는 것에 대한 내용을 보도하기도 했다.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Fri, 18 Mar 2022 21:50:52 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA); Warshaw, David Paul BG USARMY DTRA OI (USA); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** smime.p7s

Sir(s), update from the NSC call today. IOFC attended, as well as 2 other SME's from CTR.

- Goal of the meeting was to help prep NSC for the sub-IPC on Monday at 1300, and solicit good ideas from DoD on how to deal with the problem.
- It was led by one junior staffer who recognized the problem - but was not deep at all on the topic. The entire discussion was about a narrow public affairs approach to the problem.
- NSC shared some ideas they have, most of them good ideas and most of which we (DTRA) are either doing or tracking.
- Staffer wanted to know if DoD has any good ideas. Policy (Aaron Jay) shared some examples, and I did as well about enhancing our PA messaging through DTRA platforms and media interviews.
- Staffer shared Rep Majorie Taylor Greene is going to sponsor a bill in Congress that will "stop US Bio programs around the world."
- I added as an alibi and recommended the NSC look at this holistically, and not just as a public affairs problem. The "light" and "dark side" need to work in sync. Staffers said she would loop in other NSC folks to the discussion on Monday.
- Sub IPC will be held on Monday 3/21; Policy (Aaron) will attend; DTRA will not be asked to support the IPC.
- The Sub IPC will be held on Govt Zoom, unclassified. (I will with-hold further comment on this point).

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 1:24 PM  
**To:** Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6); Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6); CIV DTRA RD (USA) (b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

**Subject:** Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Jumping in from the CC line...

Let's please have a coordinated effort when reviewing/refuting the Russian document - I need one authoritative look from DTRA that can be used by whomever asked from outside the Agency. And not every response will be the

same - they likely will need to be tailored to each question/requester.

Doc - can you please keep an eye on this/coordinate?

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: "Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 1:12:19 PM  
To: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Cooner, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA)"  
(b)(6)  
DTRA OI (USA)" (b)(6), "Lutinski, Hunter F  
SES DTRA SI (USA)" (b)(6)  
Cc: "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)"  
<mailto:(b)(6)>, "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)"

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6) racking all and thanks for the actual documents. Ana has my support  
to join you if that opportunity continues to exist. Kyle

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 12:50 PM  
To: Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>; Cooper,  
Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA) (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Lutinski, Hunter  
F SES DTRA SI (USA) (b)(6)  
Cc: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
<robert.s.pope12.civ@mail.mil> <mailto:(b)(6)>  
(USA)  
(b)(6) Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR  
(USA)  
>; Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR  
(USA)

(b)(6)  
HQD  
DTR

(b)(6)  
CT  
(US  
(US

Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sirs, FYI below per Dr. Williams.

BLUF: due to the recent RUS "Note Verbale" presented 2 days ago at the BWC in Geneva (PDF file attached), and RUS presentation this morning (Word doc attached) at the UN Security Council claiming the US is developing bio weapons in UKR, the NSC (Beth Cameron) has reached out directly to DTRA (specifically Dr. Pope) for a quick conversation on this issue for preparation of an upcoming sub-IPC. This conversation will take place at 1600 today.

OSD-P and NCB/TRAC have both been looped in and Policy is leading the discussion for DoD. I have been asked to participate; I invited CT's rep to the CORT so he can back-brief them; and the IOFC (Ana) is welcome to attend as well. Note, Policy wants to keep this discussion limited. Will keep everyone informed as to the outcome of the discussion. Ms. Cameron will not participate; it will be her staff on the NSC.

Unless Policy wants DTRA representation, we will likely not be invited to the IPC on Monday, as Policy has been attending those on this topic and is the gatekeeper.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:47 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
Cc: Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>; Pope,  
Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>  
Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

ACK. I just did a quick scan of the attached. Follow the policy lead on this and also loop in TRAC. I will send a note to ASD/NCB for SA. Also, please loop in OI Leadership/CORT and PA.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

From: (b)(6)

(b)(6)  
<mai  
Date: Friday, March 18, 2022 at 11:35:21 AM  
To: "Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)  
<m  
Cc: "Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)  
<m (b)(6) >, "Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THIRT  
REDUCT (USA)" (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)  
Subject: FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sir, FYI - NSC (b)(6) reached out to Rob. NSC wants to help with disinformation, given the RUS Note Verbale they presented at the BWC 2 days ago, and now RUS apparently did the same at the UN Security Council this morning. Attached is what was presented at the BWC, and we are trying to find out what RUS presented this morning. It is likely the same product.

I looped in my Policy comrades for the discussion the NSC wants to have with us this afternoon at 1600. Not sure if we (DTRA) will be invited to the sub/IPC on Monday. Will keep you posted.

Frankly, the NSC is way behind here. But we will support them as needed/required, unless you have other guidance.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----  
From: (b)(6)  
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 11:21 AM  
To: (b)(6)  
<ma  
Cc: (b)(6)  
<m  
(b)(6)  
<mai  
<mai  
Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

- + OSD Policy (b)(6)
- (b)(6) (don't want to clobber them with administrative chatter)

Hi (b)(6) happy to talk with you at 4pm. If we can include our Policy comrades on that discussion, that would be great. They have been attending the series of sub/IPC's on this topic.

Attached is what the Russians presented at the BWC, translated into English. It is very weak argument, frankly, and I expected better. If they present the same material at the UNSC this morning, we certainly can work together to debunk this nonsense.

(b)(6) any thoughts?

(b)(6)

Deputy Director, Cooperative Threat Reduction Program  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

O: (b)(6)  
C: (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 8:45 AM

To: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)

(b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

Randolph W CIV DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

<mailto:(b)(6)>

Cc: (b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

(b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

(b)(6)  
<mailto:(b)(6)>

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Thanks (b)(6)

Hi, Rob and (b)(6)

Russia is convening the UNSC again this morning to launder its disinformation and to malign U.S. support for biological facilities and laboratories in Ukraine.

It's not going away anytime soon in the media or in international fora (BWC, UNSC, etc.), so we'd like explore with you some fresh, creative approaches to turning Russian disinformation upside down. As a starting point, I'm going to get the "evidence" that Russia furnished for the UNSC convening this morning.

NSC Democracy is hosting a subIPC on Monday @ 1:00 PM on countering disinformation regarding the U.S., Ukraine, and CBW (for example: <https://tass.com/politics/1423129>). I'll make sure you get that invite, and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you beforehand - either 4:00 PM today or Monday morning 9:30 or 10?

Many thanks!

Best,

(b)(6)

Global Health Security & Biodefense  
National Security Council | The White House

(b)(6)

(SIPR)

(b)(6)

(JWICS)

**From:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA)  
**Sent:** Tue, 22 Mar 2022 19:38:23 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
**Subject:** RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR  
**Attachments:** finalnoteverbaletrans.pdf, 2022-03-21b INFO PAPER response to rus note verbale - BTRP.docx, smime.p7s

(b)(6)

I'm good with this - please send it on.

Rhys

Rhys M. Williams, PhD  
Director (Acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022 3:33 PM  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
**Cc:** Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA); (b)(6)  
(b)(6)  
(b)(6); Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA)  
(b)(6)  
**Subject:** FW: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

Sir, per your request, see attached word document that picks apart the Note Vebale presented by the Russians at the BWC in Geneva, the UN Security Council in NY, and the OSCE. If you are ok with this product, we will send to the State AVC folks, NCB, and Policy so that we can prepare for the upcoming BWC Planning Conference in Geneva (4-8 April). State specifically asked for it.

Also, we are revising some testimony questions that you will probably get based on all the media reporting over the last few weeks, touching on the UKR Bio labs narrative.

Finally, we have 30 minutes with you on Thursday to "get you smart" on BTRP, with a focus on UKR, per your request.

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022 12:51 PM  
**To:** (b)(6)  
A C  
(b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

Attached is the draft information paper on the Note Verbale that you requested on 3/18/2022. I am standing by to answer any of your questions.

Respectfully,

(b)(6)

EUCOM CENTCOM Division Chief for the  
DoD's Biological Threat Reduction Program

Office (b)(6)

(b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Sent: Friday, March 18, 2022 12:40 PM

To: (b)(6)

Cc: Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA) (b)(6)

(b)(6); Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN

DTRA DIR (USA) (b)(6)

Subject: Re: Ukraine Labs and DoD CTR

(b)(6)

I know this is preaching to the choir... but remind the NSC (or have policy do it) that there is a lot of previously cleared messaging that can be used (and should be used for the POTUS NATO visit next week). So the wheel doesn't have to be re-invented.

That said, I assume your staff is picking apart the specifics in the Russian note verbal.... Once that is done, I would like to see it - I will need it for my testimony background.

Rhys

Rhys Williams, PhD  
Director (acting)  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**From:** (b)(6)  
**Sent:** Sun, 20 Mar 2022 16:55:33 +0000  
**To:** Williams, Rhys M SES DTRA DIR (USA);Pope, Robert S SES DTRA COOP THRT REDUCT (USA);Scholl, Ryan B RDML USN DTRA DIR (USA);Lutinski, Hunter F SES DTRA SI (USA);Musgrave, David L (Dave) SES DTRA OB (USA);Lampela, Kyle M SES DTRA OI (USA);Cooper, Donald F SES DTRA OI (USA);(b)(6)  
(USA)  
CT (U  
CIV D  
(USA)  
**Subject:** WSJ Article - Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program  
**Attachments:** WSJ Article.docx, smime.p7s

Dr. Williams and Leaders,  
Sir, attached is a copy of the WSJ article. The article is behind a paywall, so I'm sharing the story, in case you or anyone else may have not seen it yet or gotten the text. Please let me know if there are any concerns/feedback. Thanks.

V/r,

(b)(6)

Chief, DTRA Public Affairs Office  
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

(b)(6) (Work)  
Work Cell)

NIPR (b)(6)  
SIPR  
JWIC

## Moscow falsely accuses U.S. of funding biowarfare in Ukraine despite Kremlin once benefiting from Pentagon program

The Pentagon denies Russia's accusations of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories.

*By Sharon Weinberger*

March 20, 2022 5:30 am ET

On his first official visit abroad, the new senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, was taken to a facility in Ukraine where the U.S. helped scientists working with dangerous biological materials. But rather than produce biological weapons, U.S. officials in that ramshackle building were trying to prevent lethal pathogens from falling into the hands of terrorists.

"I removed a tray of glass vials containing *Bacillus anthracis*, which is the bacterium that causes the anthrax," recalls Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official who was in charge of the U.S.-funded program that worked with the Ukrainian government. Mr. Weber said he showed the tray "to a very concerned-looking young senator."

Mr. Obama himself recalled seeing in his 2005 trip to Ukraine "test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded."

A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow has accused the Pentagon of funding weapons work in Ukraine's biological laboratories. "These were not peaceful experiments," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month.

China, whose leader Xi Jinping has cultivated a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has echoed those allegations. "Russia has found during its military operations that the U.S. uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

U.S. officials have flatly denied those claims and warned that Moscow could use its allegations to justify its own use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine.

“We believe that Moscow may be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon and then falsely blame Ukraine to justify escalating its attacks on the Ukrainian people,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week. “Manufacturing events and creating false narratives of genocide to justify greater use of military force is a tactic that Russia has used before.”

The allegations have shocked those who are most familiar with the Pentagon’s post-Cold War initiative, called the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. That is because not only has Russia been aware of the Pentagon’s work securing chemical, biological and nuclear facilities across the former Soviet Union, but it had also been its beneficiary for many years.

“They’re outrageous claims,” said Robert Pope, the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, or DTRA, the arm of the Pentagon in charge of running the program. “We were created 30 years ago to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction.”

The program, which dates back to 1991 and continues today, stretches across the former Soviet Union. Since the program started, the Pentagon has spent approximately \$12 billion on securing material used in weapons of mass destruction in post-Soviet republics, according to a DTRA spokeswoman. Of those funds, about \$200 million has been spent on the biological work in Ukraine since 2005. The funds have supported dozens of labs, health facilities and diagnostic sites around the country, the DTRA spokeswoman said.

Mr. Weber, who was in charge of negotiating the initial agreement with Kyiv to work on securing the country’s biological materials and facilities, said that work expanded to Ukraine after the 9/11 attacks, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. U.S. policy makers grew worried about the potential for terrorists to steal biological materials – fears that were heightened after letters containing anthrax were sent in the U.S. mail to congressional offices and media outlets. The FBI eventually concluded that an American scientist employed at a military lab sent the letters.

The president of Ukraine at the time, Leonid Kuchma, concerned about the threat of terrorism in his own country, asked the U.S. for help. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, Ukraine had been starved of the funds needed to secure its biological facilities.

Mr. Weber put together a team that visited Ukraine's biological and chemical facilities, which ranged from large laboratories to small veterinary research centers. "We found that a number of them had dangerous pathogen collections left over from Soviet days," he said. "They were in pretty bad shape."

Ukraine's laboratories—unlike some in other former Soviet republics—weren't directly involved in the Cold War biological-weapons program, but they did have pathogens that fed into offensive work, according to Mr. Weber.

Those pathogens, like anthrax, could pose a threat if released, whether accidentally or on purpose. The focus of U.S. work in Ukraine was to consolidate that biological material, much of it related to agriculture, into secure facilities, which the U.S. would pay to build or upgrade.

Paul McNelly, who from 1995 to 2003 directed the Defense Department's chemical and biological elimination programs in Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, said he was stunned with what he saw inside the former Soviet facilities.

"You would walk into these places and the refrigerators that stored these dangerous pathogens, they had no locks on them at all," Mr. McNelly said. "There would be vials that were labeled tularemia, plague, different things like that. And these people, most of them, weren't masked. Their gowns were antiquated." He added: "It was horrible."

As part of the program, the Pentagon spent \$1 billion to build the Russians a facility in Shchuchye, Siberia, to demilitarize some two million chemical weapons. By the time it was done in 2009, ties with Moscow were growing tense. The price of oil was going up, giving Russia more revenue to wean itself off foreign assistance. At the same time, Mr. Putin was consolidating power.

As a result, the Russian government became a less-willing partner to the Pentagon's drive to secure the deadly materials, according to James Tegnalia, who served as the head of DTRA from 2005 to 2009. "They wanted our money, but they didn't want to admit that we built the facility," Mr. Tegnalia said. "You could see that they were getting ready to pull back."

Russia's Foreign Ministry had in the past praised the program. But by 2012, Moscow declined to renew cooperation, saying it could pay for the work on its own.

In 2014, the year Moscow illegally annexed Crimea and began backing separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region, the program in Russia drew to a close.

A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., didn't respond to a request for comment on the Pentagon program.

Yet even with that chapter of its cooperation over, the Russian claims about the Pentagon conducting secret weapons work in Ukraine came as a surprise not only to those who have worked on the program but also to other Western officials. The Kremlin has in the past used such charges as cover for its own actions, they say.

"We are concerned that Moscow could stage a false-flag operation, possibly including chemical weapons," North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week.

U.S. officials have declined to discuss what specific intelligence, if any, they have to indicate Russia might be preparing to deploy chemical or other unconventional weapons to Ukraine. But they say Russia has a history of using chemical weapons, including against Mr. Putin's domestic political opponents, and it has encouraged their use in Syria by President Bashar al-Assad's government.

The Russian government shot back against the U.S. allegations, denying plans to use chemical weapons. In a post last week on its official Telegram channel, the Russian Defense Ministry said the units fighting in Ukraine "do not have chemical munitions."

Mr. Tegnelia, the former DTRA director, views Russia's allegations as a path to an even more dangerous escalation. "If you see them using chemical weapons in Ukraine, watch out," he said, "because they're only one step away from nuclear weapons."

—*Warren Strobel and William Mauldin contributed to this article.*

**From:** CENTCOM Macdill AFB CENTCOM HQ Mailbox CCCI JOC Desk  
**Sent:** Sat, 2 Apr 2022 08:55:15 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)

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**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 2 APR 22  
**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 2 APR 22.pdf, smime.p7s

Sir --

You were mentioned and/or quoted in articles 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 in today's CENTCOM News Clips.

**1. Kurilla assumes CENTCOM top spot as McKenzie retires**

Washington Examiner, 1 Apr 22, Mike Brest

Army Lt. Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla is now the head of U.S. Central Command, and Gen. Frank McKenzie has retired. Kurilla, who had been the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, assumed the position during a ceremony on Friday at the Tampa Convention Center, where McKenzie's 42 years of military service were also honored.

Excerpt: Kurilla's tenure will begin as Russia's military invasion in Ukraine looms over the department. In addition to the now six-week-old war in Ukraine, the new commander will have to deal with a significantly reduced presence in the Middle East with an ever-aggressive Iran, an "acute threat" in Russia, and China, which is considered the "pacing challenge." He warned during his confirmation hearing in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee that al Qaeda and ISIS-K are "reconstituting" in Afghanistan.

**5. Tampa hosts military leaders for CENTCOM change of command**

WFLA-TV (News Channel 8, Tampa), 1 Apr 22, Jeff Patterson

Ranking officers from every branch of the U.S. Military and a number of foreign nations traveled to Tampa on Friday for the change of command ceremony for U.S. Central Command based at MacDill Air Force Base.

Excerpt: General Kurilla is a West Point Graduate and a wounded combat veteran. He's previously commanded the 82nd Airborne and the 2nd Ranger Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment and is well aware of the history and importance of CENTCOM.

"CENTCOM was critical in its formation, it is critical now and it will be into the future," said Kurrilla as he accepted his new position.

**6. McKenzie retires, hands over command of CENTCOM**

The Hill, 1 Apr 22, Ellen Mitchell

The top general in charge of U.S. military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia on Friday relinquished his command in a ceremony in Florida. Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who had led U.S. Central Command (Centcom) since March 2019, handed over his position to Army Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla during a change of command ceremony in Tampa, Fla.

Excerpt: The commander of the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N.C., since October 2019, Kurilla comes to Centcom at a time of tenuous security conditions around the globe, including Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine and bid to recruit fighters in Syria and elsewhere in the region. He also takes command as the U.S. government is struggling with a reduced presence in the Middle East following its withdrawal from Afghanistan, a situation that could lead to the quick reconstitution of al Qaeda and ISIS-K in the country, he warned during his confirmation hearing in February.

### **7. General Kurilla takes over at US Central Command**

Military.com, 1 Apr 22, Jonathan Lehrfeld

Army Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, who has earned two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star during his military career, took over leadership of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) on Friday during an event at the Tampa Convention Center, according to a press release from the command.

Excerpt: "I'm honored to serve alongside the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Guardians, Marines, coastguardsmen and civilians of this command," Kurilla, who was nominated by President Joe Biden in January and confirmed for his role by the Senate in early February, said during the ceremony. CENTCOM oversees military missions in 21 countries throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and parts of South Asia. For the past 20 years, it has covered the focus of U.S. operations overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### **8. Change of leadership at United States Central Command**

WTSP-10 Tampa Bay News, 1 Apr 22, Courtney Robinson

On Friday, U.S. Central Command assumed a new commander. General Michael “Erik” Kurilla will now lead CENTCOM, headquartered on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

Excerpt: The new boss comes to CENTCOM after serving as Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division on Fort Bragg, N.C. GEN Kurilla also spent every year from 2004 to 2014 serving in CENTCOM’s AOR commanding Conventional and Special Operations Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## **CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS**

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 2, 2022

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**COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

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## U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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### TOP NEWS

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Tehran's demand that the United States lift its designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, and U.S. refusal so far to do that, have brought the year-long negotiations over reviving the Iran nuclear deal to a halt, with no new meetings scheduled and little obvious room for compromise.

#### **4. U.S. will help transfer Soviet-made tanks to Ukraine**

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The Biden administration will work with allies to transfer Soviet-made tanks to bolster Ukrainian defenses in the country's eastern Donbas region, a U.S. official said on Friday. The decision to act as an intermediary to help transfer the Soviet-made tanks, which Ukrainian troops know how to use, comes in response to a request from President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, the official said. It marks the first time in the war that the United States has helped transfer tanks.

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### CENTCOM CHANGE OF COMMAND

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### NOTABLE TWEETS

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **22. Uzbekistan looks south for new trade routes**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Sophia Nina Burna-Asefi

Uzbekistan has received its first transit shipment via Pakistan and Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. For Uzbekistan, this means prioritizing a southern-looking policy, as it seeks to assert its own identity in the region and establish viable alternative trading partners.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **23. More 30,000-pound 'Bunker-Buster' bombs sought for U.S. forces**

Bloomberg, 1 Apr 22, Anthony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

U.S. Central Command has asked Congress to authorize and appropriate \$35 million more than requested in the White House's latest budget proposal to replace 10 of America's most powerful non-nuclear weapons after supplies were depleted during tests.

### **24. Pentagon to send Ukraine another \$300 million in defense aid**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Alex Horton

The Pentagon said Friday that it will provide a new \$300 million package of military aid to Ukraine that includes drones, armored vehicles and machine guns.

### **25. U.S. to ease nuclear tensions with Russia, cancel 'Minuteman' Missile tests**

Newsweek, 1 Apr 22, Jake Thomas

The Pentagon is again delaying a test of a nuclear-capable missile to avoid a "misinterpretation or miscommunication" with Russia amid heightened tensions.

### **26. How two dozen retired generals are trying to stop an overhaul of the Marines**

Politico, 1 Apr 22, Paul McLeary and Lee Hudson

An influential group of over two dozen retired generals has launched a counteroffensive against plans to transform the Marine Corps and is using their clout in a high-power pressure campaign to get Congress to slam on the brakes.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **27. China calls on EU to act independently of US foreign policy**

Financial Times, 1 Apr 22, Andy Bounds, Sam Fleming, Tom Mitchell and Eleanor Olcott

Xi Jinping has called on the EU to act more independently of the US as China and Brussels clashed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the bloc's leaders warned Beijing not to aid Moscow's war effort.

### **28. China's embrace of Putin is looking more and more costly**

TIME, 1 Apr 22, Charlie Campbell

When Wang Jixian moved to the southern Ukrainian port city of Odessa, he didn't expect to find himself in the middle of a war. But as the 37-year-old software engineer picked up his cellphone and began posting online the reality of life under Russian bombardment—wailing sirens, booming artillery, buskers on fretful streets—he soon found himself under attack from a more surprising quarter: the Chinese government and nationalist trolls, who objected to Wang's stark portrayal of Russian aggression that chafed with Beijing's official narrative.

### **29. Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love**

The Economist, 1 Apr 22

Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

### **30. War in Ukraine compounds hunger in East Africa**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Abdi Latif Dahir

First came the drought, drying up rivers, and claiming the lives of two of Ruqiya Hussein Ahmed's children as her family fled the barren countryside in southwest Somalia. Then came the war in Ukraine, pushing food prices so high that even after making it to the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, she is struggling to keep her two other children alive.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **31. America and Saudi Arabia are stuck with each other: How Biden can recalibrate the relationship without breaking it**

Foreign Affairs, 1 Apr 22, Yasmine Farouk and Andrew Leber

In recent weeks, as Western sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine have roiled global energy markets, Saudi Arabia has continued to decline requests from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration that it increase oil production. Although the kingdom's pointed refusal to mitigate the pain of skyrocketing fuel prices clearly startled many American observers, inspiring a raft of commentary asking whether the 77-year U.S.-Saudi alliance was still worth maintaining, it should not have come as a surprise.

### **32. A new video shows a missing American hostage pleading for help in Taliban custody**

The New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Michael Ames

When the Biden Administration pulled all U.S. forces out of Afghanistan last August, Mark Frerichs was believed to be the only American hostage remaining in Taliban custody. Frerichs, a fifty-nine-year-old civil engineer and Navy veteran, had been abducted on the streets of Kabul in 2020. Members of his family have repeatedly pleaded with the Taliban and the Biden Administration to negotiate his release, but, for more than two years, no evidence had publicly emerged that Frerichs was alive. The New Yorker has obtained a new video, from an

unidentified individual in Afghanistan, that shows Frerichs in captivity and pleading for his freedom. “I’ve been patiently waiting for my release,” Frerichs says, apparently reading from a script held in front of him. “I’d like to ask the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, please, release me.”

### **33. Government change in Islamabad will not derail China-Pakistan relations**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Krzysztof Iwanek

At present, the future of Imran Khan’s government in Pakistan appears uncertain. As things stand now, the ruling coalition, led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has lost its majority and it is about to face a no-confidence vote. Should there be a change of government, however, there is unlikely to be a change in China-Pakistan ties. Pakistan’s relationship with China may have already become more stable than Pakistan’s democracy.

### **34. Analysis: Oil prices, Ukraine war create Saudi pivot point**

Associated Press, 1 Apr 22, Jon Gambrell

The world is looking to Saudi Arabia to boost oil production as global energy prices spike because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But that could mean rethinking how to deal with the kingdom’s controversial crown prince.

### **35. Afghanistan’s hungry will pay the price for Putin’s war**

Foreign Policy, 1 Apr 22, Lynne O’Donnell

Russia’s ban on food and fertilizer exports to stabilize supply and prices at home while it wages war on Ukraine is reverberating in its own backyard, pushing Central Asian states into economic crisis and threatening to tip Afghanistan from starvation into famine.

### **36. Israel and the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine**

New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Bernard Avishai

On Monday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, joined the foreign ministers of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Morocco for a meeting at Sde Boker, the retirement kibbutz and burial place of David Ben-Gurion, the nation’s first Prime Minister. The meeting had been initiated by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, with encouragement from Blinken, whose main aim was to reassure the group that the United States is fixed in its commitment to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, and that the not-yet-consummated Iran nuclear deal is the best of available options to do that. “The summit was to showcase a strategic alliance growing out of the Abraham Accords,” the Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman told me. “To seed the formation of a kind of Middle Eastern NATO to contain Iran—deal or no deal.”

### **37. Painful choices lie in the path to peace in Ukraine**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, David Ignatius

In the agonizing final years of the Vietnam War, a strategist named Fred Iklé wrote a treatise titled “Every War Must End.” His basic theme was that “wars are easier to start than to stop” — a message that applies powerfully now to the conflict in Ukraine.

### **38. Peace in Ukraine will be elusive until one side makes a military breakthrough**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Lawrence Freedman

From almost the moment the war in Ukraine began, diplomats have been at work trying to end it. The UN Security Council has deliberated. Vladimir Putin has had regular telephone discussions with western leaders in which they urge him to stop his aggression or at least facilitate humanitarian relief for those suffering under the weight of Russian bombardments. He then in turn explains how they fail to understand Ukraine's responsibility for these tragic events.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **39. Wexler to Asharq Al-Awsat: Regional peace not possible without Saudi Arabia**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Fatehelrahman Yousif

US Senator and President of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington DC, Robert Wexler stressed that real peace in the Middle East is not possible without Saudi Arabia.

### IRAN

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#### **40. Iran says crude oil production back to pre-sanction levels**

Tasnim News Agency, 2 Apr 22

Iran's oil production has reached pre-sanction levels, the country's Oil Minister Javad Owji said.

### IRAQ

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#### **41. The Iraq Report: Erbil strikes expose Iran's underlying geopolitical anxieties**

The New Arab, 1 Apr 22

As Iran comes under increased pressure from geopolitical rivals regarding sanctions, oil, and the nuclear deal, it has turned to hard power to assert its regional influence and hide its nerves.

### SYRIA

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#### **42. In Syria, Russia leads effort to recruit fighters for Ukraine**

Al Jazeera, 1 Apr 22, Kareem Chehayeb

Even after a decade of civil war, Syrians have been trying to find a way out of the country to fight in another. Moscow through the mercenary company the Wagner Group and supported Syrian fighter groups have been recruiting men to fight alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. Thousands across the war-torn country have reportedly expressed an interest in signing up.

#### **43. Assassinations continue in Syria's Daraa with no accountability**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Riyadh al-Zain

Communication Integration (CCCI) directorate

CACI-WGI, Contractor

Commercial Telephone (b)(6)

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 2, 2022

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Military.com, 1 Apr 22, Jonathan Lehrfeld

Yemen could be afflicted by an even worse humanitarian catastrophe if the UK government goes ahead with a plan to designate the Houthi rebels as a terrorist group, leading aid agencies have warned cabinet ministers in a letter.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **20. Israeli forces kill Palestinian in West Bank clashes**

Associated Press, 1 Apr 22

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron when clashes broke out after Friday prayers, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

### **21. Spike in violence poses test for Israel's fragile government**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Patrick Kingsley

A recent wave of terrorist attacks in Israel, the deadliest in seven years, has presented a stark challenge to Israel's fragile coalition government, which has come under criticism from both ends of the political spectrum for policies that critics claim have compounded the risk of violence.

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **22. Uzbekistan looks south for new trade routes**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Sophia Nina Burna-Asefi

Uzbekistan has received its first transit shipment via Pakistan and Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. For Uzbekistan, this means prioritizing a southern-looking policy, as it seeks to assert its own identity in the region and establish viable alternative trading partners.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **23. More 30,000-pound 'Bunker-Buster' bombs sought for U.S. forces**

Bloomberg, 1 Apr 22, Anthony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

U.S. Central Command has asked Congress to authorize and appropriate \$35 million more than requested in the White House's latest budget proposal to replace 10 of America's most powerful non-nuclear weapons after supplies were depleted during tests.

### **24. Pentagon to send Ukraine another \$300 million in defense aid**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Alex Horton

The Pentagon said Friday that it will provide a new \$300 million package of military aid to Ukraine that includes drones, armored vehicles and machine guns.

### **25. U.S. to ease nuclear tensions with Russia, cancel 'Minuteman' Missile tests**

Newsweek, 1 Apr 22, Jake Thomas

The Pentagon is again delaying a test of a nuclear-capable missile to avoid a "misinterpretation or miscommunication" with Russia amid heightened tensions.

#### **26. How two dozen retired generals are trying to stop an overhaul of the Marines**

Politico, 1 Apr 22, Paul McLeary and Lee Hudson

An influential group of over two dozen retired generals has launched a counteroffensive against plans to transform the Marine Corps and is using their clout in a high-power pressure campaign to get Congress to slam on the brakes.

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#### **ADJACENT AORs**

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#### **27. China calls on EU to act independently of US foreign policy**

Financial Times, 1 Apr 22, Andy Bounds, Sam Fleming, Tom Mitchell and Eleanor Olcott

Xi Jinping has called on the EU to act more independently of the US as China and Brussels clashed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the bloc's leaders warned Beijing not to aid Moscow's war effort.

#### **28. China's embrace of Putin is looking more and more costly**

TIME, 1 Apr 22, Charlie Campbell

When Wang Jixian moved to the southern Ukrainian port city of Odessa, he didn't expect to find himself in the middle of a war. But as the 37-year-old software engineer picked up his cellphone and began posting online the reality of life under Russian bombardment—wailing sirens, booming artillery, buskers on fretful streets—he soon found himself under attack from a more surprising quarter: the Chinese government and nationalist trolls, who objected to Wang's stark portrayal of Russian aggression that chafed with Beijing's official narrative.

#### **29. Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love**

The Economist, 1 Apr 22

Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

#### **30. War in Ukraine compounds hunger in East Africa**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Abdi Latif Dahir

First came the drought, drying up rivers, and claiming the lives of two of Ruqiya Hussein Ahmed's children as her family fled the barren countryside in southwest Somalia. Then came the war in Ukraine, pushing food prices so high that even after making it to the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, she is struggling to keep her two other children alive.

**31. America and Saudi Arabia are stuck with each other: How Biden can recalibrate the relationship without breaking it**

Foreign Affairs, 1 Apr 22, Yasmine Farouk and Andrew Leber

In recent weeks, as Western sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine have roiled global energy markets, Saudi Arabia has continued to decline requests from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration that it increase oil production. Although the kingdom's pointed refusal to mitigate the pain of skyrocketing fuel prices clearly startled many American observers, inspiring a raft of commentary asking whether the 77-year U.S.-Saudi alliance was still worth maintaining, it should not have come as a surprise.

**32. A new video shows a missing American hostage pleading for help in Taliban custody**

The New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Michael Ames

When the Biden Administration pulled all U.S. forces out of Afghanistan last August, Mark Frerichs was believed to be the only American hostage remaining in Taliban custody. Frerichs, a fifty-nine-year-old civil engineer and Navy veteran, had been abducted on the streets of Kabul in 2020. Members of his family have repeatedly pleaded with the Taliban and the Biden Administration to negotiate his release, but, for more than two years, no evidence had publicly emerged that Frerichs was alive. The New Yorker has obtained a new video, from an unidentified individual in Afghanistan, that shows Frerichs in captivity and pleading for his freedom. "I've been patiently waiting for my release," Frerichs says, apparently reading from a script held in front of him. "I'd like to ask the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, please, release me."

**33. Government change in Islamabad will not derail China-Pakistan relations**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Krzysztof Iwanek

At present, the future of Imran Khan's government in Pakistan appears uncertain. As things stand now, the ruling coalition, led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has lost its majority and it is about to face a no-confidence vote. Should there be a change of government, however, there is unlikely to be a change in China-Pakistan ties. Pakistan's relationship with China may have already become more stable than Pakistan's democracy.

**34. Analysis: Oil prices, Ukraine war create Saudi pivot point**

Associated Press, 1 Apr 22, Jon Gambrell

The world is looking to Saudi Arabia to boost oil production as global energy prices spike because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But that could mean rethinking how to deal with the kingdom's controversial crown prince.

**35. Afghanistan's hungry will pay the price for Putin's war**

Foreign Policy, 1 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Russia's ban on food and fertilizer exports to stabilize supply and prices at home while it wages war on Ukraine is reverberating in its own backyard, pushing Central Asian states into economic crisis and threatening to tip Afghanistan from starvation into famine.

### **36. Israel and the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine**

New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Bernard Avishai

On Monday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, joined the foreign ministers of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Morocco for a meeting at Sde Boker, the retirement kibbutz and burial place of David Ben-Gurion, the nation's first Prime Minister. The meeting had been initiated by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, with encouragement from Blinken, whose main aim was to reassure the group that the United States is fixed in its commitment to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, and that the not-yet-consummated Iran nuclear deal is the best of available options to do that. "The summit was to showcase a strategic alliance growing out of the Abraham Accords," the Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman told me. "To seed the formation of a kind of Middle Eastern NATO to contain Iran—deal or no deal."

### **37. Painful choices lie in the path to peace in Ukraine**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, David Ignatius

In the agonizing final years of the Vietnam War, a strategist named Fred Iklé wrote a treatise titled "Every War Must End." His basic theme was that "wars are easier to start than to stop" a message that applies powerfully now to the conflict in Ukraine.

### **38. Peace in Ukraine will be elusive until one side makes a military breakthrough**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Lawrence Freedman

From almost the moment the war in Ukraine began, diplomats have been at work trying to end it. The UN Security Council has deliberated. Vladimir Putin has had regular telephone discussions with western leaders in which they urge him to stop his aggression or at least facilitate humanitarian relief for those suffering under the weight of Russian bombardments. He then in turn explains how they fail to understand Ukraine's responsibility for these tragic events.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **39. Wexler to Asharq Al-Awsat: Regional peace not possible without Saudi Arabia**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Fatehelrahman Yousif

US Senator and President of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington DC, Robert Wexler stressed that real peace in the Middle East is not possible without Saudi Arabia.

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### IRAN

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#### **40. Iran says crude oil production back to pre-sanction levels**

Tasnim News Agency, 2 Apr 22

Iran's oil production has reached pre-sanction levels, the country's Oil Minister Javad Owji said.

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#### IRAQ

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#### **41. The Iraq Report: Erbil strikes expose Iran's underlying geopolitical anxieties**

The New Arab, 1 Apr 22

As Iran comes under increased pressure from geopolitical rivals regarding sanctions, oil, and the nuclear deal, it has turned to hard power to assert its regional influence and hide its nerves.

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#### SYRIA

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#### **42. In Syria, Russia leads effort to recruit fighters for Ukraine**

Al Jazeera, 1 Apr 22, Kareem Chehayeb

Even after a decade of civil war, Syrians have been trying to find a way out of the country to fight in another. Moscow through the mercenary company the Wagner Group and supported Syrian fighter groups have been recruiting men to fight alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. Thousands across the war-torn country have reportedly expressed an interest in signing up.

#### **43. Assassinations continue in Syria's Daraa with no accountability**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Riyadh al-Zain

Since early 2022, the province of Daraa in southern Syria has witnessed 117 different types of attacks that left 97 people dead, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights announced in a report on Thursday. It said violence and insecurity chaos has dramatically escalated in the province, where 45 attacks, murders and incidents of security instability were reported in different places in Daraa only in March, leaving 39 deaths.

#### **44. Fears for 100 children missing from Syria jail attacked by ISIS**

The National, 1 Apr 22

More than 100 children who had been held in a Syrian prison are missing more than two months after militants attacked it, the UN said on Friday

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#### AFGHANISTAN

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#### **45. US pledges \$204M in humanitarian aid for Afghans**

TOLOnews, 1 Apr 22

The United States pledged to provide nearly \$204 million in humanitarian assistance to help the people of Afghanistan. The pledge was made at the high-level "Pledging Event on Supporting the Humanitarian Response in Afghanistan."

More than 11 years after the beginning of the uprising that later turned into a war with multiple regional and international actors involved, the Syrian regime now controls almost 70% of Syrian territory. This is no thanks to the political, economic, and military assistance provided by its allies: Russia and Iran. At the same time, the normalization process of the Syrian regime is moving forward across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which was confirmed by Bashar al-Assad's trip to the UAE in March 2022- his first visit to a country in the region since the eruption of the uprising in 2011.

## **52. What must the next PM do**

Pakistan Express Tribune, 1 Apr 22, Dr. Pervez Tahir

Every crisis creates opportunities for reform. Left to themselves, politicians have succeeded to bring politics, disturbed by a hybrid interregnum, back on the rails. By all reckoning, the next government will be consensual, if not 'national'. Hopefully, it would let the present National Assembly complete its term to make a lasting impact.

## **53. 'Pay-for-slay' Abbas takes his cue from 'Iran-deal' Blinken**

Jerusalem Post, 1 Apr 22, Ruthie Blum

Following Tuesday night's terrorist attack in Bnei Brak, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued what the media reported as a "rare condemnation." While it's true that Abbas doesn't usually come out against the murder of Israelis (though, in this case, three of the five people killed were not Jewish), his statement should not be viewed as cause for optimism.

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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#### **1. Kurilla assumes CENTCOM top spot as McKenzie retires**

Washington Examiner, 1 Apr 22, Mike Brest

Army Lt. Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla is now the head of U.S. Central Command, and Gen. Frank McKenzie has retired.

Kurilla, who had been the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, assumed the position during a ceremony on Friday at the Tampa Convention Center, where McKenzie's 42 years of military service were also honored.

McKenzie assumed command of CENTCOM back in March 2019, and his three years on the job included the killing of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and his successor, Abu Ibrahim al Hashimi al Qurashi, the end of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, and the transition of coalition forces in Iraq to an exclusively advisory role.

“For the past 21 years, CENTCOM has been the only combatant command in close and enduring contact with America’s enemies,” said McKenzie. “It’s where every combat arms commander wants to be. I can think of no one better qualified to write CENTCOM’s next chapter than Erik Kurilla.”

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, attended the ceremony.

“Frank, as you head into a well-earned retirement, please know that your tenure at CENTCOM has deepened security in the region and at home for years to come. And this team will continue building on your legacy,” Austin said during his address to the crowd. “So, thank you for all that you’ve done to make America safer.”

Kurilla's tenure will begin as Russia's military invasion in Ukraine looms over the department. In addition to the now six-week-old war in Ukraine, the new commander will have to deal with a significantly reduced presence in the Middle East with an ever-aggressive Iran, an "acute threat" in Russia, and China, which is considered the "pacing challenge."

He warned during his confirmation hearing in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee that al Qaeda and ISIS-K are “reconstituting” in Afghanistan.

“One of the challenges is the threat to the homeland from al Qaeda and ISIS-K. They are reconstituting. The Taliban has not renounced al Qaeda. ISIS-K, with the release of the prisoners both from the Bagram prison and Pul-e-Charkhi are in a process of reconstituting,” he said.

Similarly, McKenzie, in his final testimony on the Hill earlier this month, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that CENTCOM hasn't executed a strike against the Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, ISIS-K, since the United States exited the country at the end of August.

“We have not undertaken any strikes in Afghanistan since the 1st of September,” McKenzie said. “We continue to watch carefully as ISIS grows. They’ve gone through the winter. They’ve been able to carry out some high-profile attacks. They still aspire to attack the United States and our partners abroad. So, we’re going to watch very carefully what the Taliban is able to do and not able to do in terms of controlling ISIS. Because as we all know, the Taliban will actually fight ISIS, and they have a theological dispute, and so they are in opposition.”

During the same hearing, he said the timeline under which ISIS-K could regain the capability to conduct an international attack is “12 to 18 months,” which was a more delayed timeline than the six to 12 months estimation Dr. Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defense for policy, presented to the committee back in October.

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## **2. Yemen parties agree to two-month truce**

Wall Street Journal, 1 Apr 22, Dion Nissenbaum

terrorism would be diminished ... whose ballistic missile program would be checked, all of those things turned out not only to be not true, but in almost every case the exact opposite has come to fruition.”

At the same time, while continuing to deny it seeks a nuclear bomb, Iran has vastly expanded the quality and quantity of uranium enrichment and is believed now only weeks away from assembling enough to fuel a weapon. It expanded other aggressive activities even as Trump reimposed sanctions that had been lifted by the Iran deal and imposed more than 1,500 more. Between 2019 and 2020, Price said, the number of attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq by Iran-backed groups “went up 400 percent.”

Much of the Vienna negotiations over the past year were devoted to disagreements between Iran insisting that all U.S. sanctions be lifted, and administration insistence that a return to the deal involved only those that were “nuclear related.” Those issues, along with questions of sequencing and the unfreezing of certain Iranian assets, have now been largely resolved.

But as word spread that the biggest remaining issue on the table was the terrorism designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, opponents of the deal, including virtually all Republicans vowed to redouble their efforts to stop the agreement, and a number of Democrats expressed worries.

“We are highly concerned about reports indicating the potential lifting” of the foreign terrorist organization designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, a bipartisan group of 21 House members wrote Biden last month, saying that the combination of not “adequately addressing Iran’s role as the world’s leading state sponsor of terror,” and providing billions of dollars in sanctions relief would provide “a clear path for Iranian proxies to continue fueling terrorism.”

Any administration action is further complicated by reported U.S. intelligence indicating ongoing Iranian plots to target Pompeo and other former U.S. officials whom Tehran holds responsible for the drone strike in 2020 that killed Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard Corps branch specializing in unconventional warfare. But others have warned that Iranian and U.S. leaders have “painted themselves into a corner” by allowing the issue to become what may ultimately kill any prospect of a deal.

“Failure to secure the nuclear deal will very likely lead to unpredictable and possible uncontrollable escalation, and almost certainly skyrocketing oil and gas prices,” Trita Parsi, an Iran expert and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft wrote Thursday. “The political costs to both the United States and Iran of either delisting” the Revolutionary Guard Corps or “dropping the demand to delist, respectively, pale in comparison.”

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#### **4. U.S. will help transfer Soviet-made tanks to Ukraine**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Helene Cooper

The Biden administration will work with allies to transfer Soviet-made tanks to bolster Ukrainian defenses in the country’s eastern Donbas region, a U.S. official said on Friday.

The decision to act as an intermediary to help transfer the Soviet-made tanks, which Ukrainian troops know how to use, comes in response to a request from President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, the official said. It marks the first time in the war that the United States has helped transfer tanks.

The official said the transfers would begin soon but declined to say how many tanks would be sent, or from which countries they would come. They will allow Ukraine to conduct long-range artillery strikes on Russian targets in Donbas, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The tanks' arrival could be another signal of a new phase in the war, which is five weeks old and has been dominated by Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities and installations from the air, and a stalled Russian advance on the ground. Earlier this week, Russian officials indicated that they were refocusing their efforts on eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian soldiers since 2014.

Mr. Zelensky called on Sunday for NATO allies to provide tanks and planes, in addition to the antitank and anti-aircraft weaponry that have become a staple of the arms transfers to Ukraine from the West. Frustrated at what he views as a slow pace of weapons transfers, Mr. Zelensky asked specifically for tanks, in remarks a day after President Biden met with senior Ukrainian officials in Poland.

An angry Mr. Zelensky criticized the West for what he called its "Ping-Pong" about weapons transfers. "I've talked to the defenders of Mariupol today," he said, in a reference to the besieged city that has been under an onslaught from Russia for four weeks. "If only those who have been thinking for 31 days on how to hand over dozens of jets and tanks had 1 percent of their courage."

In the past, the Biden administration has taken pains to call the weapons it is providing to Ukraine defensive, and has focused on smaller, easily portable arms. But as the war has progressed, the definition of defensive has become more elastic.

Ukraine had already found one source of tanks, capturing at least 161 from Russia on the battlefield, according to the military analysis site Oryx, though Russia has also destroyed a number of Ukrainian tanks. For its part, Russia has captured 43 Ukrainian tanks, according to analysts who study photos and videos on social media.

The decision to help transfer the tanks comes as the Ukrainian military has continued to turn back Russia's ground advance. Pentagon officials have been quick to point out that Russia's pivot to Donbas and away from capturing Kyiv, the capital, might be a necessity for Moscow after Russian forces stalled out in the central part of the country.

On Wednesday, Biden administration officials, citing declassified U.S. intelligence, said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had been misinformed by his advisers about the Russian military's problems in Ukraine. The intelligence, American officials said, also showed what

appeared to be growing tension between Mr. Putin and his defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, who was once among the most trusted members of the Kremlin's inner circle.

Russian officials have disputed the allegations, with the Kremlin on Thursday calling it a "complete misunderstanding" of the situation that could have "bad consequences."

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## CENTCOM CHANGE OF COMMAND

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### **5. Tampa hosts military leaders for CENTCOM change of command**

WFLA-TV (News Channel 8, Tampa), 1 Apr 22, Jeff Patterson

Ranking officers from every branch of the U.S. Military and a number of foreign nations traveled to Tampa on Friday for the change of command ceremony for U.S. Central Command based at MacDill Air Force Base.

The ceremony was attended by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin who previously served as the Commanding officer for CENTCOM. Austin says CENTCOM plays a vital role in the defense of the middle east.

"This region is where we protect waterways so that global commerce can flow, it is where we fight terrorists who threaten our citizens," said Austin who praised outgoing Marine General Kenneth McKenzie as he turned over the command to Army General Michael "Erik" Kurilla.

Kurilla once served as McKenzie's Chief of Staff at CENTCOM and so his return is homecoming of sorts to Tampa.

General Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff spoke at the ceremony, pointing out that combat operations are over in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that CENTCOM still has a vital role to play.

"The fight isn't over here. Every day there is new threats this country faces and there are always new challenges and in this complex theater, everything from terrorism to regional conflict can rear its ugly head on very short notice," said Milley.

General Kurilla is a West Point Graduate and a wounded combat veteran. He's previously commanded the 82nd Airborne and the 2nd Ranger Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment and is well aware of the history and importance of CENTCOM.

"CENTCOM was critical in its formation, it is critical now and it will be into the future," said Kurilla as he accepted his new position.

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### **6. McKenzie retires, hands over command of CENTCOM**

The Hill, 1 Apr 22, Ellen Mitchell

#### **24. Pentagon to send Ukraine another \$300 million in defense aid**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Alex Horton

The Pentagon said Friday that it will provide a new \$300 million package of military aid to Ukraine that includes drones, armored vehicles and machine guns.

The assistance is part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, a program that lets the United States procure supplies from manufacturers instead delivering them from its own military stockpiles, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said. Under this initiative, Washington has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Ukraine each year since 2015.

The Biden administration has dispatched more than \$2.3 billion in defense support to Ukraine since it took office. Among the highlights of the new package are Puma unmanned aerial systems, or hand-launched lightweight drones, “non-standard” machine guns, counter-drone systems and access to commercial satellite imagery services.

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#### **25. U.S. to ease nuclear tensions with Russia, cancel 'Minuteman' Missile tests**

Newsweek, 1 Apr 22, Jake Thomas

The Pentagon is again delaying a test of a nuclear-capable missile to avoid a “misinterpretation or miscommunication” with Russia amid heightened tensions.

The U.S. military on Friday canceled a previously scheduled test flight of the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile, capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to Russia. The postponement is the second time the Pentagon has put off the planned test, signaling the U.S. is continuing to avoid nuclear escalation with Russia.

The Pentagon told Newsweek in an email that the Air Force recently canceled the test flight of the LGM-30G Minuteman III missile.

“The launch had been previously delayed due to an overabundance of caution to avoid misinterpretation or miscommunication during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and was canceled for the same reason,” the Pentagon said in the statement. “Our next planned test flight is later this year. The Department is confident in the readiness of the strategic forces of the United States.”

Pentagon officials announced on March 2 that it would delay the launch of the Minuteman III missile after Russian President Vladimir Putin said he would place his country's nuclear forces on high alert during its invasion of Ukraine.

At the time, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby contrasted what he described as the U.S.'s restraint to Putin's “dangerous and irresponsible...unnecessary step.”

“We did not take this decision lightly, but instead to demonstrate that we are a responsible nuclear power,” Kirby said in March.

The Minuteman III has been "the backbone of the U.S. land-based nuclear strategic force since 1962," according to Missile Threat, a product of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The missile is the only land-based component of the U.S. nuclear triad and has near 100 percent testing reliability.

There are currently an estimated 440 of the missiles in the U.S.'s arsenal, and two or more tests are conducted each year, according to Missile Threat.

Air Force crews test four Minuteman III missiles each year from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California to ensure its arsenal is functioning. Each of the tests are publicized in advance to avoid the appearance of being in response to a world event. The dummy warheads splash down near Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

The Air Force previously successfully tested a Minuteman III in August 2021. The missile flew about 4,200 miles and detonated explosives before landing in the ocean.

Previously, the Pentagon has said the launch's postponement will "not affect America's nuclear deterrence in any way."

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## **26. How two dozen retired generals are trying to stop an overhaul of the Marines** Politico, 1 Apr 22, Paul McLeary and Lee Hudson

An influential group of over two dozen retired generals has launched a counteroffensive against plans to transform the Marine Corps and is using their clout in a high-power pressure campaign to get Congress to slam on the brakes.

The roster of personalities includes every living former commandant, along with a slew of other retired four-star generals revered within the Corps. And all of them are bristling at different aspects of foundational changes introduced by Commandant Gen. David Berger, who aims to make the Corps lighter, faster and more capable of doing everything from electronic warfare to sinking ships at sea.

The group of retired generals includes former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, former Joint Chiefs Chair Joe Dunford and John Kelly, a former Homeland Security chief and White House chief of staff.

"This is not a fragmented effort, this is a collective of 30 some generals ... including six or seven of the most senior, most credible Marines that I've ever worked with," said Frank Hoffman, distinguished research fellow at the National Defense University and a retired Marine officer. Yet he also noted that Berger's efforts have already been blessed by Congress and the Pentagon brass, so putting a stop to them now is unlikely.

The Marine Corps' two-year-old plan represents a fundamental shift in how the Corps equips its troops and goes to war. The Corps' 400-odd tanks have already been shifted to the Army,

Xi “did not condemn, but also did not defend” Putin’s invasion, according to a person present during the video call, adding that the Chinese president ignored a direct question from Michel as to whether he supported the invasion.

Instead, Xi referred to the importance of understanding Russia’s “security concerns in Europe”, the person said.

In a separate video call with the EU duo, Chinese premier Li Keqiang insisted Beijing was working towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis in “its own way”.

In the run-up to Friday’s summit, Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, told his Russian counterpart “the Ukrainian issue” was the result of “the long-term accumulation of security conflicts in Europe” as well as a “cold war mentality and group confrontation”.

Wang hosted Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of a regional security meeting about Afghanistan on Wednesday, their first in-person discussion since the war in Ukraine began in late February.

In early February, Xi and Putin said there were “no limits” to their friendship. But analysts say the threat of secondary western sanctions has stopped China from offering significant support to the struggling Russian economy.

“So far, China has not helped Russia offset the cost of sanctions because it doesn’t want to trigger secondary sanctions or become more entangled in the unstable Russian economy,” said Francesca Ghiretti, an EU-China analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies, a German think-tank.

“Beijing wants to avoid any more economic pain on top of the pandemic lockdowns and global inflationary pressures,” she added.

China’s trade with the EU was worth €1.9bn a day, compared with €330mn daily with Russia, von der Leyen said, suggesting Beijing’s attitude to the war could threaten that flow. Ukraine was a “defining moment for our relationship with the rest of the world”, she said.

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## **28. China's embrace of Putin is looking more and more costly**

TIME, 1 Apr 22, Charlie Campbell

When Wang Jixian moved to the southern Ukrainian port city of Odessa, he didn’t expect to find himself in the middle of a war. But as the 37-year-old software engineer picked up his cellphone and began posting online the reality of life under Russian bombardment – wailing sirens, booming artillery, buskers on fretful streets – he soon found himself under attack from a more surprising quarter: the Chinese government and nationalist trolls, who objected to Wang’s stark portrayal of Russian aggression that chafed with Beijing’s official narrative.

Wang’s Weibo social media account was blocked for “spreading rumors” and strangers started issuing expletive-riddled threats on his Wechat account. “I’m dealing with a war on two fronts,”

Wang told Voice of America. “The battlefield I’m faced with here is terrifying, but at least I can see the tanks. But the other battlefield lurking behind me is even scarier ... I don’t know who’s in it, but they’re all telling me that they want me dead.”

China’s censorship of Wang and other independent voices on Ukraine underscores the contradictory position that the Beijing government has adopted since Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Feb. 24 assault on Ukraine: on one hand upholding sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the rules-based international order; on the other refusing to condemn Putin’s invasion nor even call it one.

“For a major power like China, which is poised to become the world’s largest economy in less than 10 years, the most important thing is to strike a balance,” says Zhou Bo, a retired PLA senior colonel and senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University Zhou.

Over days and weeks of probing questions, China’s spokespeople settled on a line: The war is caused by NATO’s expansionism, which Russia is defending itself against. In an emailed statement March 18, China’s embassy in London said that Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke with Putin on the second day of the conflict and “expressed China’s hope to see Russia and Ukraine hold peace talks as early as possible.” Putin’s escalation since then—including the near total destruction of the eastern city of Mariupol—hardly indicates that he took Xi’s words to heart.

On April 1, Xi met E.U. leaders for a virtual summit with efforts to resurrect the stalled Comprehensive Agreement of Investment trade pact already facing pushback over allegations of forced labor and human-rights abuses in Xinjiang province. Refusal to help end the bloodshed in Ukraine just compounds the ill-feeling.

How much sway China has over Putin’s Ukraine invasion is a contentious matter. A Western intelligence report claimed that senior Chinese officials asked their Russian counterparts in early February to delay the invasion of Ukraine until after the Winter Olympics in Beijing. However, Qin Gang, the Chinese ambassador to the U.S., refuted that claim writing in the Washington Post March 16, saying “had China known about the imminent crisis, we would have tried our best to prevent it.”

Of course, figuring out China is like watching a magic show: sure, you can listen to the patter, but never take your eyes off the hands. And China’s actions reveal a cynical and risky gambit to back Vladimir Putin. Xi has often spoken of a world buffeted by “changes unseen in 100 years.” If Western sanctions targeting Russia’s economy, oligarchs and industry fail, it would confirm America’s decline as a superpower—and perhaps Xi would have less to fear from blowback were he to pursue his own strategic targets, such as reuniting self-ruling Taiwan.

But it’s looking increasingly likely that Beijing has its strategic calculus wrong. Putin’s offensive is foundering (for now, at least), and NATO has rarely been more united, as members announce a raft of defense spending hikes. A defeat for Putin just after he and Xi declared a “no limits” partnership in a high-profile meeting ahead of the Beijing Olympics would be an embarrassment

for the Chinese Communist Party leader just as he is seeking a protocol-shredding third term. And in Putin, China has a “partner” with neither scruples nor, it’s becoming increasingly apparent, a sense of reality.

“It’s quite exposing for China,” says Kerry Brown, director of the Lau China Institute at King’s College, London. “It’s pushed a lot of decisions on them far quicker than they were expecting, making them declare their hand in ways where they don’t want to.”

### **The high cost of siding with Russia**

Beijing’s initial approach was to deal with the crisis through inaction, on the assumption that you can’t punish inactivity. But things are happening on a scale in a speed that is compelling China into taking more proactive positions. On the one hand, China doesn’t want to align with Russia, which is antagonizing and angering Western countries who remain their biggest trade partners. But on the other, Beijing doesn’t want a continuation of American-led Western dominance, which it felt was already waning.

China was quick to refute reports that Russia had asked for military assistance. While it makes perfect sense for Putin to want to embroil China in his conflict, Beijing has more to lose than gain from actively assisting the invasion of Ukraine. And any help would mostly be symbolic—though China retains close military ties with Russia, with the two countries staging frequent joint-exercises including naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean and the Baltic seas—there’s little interoperability between their forces. Exercises in north-west China last year involving some 10,000 Russian and Chinese troops were the first to feature Russians using Chinese weapons and joint command-and-control. Coming down more heavily on the Russian side will entail huge costs, including risking tough sanctions and international boycotts. It doesn’t make much sense for Beijing to pay that for Russia, which they consider a regional power with a limited sphere of influence, whereas China today is a global player with interests on every continent—the only true rival to the United States.

“If China and Russia engage in a military alliance, the whole world would change,” says Zhou. “Western countries, no matter how strong their economic relationship with China, will definitely follow America and stand on their side. Then we inevitably will have two camps and a repetition of the Cold War. So it is extremely important for China to have this nonaligned relationship with Russia in spite of our friendship. And this is totally possible.”

### **Why Beijing won’t try to stop Putin**

At the same time, if the West believes it can shame China into isolating Russia, it’s kidding itself. Beijing has for decades propped up an ossified, rogue nuclear state on its border because dealing with Kim Jong Un is calculated as preferable to a united, U.S.-allied Korean peninsula. If the threat of nuclear catastrophe combined with the plight of 25 million North Koreans subject to U.N.-designated “crimes against humanity” doesn’t sway China’s leaders, 4 million Ukrainian refugees won’t warrant a shrug. Beijing has proved it will only act in the purest traditions of self-interest. And so, it’s doubtful that Beijing will suddenly oppose Putin as he attempts to carve up the world into spheres of influence, with NATO, and America’s role severely diminished.

In this sense, joining Western sanctions are contrary to China's self-interest, given that handing NATO an easy victory would reenergize a newly confident, united, America-led Western alliance. China wants a less-confident, less-zealous West to deal with, and more unity and purposefulness spells trouble. "Russia is causing that to happen," says Brown. "But it's still not a solution for China to align with the West as that actually brings about the very thing that it doesn't want. It just shows this rather torturous position they're in."

It's also likely that the West is inflating the clout Beijing has over the Kremlin to distract from its own culpability. China has little demand for Russian products other than oil and gas. True, bilateral trade rose 33.6% year-on-year to some \$140 billion in 2021, when Russia was China's second largest crude oil supplier, accounting for some 15.5% of China's total imports. But the 10 billion cubic meters of gas China purchased in 2021 is dwarfed by the 175 billion cubic meters Russia sold to Europe over the same period. For leverage over Russia's economy, European leaders should look closer to home.

Ultimately, it's a war that looks unwinnable, while perpetually muddying China's international reputation, stirring up antagonism in Washington and Europe. None of that speaks to China's interest, being the self-appointed global superpower in waiting. And while China may be winning the domestic propaganda war for now, voices like Wang's in Odessa—who has more than 100,000 subscribers on Youtube—will get louder as the war drags on and more people ask questions. "[Ukrainians] are fighting for their homes ... Why should they be bombed?" he posted March 4. "It's just that simple; it's got nothing to do with NATO. People just want to be able to live their lives."

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## **29. Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love**

The Economist, 1 Apr 22

Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

During one of a seemingly endless series of press appearances Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's busy foreign minister, moaned that there appears to be "almost a campaign" to influence India. If so, this is largely his fault. The official Indian response to the great drama that currently preoccupies much of the world, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has been so cold and tight-lipped that it has left everyone wondering where the world's largest democracy stands. The guessing game has at the same time raised Russian hopes of Indian support, Chinese hopes of wooing India from the clutches of America, Western hopes that India may dump its crotchety old friend Russia—and Western worries that a country they see as a natural ally couldn't, in fact, give a fig about their high-falutin' self-declared values, and is solely focused on a narrow notion of its own interests.

On every vote at the UN since Russia's tanks rolled into Ukraine on February 24th, India has abstained. It has not condemned Russia by name. But nor has it shied from calling this a war rather than a "special operation", as Sergei Lavrov, Russia's deadpan foreign minister, gamely corrected an Indian journalist in Delhi on April 1st. Russia's state-throttled media tries to paint India as a staunch cheerleader of Vladimir Putin, but struggles to find pukka Indians to parrot such tosh. And although India has annoyed those hoping to squash Russia with sanctions, by eagerly bargaining for discounted Russian oil and other goods, Mr Jaishankar points out that Western countries still buy heaps more Russian stuff than India ever has or will.

This prickly damn-them-all attitude is popular in India. In the polarized politics generated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) strident Hindu nationalism, giving the West a poke in the eye unites in delight both old leftists and young Hindutva hotheads. Mr Jaishankar was also not wrong when he told a perplexed-looking Liz Truss, Britain's foreign secretary, that Indians care less about Ukraine than they do, say, about Afghanistan simply because of proximity. The subtle message was, first, that Ukraine is Europe's problem and, second, that the West let India down by scuttling Afghanistan to the Taliban, so why should India be concerned now? India's press and social media tom-tommed umbrage when Daleep Singh, America's deputy national security adviser for economic affairs, suggested there might be "consequences" for undermining efforts to squeeze Russia. India will never bow to pressure, was the responding chorus.

While much of India's establishment does cherish musty memories of cold-war "non-alignment", when the Soviet Union backed the country against an American-supported Pakistan and a looming Chinese dragon, many also cite pragmatic contemporary reasons for staying off the West's anti-Putin bandwagon. Most obviously, India depends on Russia for most of its arms. Perhaps 80% of its legacy systems are of Russian origin and, despite intensifying efforts to diversify, Russia remains a key supplier of new weapons and a vital source for maintenance and spares. Perhaps more crucially in the eyes of Indian generals, many of the country's prestige military toys, such as nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic cruise missiles, rely on Russian inputs.

It is not just nostalgia, either, that attaches Indian strategists to a clumsy fading power whose economy is now little more than half of India's in size. Tanvi Madan of the Brookings Institution, an American think-tank, notes that India still sees Russia through the lens of its biggest long-term foreign-policy challenge, China. Delhi warmed to Moscow in the 1960s after the Soviet Union broke with Beijing. Indian security wonks still see Mr Putin's Russia as a potential balance to what is not only an Asian superpower, but one with which India regularly spars over a long and dangerously undefined border. India fears that an isolated Russia will fall deeper into China's embrace. At the same time, by declining to condemn Russia over Ukraine, India also wants to send a signal to China of its independence. The message is that for all its military footsie with the West, such as joining a "Quad" of China-wary powers along with America, Japan and Australia, carrying out joint naval exercises and mouthing mantras about a "rules-based order" and "free and open Indo-Pacific", India is not a Western stooge.

All this posturing is fine, say Western diplomats, swallowing yet another snub on April 1st when Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, granted an audience to Mr Lavrov that he had pointedly denied to any of the other envoys (including China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, who visited

Delhi on March 25th). Even the Americans accept that in a global energy crunch India may take some advantage of steep Russian discounts on its oil. They have already given Delhi a free pass for its recent purchase of an advanced Russian air-defense system – the sort of order that could trigger American laws requiring sanctions.

But although India may be right in thinking that it is too big and important a player for Western powers to forsake, Delhi's narrow focus on "realpolitik" is not without costs. China's "historic" claims on bits of Indian territory are not so different from Russia's in Ukraine. Cocking a snook at your partners in the Quad serves only to prove Mr Wang, the Chinese foreign minister, acute in his argument that the grouping is no more substantial than "sea foam". Clever as it may seem to use its closeness to Russia to its advantage in its contest with China, the erratic, bumbling and nasty Russia of Mr Putin, provider of costly weapons that don't work too well, does not a reliable partner make. And at some point, particularly if Ukraine gets even messier, India's own people might begin to take unwonted interest in foreign affairs. They might then ask, what kind of democracy are we anyway, if we can't help fellow democracies in need?

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### **30. War in Ukraine compounds hunger in East Africa**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Abdi Latif Dahir

First came the drought, drying up rivers, and claiming the lives of two of Ruqiya Hussein Ahmed's children as her family fled the barren countryside in southwest Somalia.

Then came the war in Ukraine, pushing food prices so high that even after making it to the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, she is struggling to keep her two other children alive.

"Even here, we have nothing," she said.

Across East Africa, below-average rainfall has created some of the driest conditions in four decades, according to the United Nations, leaving more than 13 million people facing severe hunger. Seasonal harvests have hit their lowest in decades, malnourished children are filling hospitals and many families are walking long distances to find help.

The devastating drought has blanketed most of Somalia, leaving nearly a third of the population hungry. In neighboring Kenya, the drought has left more than three million people short of food and killed more than 1.5 million livestock.

And in Ethiopia, where a civil war has impeded aid delivery into the northern Tigray region, food insecurity is more widespread than at any time in the last six years. The first food aid to Tigray in three months arrived on Friday.

Now, the war in Ukraine is making the crisis even worse by raising the price of grains, fuel and fertilizer.

Russia and Ukraine are some of the region's top suppliers of agricultural commodities such as wheat, soybeans and barley. At least 14 African countries import half of their wheat from Russia

and Ukraine, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. Eritrea depends on them entirely for its wheat imports.

“The conflict in Ukraine is compounding an already complicated situation in East Africa,” Gabriela Bucher, the executive director for the charity organization Oxfam International, said in a phone interview. “East Africa is not on the global agenda now, but the region needs the solidarity of the international community and it needs it now.”

The devastating drought and the war in Ukraine are amplified by a series of crises over the past two years.

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted food supply chains and forced many families to pay higher prices for food staples. The locust infestation in Kenya, the civil war in Ethiopia, extreme flooding in South Sudan, the political crises and growing terrorist attacks in Somalia, and the intensifying ethnic conflict in Sudan have all contributed to the destruction of farms, the depletion of harvests and a worsening food crisis, aid groups say.

The war in Ukraine, which is in its second month, is expected to cause further spikes in food costs across the region. The conflict, depending on how long it lasts, could reduce “the quantity and quality” of staples like wheat, said Sean Granville-Ross, the regional director for Africa at Mercy Corps, a nongovernmental organization.

“Meeting the basic needs of vulnerable drought-affected populations will become more expensive and challenging,” he said.

That ominous outcome is already evident in many parts of the region.

In Somalia, the price of a 20-liter container of cooking oil has increased to \$55 from \$32, while 25 kilograms of beans now go for \$28 instead of \$18, according to data gathered by Mercy Corps.

In Sudan, the price of bread has nearly doubled, and some bakeries have closed because wheat imports have dropped by 60 percent since the beginning of the war, according to Elsadig Elnour, the Sudan country director for the charity organization Islamic Relief.

Kenya, citing the war in Ukraine, also raised the price of fuel, leading to protests in parts of the country.

When famine hits, children are particularly vulnerable. An estimated 5.5 million children in the region are facing high levels of malnutrition from the drought, according to World Vision, a Christian aid organization.

“My children died of hunger. They suffered,” said Ms. Ahmed, whose children, aged 3 and 4, died during her days-long trek from her home in Adde Ali village in the Lower Shabelle region to the outskirts of Mogadishu. “They died under a tree.”

In Mogadishu, families are already feeling the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine, with rising food prices squeezing household budgets as the holy month of Ramadan approaches. With no job, proper shelter or access to the beans, maize and tomatoes she once farmed, Ms. Ahmed now relies on food donations from well-wishers to feed her two surviving children, ages 7 and 9.

And aid programs are stretched thin. The war has affected the operations of the World Food Program, which this month said it had reduced rations for refugees and others in East Africa and the Middle East because of rising costs and depleting funds.

Some fear that the continued drought in East Africa could come to resemble the one in 2011, which killed about 260,000 people in Somalia alone. While the situation hasn't reached that level yet, the funding and resources needed to avert such a crisis have not yet begun to flow, Ms. Bucher of Oxfam said.

Just 3 percent of the \$6 billion the U.N. needs this year for Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan has been allocated, she said, while Kenya has only secured 11 percent of the \$139 million needed for assistance.

Last week, the African Development Bank said it would raise up to \$1 billion to improve agricultural production and help Africans become self-sufficient in food in the long run. But while these initiatives are welcome, Ms. Bucher said it was imperative that donors also give unsparingly and immediately to avert a much wider crisis.

"The world needs to come to the rescue of East Africa to avert a catastrophe," she said.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **31. America and Saudi Arabia are stuck with each other: How Biden can recalibrate the relationship without breaking it**

Foreign Affairs, 1 Apr 22, Yasmine Farouk and Andrew Leber

In recent weeks, as Western sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine have roiled global energy markets, Saudi Arabia has continued to decline requests from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration that it increase oil production. Although the kingdom's pointed refusal to mitigate the pain of skyrocketing fuel prices clearly startled many American observers, inspiring a raft of commentary asking whether the 77-year U.S.-Saudi alliance was still worth maintaining, it should not have come as a surprise.

The United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia has been in a downward spiral since immediately after 9/11. After years of tensions over the U.S.-led "war on terror," the American intervention in Iraq, Washington's on-and-off pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran, the Saudi-led war in Yemen, and Riyadh's human rights record, even former President Donald Trump's open courtship of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) did little to improve trust and communication. Though some in the U.S. foreign policy establishment privately question

soon, a similar process may occur – the focus of some of the projects may be shifted to create benefits for different groups – but this will only mean the Chinese presence on Pakistani soil will shift, not depart entirely.

*Krzysztof Iwanek is a South Asia expert and the head of the Asia Research Centre (War Studies University, Poland)*

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### **34. Analysis: Oil prices, Ukraine war create Saudi pivot point**

Associated Press. 1 Apr 22, Jon Gambrell

The world is looking to Saudi Arabia to boost oil production as global energy prices spike because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But that could mean rethinking how to deal with the kingdom's controversial crown prince.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ties with longtime allies have been troubled by a string of issues. At the top of the list is the killing and dismemberment of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in 2018, as well as Saudi Arabia's intervention in neighboring Yemen's war.

U.S. President Joe Biden has kept the 36-year-old prince at a distance. But with economic worries high, others may be putting the controversies behind them.

Turkey on Thursday moved to end an ongoing court case of Khashoggi's death, a step that could ease tensions with Saudi Arabia.

With higher oil prices flooding the kingdom's coffers, the crown prince and his father King Salman face a potential pivot point of their own.

Can the ruling Al Saud family reset its relationship with the United States, long the security guarantor for the wider Persian Gulf? Or does the kingdom tip toward further toward China, now its biggest buyer of crude, or Moscow?

An American rapprochement seems unlikely. Asked in a recent interview about what he'd want Biden to know about, Prince Mohammed bluntly said: "I don't care."

"It's up to him to think about the interests of America," the prince added.

Perhaps no other country in the world stands to rapidly benefit financially from the Ukraine war as Saudi Arabia.

Its vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, make it one of the world's cheapest places to produce crude. For every \$10 rise in the price of a barrel of oil, Saudi Arabia stands to make an additional \$40 billion a year, according to the Institute of International Finance.

It's a wild turn of events considering oil prices in April 2020 turned negative at the height of lockdowns in the coronavirus pandemic. Now, benchmark Brent crude stands at \$105 a barrel highs unseen since 2014.

The additional cash comes in handy for Prince Mohammed, who also has to deal with questions at home, particularly how to find jobs for a growing number of unemployed youth.

The crown prince has been known for his brash moves. His vision for Saudi Arabia includes developing a futuristic city called Neom in the desert reaches along the Red Sea. Its latest iteration involves a ski slope project called Trojena, advertised in a computer-generated commercial now in heavy rotation across Mideast satellite channels.

But while expansive palaces now exist there, satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC show the wider Neom project remains at an early stage. It likely will be years before it produces the jobs the prince counts on to slingshot the kingdom's economy away from oil.

Meanwhile, unemployment among youth stood at 32.7% for men and 25.2% for women late last year, according to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics. Reopening cinemas and allowing concerts in a kingdom where ultraconservatives view music as a sin comes as a part of that push for jobs.

"If I'm going to get the employment rate down, and tourism could create 1 million jobs in Saudi Arabia, ... that means I have to do it," the prince told *The Atlantic* magazine in a recent interview. "Choose a lesser sin rather than a bigger sin."

The sheen, however, has come off for human rights activists and some Western nations.

Saudi Arabia just put to death 81 prisoners in a single day, the biggest known mass execution in the kingdom's history, after a pandemic lull. Despite a unilateral Ramadan cease-fire, the Saudi-led war in Yemen against the Houthi rebels rages years after the prince promised a quick victory — and the Arab world's poorest country has been left in wreckage.

Internationally, perhaps nothing received more attention than Khashoggi's killing.

U.S. intelligence services believe Prince Mohammed approved the operation that killed Khashoggi, a permanent resident of the United States. Finding a resolution over the split with a close ally remains a difficult knot to untangle.

Biden, who called the crown prince "a pariah" while campaigning, pointedly has only spoken to King Salman since entering the White House. Biden's first foreign trip was to a G-7 summit in England, rather than the sword-dancing embrace then-President Donald Trump gave to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates appear to be leveraging record gasoline prices at the pump to extract American concessions on Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly said it can't be held responsible for energy price jumps caused by Houthi attacks on its oil facilities. That steps up pressure on Biden, whose administration withdrew American air defenses from Saudi Arabia last year.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is maintaining its own ties to Russia. The kingdom also is again reportedly thinking of selling some crude oil in Chinese yuan to Beijing, rather than the U.S. dollar.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy weighed in on the situation in recent days, urging Qatar and other regional energy powers to increase their output to make up for the loss of Russian supply. "The future of Europe depends on your efforts," he told them.

Faisal J. Abbas, the editor-in-chief of Saudi Arabia's English-language daily newspaper Arab News, wrote that the kingdom needs "all the support it can get" against the Houthis.

"The kingdom cannot — and must not — be left alone to safeguard global energy supplies at a time when the entire world is unanimously hurting from price hikes," he wrote.

Where the support comes from in the future remains the question.

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### **35. Afghanistan's hungry will pay the price for Putin's war**

Foreign Policy, 1 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Russia's ban on food and fertilizer exports to stabilize supply and prices at home while it wages war on Ukraine is reverberating in its own backyard, pushing Central Asian states into economic crisis and threatening to tip Afghanistan from starvation into famine.

The war in Ukraine has already sent shudders through commodities markets, pushing up prices of cereals, fuel, and fertilizer. Together, Ukraine and Russia account for 30 percent of wheat supply; Russia exports most of the world's fertilizer. The longer the war lasts, the greater the instability of supply and the higher prices will go in anticipation of shortages.

The impact on vulnerable countries such as Afghanistan, where millions of people are short of food and babies are dying of malnutrition, will be devastating, economists said. Other vulnerable countries, including Yemen, Lebanon, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, can expect serious ramifications at least for the coming year, possibly longer. The war is expected to hit harvests and yields, not only in Ukraine, where grain planting this year could be cut by half, but in countries that have relied on Russian fertilizer to boost their own output, according to Friederike Greb, an economist with the World Food Program (WFP).

WFP is spending \$71 million a month on grain purchases, she said, 44 percent more than the average monthly outlay in 2019, to meet existing needs. As the war fallout worsens, need will rise, and not only will WFP have to stretch stocks to feed more mouths, but hunger will intensify in countries already suffering from a lack of food as there just won't be enough to go around. Already, WFP has had to reduce food rations to 8 million people.

One of the worst-hit will likely be Afghanistan, reeling after emerging from four decades of war with little in the way of a sustainable economy. Since the Taliban's takeover last August, what economic activity there has come to a halt, and U.S. economic sanctions mean that many people do not have cash to buy anything, including food. Desperate people have reportedly sold their organs and their children.

"The situation in Afghanistan can only get worse," said Qais Mohammadi, an Afghan economist and former assistant professor at a private university in Kabul. "It's not just one but multiple variables, and the Ukraine war is an additional significant variable on top of unstable currency, unstable banking system, unstable political environment, instability of decision-making, having no rules and regulations, freezing of billions of dollars in financial assets."

WFP has repeatedly warned that half of Afghanistan's population is "food insecure," with nearly 9 million people facing famine-like conditions. Worldwide, that figure is 44 million, Gerb said. The Taliban's Ministry of Public Health has said more than 13,000 babies have died of malnutrition this year already, though the number is impossible to verify.

"Afghanistan is one huge humanitarian crisis," Greb said, adding that along with Yemen and Lebanon it was already in a "very dire place" before Russia's war in Ukraine. WFP operations in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Lebanon "are highly dependent on wheat," she said. "Our resources don't take us as far as they used to because we have to pay higher prices in global markets."

In Afghanistan, where the main staple is bread, wheat imports are essential. Kazakhstan is a major supplier but won't have so much to sell as Russian curtailments on exports to its own neighbors start to bite. Afghan economists expect that farmers in the eastern provinces will take advantage of higher prices in Pakistan, itself a recipient of WFP aid, to sell their grain over the border, rather than at home.

Nazar Bobitski, a strategic advisor with the Ukrainian Business and Trade Association, said Russia's blockade of the Black Sea coast has isolated Ukraine from global maritime trade, cutting supplies of cereals and vegetable oils, as well as grain for animal feed production. Almost all of Ukraine's grain exports are shipped through deep-water ports on the Black Sea, but no bulk shipments have left since the invasion.

"Sea lane trade was critical to ensure that there is stability of supply and price stability for these commodities," he said. Combined with the export bans, "this leaves significant curtailment of supply, and obviously price rises will follow. It's mostly less developed countries that will be affected."

It's not just Afghanistan. Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan will suffer from the ban on Russian fertilizer and grain exports, as well as the wilting of the Russian economy under Western sanctions, which will shrink their own remittance incomes from migrant workers.

Egypt, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen all depend on grain shipments from Black Sea ports, which cannot be easily replaced, as sourcing from elsewhere, such as Canada, Australia, or

India, adds to shipping costs and time. Nor do good harvests necessarily mean producing countries can pick up the slack, as port capacities are already tight.

“There’s only so much you can do, especially if transport costs are so high. So in the end it means cutting rations. And now WFP would need almost \$20 billion for this year to feed almost 140 million beneficiaries,” Greb said. “That’s a lot of money.”

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### **36. Israel and the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine**

New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Bernard Avishai

On Monday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, joined the foreign ministers of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Morocco for a meeting at Sde Boker, the retirement kibbutz and burial place of David Ben-Gurion, the nation’s first Prime Minister. The meeting had been initiated by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, with encouragement from Blinken, whose main aim was to reassure the group that the United States is fixed in its commitment to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, and that the not-yet-consummated Iran nuclear deal is the best of available options to do that. “The summit was to showcase a strategic alliance growing out of the Abraham Accords,” the Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman told me. “To seed the formation of a kind of Middle Eastern NATO to contain Iran—deal or no deal.”

Israel and its Arab guests registered a certain discontent. No deal currently being negotiated contemplates constraints on the Iranian missile and drone programs. The leaders of the Gulf states have been increasingly chagrined by the lack of a U.S. response to the various attacks that Iran’s Houthi proxies in Yemen have made on the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia during the past few months—including, most recently, a strike on a Saudi Aramco facility, on March 25th. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and Jordan were not represented in person at the summit, although their interests were. (“The Saudis were the real enablers of the meeting,” Cymerman said.) According to Axios, Blinken asked Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, at a pre-summit meeting on Sunday, what alternative Israel proposed to a new deal—other than a U.S.-led, preemptive strike, which Israel continues to prepare for but, particularly given the situation in Ukraine, the Biden Administration would not want to entertain. Bennett reportedly said that he believed Iran might be deterred from enriching uranium to weapons grade if it knew that the U.S. and European countries would intensify sanctions to the extreme levels they have placed on Russia. Since Israel has not joined in those sanctions, one can only wonder how Blinken received the suggestion.

In any event, Bennett had already stated that Israel did not see itself as a party to the Iran deal. Earlier in March, moreover, as if to prove some independence from Washington, the U.A.E. hosted a state visit by Syria’s Bashar al-Assad—who remains in power thanks to brutality abetted by Iran and Russia. The chief U.S. negotiator on the Iran deal, Robert Malley, perhaps signaled acknowledgement of Israel’s developing partnership with the Gulf states when he announced in Doha, on Sunday, that Washington would not yet remove Iran’s Revolutionary Guards from the terrorism-sanctions list, and noted that the signing of the deal was “not just around the corner.”

Two other matters cast shadows on Blinken's trip: Israel's occupation of Palestine, especially the continuing expansion of the settlements, and its quasi-neutrality on Ukraine, both of which are a source of tension between Jerusalem and Washington. They may seem unrelated, but each has rendered Israel a sort of outsider among democratic states at a decisive moment. And Blinken chose to finesse both. Bennett has made much of his attempts to mediate between Moscow and Kyiv, but, in addition to remaining aloof from sanctions against Russia, Israel refuses to supply Ukraine with war matériel in order to preserve, Lapid had said, Russian tolerance for its interdictions of Iranian-backed forces in Syria. Blinken, at a press conference with Bennett, tactfully praised Israel for the solidarity that it has shown with regards to Ukraine: joining the United Nations' vote to condemn Vladimir Putin's invasion; implementing new rules to prevent oligarchs from parking yachts and planes and fortunes in Israel (though Jewish oligarchs who are Israeli citizens, and have Israeli registered property, may well be able to elide them); setting up a field hospital in western Ukraine; and, last and apparently least, Bennett's mediation efforts.

The question of Palestine was largely sidelined at the Sde Boker summit, though few doubt that the Saudis and Jordanians made a show of boycotting it largely to avoid providing scenes of senior Arab and Israeli diplomats hobnobbing for the world's press, while Israeli occupation forces defended the at times violent settler zealots—which might have incited further violence in the West Bank and Amman, as Ramadan begins. Alas, that show seems to have been of little value. Eleven Israelis have been killed in three separate terror attacks during the past week. On Friday, a Palestinian man was shot and killed by soldiers in Hebron.

Blinken, apparently sensitive to this gap in the agenda, spent the afternoon before the summit with Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, who called the gathering a "harsh attack" on the Palestinian people, and decried a U.S. "double standard": acting against Russia's claims on the Ukraine, while tolerating Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. Jordan's King Abdullah II visited Abbas in Ramallah, on Monday, as the summit was taking place. Benny Gantz, the moderate Israeli Defense Minister, wanted to join that meeting, but Bennett, the annexationist Prime Minister, nixed the idea. Blinken, for his part, simply restated his endorsement of a "two-state" solution, while acknowledging that is not imminent. In the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine, the last issue seems the most deferrable at present.

Or is it? The occupation exacerbates Israel's hostility with Iran, and the desire to operate against Iran in Syria shapes its diplomacy with Russia. Leaders make strategic, not just transactional, decisions. Deliberately or by default, they define what a country stands for and set its course for a generation. And the leader who made this responsibility most vivid for the Israelis in recent days was not Blinken, or Bennett, but Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, who addressed the members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in an impassioned speech delivered remotely on March 20th. "Indifference kills. Calculation is often erroneous. And mediation can be between states, not between good and evil," he said. "I am sure that every word of my address echoes with pain in your hearts." But he wanted to know why Israeli military help had not been forthcoming. "What is it? Indifference? Political calculation? Mediation without choosing sides?" Putin's aggression, Zelensky said, had made the choice this stark. There is an urgency for democratic solidarity, he suggested, to valorizing a global order in which military power does not determine a neighbor's fate.

He might have added that Ben-Gurion himself, in his Biltmore Declaration of 1942, envisioned a “Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.” But Zelensky, a Jew, couched his appeal in a way that he clearly thought would resonate with the leaders of a Jewish state. “The Nazi Party raided Europe and wanted to destroy everything. Destroy everyone,” he told them. “Wanted to conquer the nations. And leave nothing from us, nothing from you.” Then he said, “They called it ‘the final solution to the Jewish issue.’ You remember that. And I’m sure you will never forget! But listen to what is sounding now in Moscow. Hear how these words are said again: ‘final solution.’ But already in relation, so to speak, to us, to the Ukrainian issue.”

Members of Bennett’s inner circle responded furiously to the comparison. The Communications Minister, Yoaz Hendel, tweeted that the Nazis’ genocide of Jews “was also carried out on Ukrainian land,” implying Ukrainian sympathy for it, and said that “the comparison to the horrors of the Holocaust and the Final Solution is outrageous.” The Interior Minister, Ayelet Shaked, went further, telling a conference sponsored by the newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth that, while some Ukrainians had behaved decently during the Second World War, “Ukraine, as a whole, colluded with the Nazis—may their name be cursed—in the slaughter of the Jewish people.” Bennett echoed Hendel and Shaked, albeit in a more compassionate tone. “I can’t imagine being in his shoes,” Bennett said, of Zelensky, but added that the Holocaust should not be compared with anything, and that Zelensky’s rhetoric was “misplaced.”

The discomfort that Bennett’s allies felt was from the messenger as much as from the message. Zelensky hardly needs a lesson on the unique cruelties of the Final Solution: his grandfather fought in the Red Army and lost many family members to Nazi occupiers. Indeed, Zelensky’s fierce liberalism and his ironist’s sense of history seem his tribute to them. But for national-Orthodox Zionists such as Bennett, Hendel, and Shaked, Zelensky’s grasp of nationhood would seem a kind of naïveté. Their lesson, as their erstwhile mentor Benjamin Netanyahu had put it, is that “only the strong survive.” Hendel, who grew up in a West Bank settlement, refused, during the spring of 2020, to allow a center-left government to be formed if it rested on the votes of Arab Israelis. More recently, Shaked scandalized moderates in the government by setting criteria—which have since been overturned—that would allow Israel to absorb only Ukrainian Jewish refugees. As long as Bennett is in power, the Israeli government’s hesitation to align unambiguously with the democratic world has an ideological, not just a pragmatic, aspect.

Zelensky, I hasten to add, thanked the Israelis for the support they have given, and he did not dismiss Bennett’s mediation efforts. But, as the negotiations that resumed this week in Istanbul have revealed, the question is not whether mediation should persist but whether Bennett’s value as a mediator outweighs Israel’s potential contribution to the resilience of Zelensky’s forces, America’s sanctions, and Western solidarity—whether that counterforce against Putin, not mediation, would cause him to inch toward agreement, if inch he will. A source close to Bennett claimed that the Prime Minister’s efforts were appreciated: Putin is no longer insisting on the “de-Nazification” of Ukraine’s regime, code for his being reconciled to Zelensky staying in power. Nor, the source told me, does the Kremlin’s demand for “demilitarization” mean a Russian takeover, though Putin expects Zelensky to recognize Russian annexation of the Donbas and Crimea. The remaining Ukrainian state, for its part, would adopt something like the neutral stance of Austria during the Cold War. Zelensky would need some sort of security guarantors,

though, the source said, he “didn’t get many volunteers.” But these shifting conditions have been shaped, obviously enough, by the desperate military courage of the Ukrainian forces. (Last week, the Times reported that Israel, fearing a Russian reaction, refused even to supply those forces with hacking software.)

All of which returns us to the Sde Boker meeting. Given Israel’s appeal to the “democratic world” — certainly to the United States — to anchor a new alliance against Iran, it is hard to see how Bennett justifies his maneuvering on Ukraine. If Iran, for example, were to attack Israel from Lebanon, and Tel Aviv became a site of carnage, no Israeli Prime Minister would be grateful for, say, the French President offering mediation instead of aid. The retired Lieutenant General H. R. McMaster, who briefly served as Donald Trump’s national-security adviser and has worked closely with the Israeli military, told Haaretz that “Israelis ought to be embarrassed” by their government’s proto-neutrality. (“This idea that you hedge with Vladimir Putin to compensate for concerns that the American Administration might attenuate or lessen support for Israel — that’s part of a long pattern and it’s always been wrong,” he said.)

The risks are real: Palestine, Iran, and Ukraine have presented Israeli leaders a strategic challenge. Does Israel prioritize a peace process with Palestinians, defer to American leadership on Iran, take a stronger stance on Russia—define its interests within “the structure of the new democratic world”? The complexity — as Zelensky implied — doesn’t mean that the answer isn’t simple.

Putin has punished his shrinking inner circle for misjudging the war.

*Bernard Avishai teaches political economy at Dartmouth and is the author of “The Tragedy of Zionism,” “The Hebrew Republic,” and “Promiscuous,” among other books. He was selected as a Guggenheim fellow in 1987.*

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### **37. Painful choices lie in the path to peace in Ukraine**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, David Ignatius

In the agonizing final years of the Vietnam War, a strategist named Fred Iklé wrote a treatise titled “Every War Must End.” His basic theme was that “wars are easier to start than to stop” — a message that applies powerfully now to the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine have been meeting for preliminary peace talks in Turkey this week, which has raised hopes for a settlement. Both sides have described the same basic terms for resolving the conflict: In exchange for a halt in the fighting, Ukraine would agree to a neutral military status that wouldn’t threaten Russia.

But this formula masks painful choices: Such a pact would grant Russian President Vladimir Putin at least partial victory. For many in Ukraine and the West, that is unacceptable. Putin launched an unprovoked, illegal invasion. His army committed atrocities against civilians. He shouldn’t be rewarded for such behavior.

The Biden administration's view is that it's up to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to decide whether to settle for neutrality or keep fighting for a better deal. "The Ukrainians will have to decide when the situation on the ground is ripe for a settlement," argues Stephen Hadley, a former national security adviser to President George W. Bush who keeps close contact with the Biden team.

After fighting so valiantly, Ukrainians won't want a settlement that leaves the country disarmed and vulnerable to a future attack. "This is viable to me in only one way — the kind of neutrality that Switzerland has — fully armed, with a citizen army," Konstantin Gryshchenko, an influential former foreign minister of Ukraine, told me in an interview.

The Russian military has performed poorly so far, and some Ukrainians think more fighting will bring victory. But U.S. officials specializing in Russia are skeptical. Russia is a large country with the ability to resupply and reposition its forces; Ukraine is a relatively small one that's short on the essentials for survival. The war is 40 days old; who can say what the battlefield situation might be in six months or a year?

Iklé offered a useful caution: "It often happens in wars that the weaker party makes no attempt to seek peace while its military strength can still influence the enemy but fights until it has lost all its power to bargain." He called this "self-destructive perseverance."

Iklé was similarly skeptical of punitive tactics such as Russia's seeming determination to bomb its way to a desirable settlement. "Inflicting 'punishment' on the enemy nation is not only an ineffective strategy for ending a war, it may well have side effects that actually hasten the defeat of the side that relies on that strategy," he wrote.

Often, wars don't end with a peace treaty but a cease-fire that leaves forces in place along a "line of control." Some analysts think Russia may be moving toward such an outcome by consolidating its forces in a swath of southeastern Ukraine that could eventually stretch from Odessa to the Donbas region.

Such partition lines are messy but can be surprisingly durable. North and South Korea are still separated without a formal peace treaty. A disputed line of control separates India and Pakistan, and also India and China. Vietnam was similarly partitioned for decades.

Harvard's Graham Allison argues that such a division could allow the Western-allied part of Ukraine to prosper. Before the Russian invasion, he contends, Ukraine was a failing state — one of the rare post-Soviet republics whose real gross domestic product per capita actually declined after 1991. A future Western Ukraine might become a version of South Korea, Allison says.

As Russia and Ukraine exchange peace proposals, the United States and its allies are subtly pressuring Russia through what has been their best tool — the release of declassified intelligence. The latest installment was a series of statements this week by U.S. and British officials arguing that Putin's bloody invasion was marked by the Russian leader's delusion and the incompetence of his advisers. "Putin's advisers are afraid to tell him the truth," but "the

extent of these misjudgments must be crystal clear to the regime,” argued Jeremy Fleming, director of Britain’s code-breaking agency GCHQ, in a speech on Thursday.

That zinger was aimed directly at the Kremlin, and it could have several interesting consequences: Putin may further blame his military and intelligence chiefs for failing to warn him of the disaster ahead; the generals and spies may further resent their remote president who has waged what Fleming described as his “personal war”; and the Russian people may mistrust both Putin and his security chiefs.

The most hopeful development I saw in this week’s peace feelers was a statement by Russian negotiator Vladimir Medinsky that, although Moscow rejects Ukrainian membership of NATO, it “has no objection to Ukraine’s aspirations to join the European Union.”

Maybe that is a building block for a real settlement. For a European Ukraine would represent a profound defeat for Putin’s dream of hegemony over Kyiv. That’s an essential requirement for a peace deal, along with stopping the killing.

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### **38. Peace in Ukraine will be elusive until one side makes a military breakthrough**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Lawrence Freedman

From almost the moment the war in Ukraine began, diplomats have been at work trying to end it. The UN Security Council has deliberated. Vladimir Putin has had regular telephone discussions with western leaders in which they urge him to stop his aggression or at least facilitate humanitarian relief for those suffering under the weight of Russian bombardments. He then in turn explains how they fail to understand Ukraine’s responsibility for these tragic events.

Israel’s prime minister Naftali Bennett visited Moscow to explore a peace initiative some weeks ago, but that now seems to be in abeyance. The only talks that hold any real promise are those that take place regularly between Ukrainian and Russian teams. The most recent of these was in Istanbul. But here too there has been little tangible progress.

For now neither side has an incentive to commit to a long-term settlement. They are waiting for military breakthroughs and a clearer view on the likely course of the war. Should the prospect be one of a long stalemate, then both might feel obliged to compromise. As they wait for news from the front, all they can do is to urge each other to be more “realistic” in their expectations.

Russia has had most reason to scale down its ambitions. It launched this war presuming an early victory, an assessment that was shared in a number of western capitals. The resulting mindset, which assumed that it would be Ukraine who was compelled to make the big concessions, has still not gone away, even though Russia has had to relinquish some of its earlier territorial gains. Its forces are suffering heavy losses and struggle with logistical and morale issues. And on Friday, authorities in the city of Belgorod claimed that Ukrainian helicopters had made the first strike on Russian soil since the war began.

Russia's original demands, however, are still on the table. So far it has only acknowledged implicitly that it will be unable to achieve regime change in Kyiv or impose demilitarization.

What will happen if Ukraine sustains this military pressure, and Russian efforts to reinforce its forces and mount new offensives continue to falter? Moscow's best option in those circumstances will be to call for an imminent ceasefire. This would enable Russia to consolidate its gains.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky will see the trap and be obliged to refuse the offer. He can note a record of Russia failing to honor many of the localized ceasefires, intended to allow civilians from besieged towns and cities to escape and for relief supplies to enter. He could also point to the problems with the implementation of the February 2015 Minsk agreement. Russian-sponsored separatists stayed in control of the territory they had occupied the previous year.

While Putin might be happy to start with a ceasefire without an accompanying peace deal, giving him an opportunity to confirm his gains while using a period of quiet to encourage his armed forces to sort themselves out, Zelensky will want a peace deal that only leads to a ceasefire as it is being implemented. His core demand is that Russian forces must leave Ukrainian territory. The war cannot truly end while any remain.

To sweeten the pill for Russia, the Ukrainian leader has come up with ideas to deal with the most contentious issues. The proposal that captured the most attention was one to abandon efforts to join Nato and turn Ukraine into a neutral state.

At first glance this looks like an important step. But Zelensky is after an armed neutrality backed by security guarantees. As he wants these guarantees to be stronger than those Ukraine had before, notably the ones in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which were provided in return for giving up its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal. Weeks before the war began foreign minister Sergei Lavrov explained that Russia was no longer bound by any promises because of the "state coup in Ukraine".

This experience explains why Ukraine was so keen to join Nato and why it now will want guarantees from the US, UK and others that are more or less the same as those as it would get as a member of Nato. However, as always with guarantees, there is small print. Whatever formula is found, Ukraine will carry on being dependent upon its own defenses, fortified by more equipment coming in from the west. It might hope that Moscow's experience of military failure will encourage caution in the future, though it will hardly feel secure if Russia ends this war still holding a chunk of Ukrainian territory.

Kyiv has all but accepted that while it will never agree in principle to Russia's annexation of the Crimea, in practice this is a fait accompli. But it will not agree to Russian control over the Donbas, the area for which Putin went to war.

It seems doubtful that this shattered territory, with its hostile population and vast reconstruction costs, requiring defense for the indefinite future, will appear now as such an attractive prize. But without it Putin has absolutely nothing to show for all this effort. This war should end with

Russian forces out of the Donbas. That would also be the most stable outcome. Without an agreement on this core issue, whatever else has been settled in negotiations, the conflict will not be concluded. That is why the search for a durable peace cannot be separated from the search for military success.

*The writer is emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London*

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **39. Wexler to Asharq Al-Awsat: Regional peace not possible without Saudi Arabia**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Fatehelrahman Yousif

US Senator and President of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington DC, Robert Wexler stressed that real peace in the Middle East is not possible without Saudi Arabia.

In remarks to Asharq Al-Awsat, he said the Saudi-American relationship is the cornerstone for not just tangible security, but in handling terrorism related to extremist ideologies and deterring emerging groups.

The relationship between Riyadh and Washington is very important, not just in traditional politics, but goes beyond it to the fields of innovation, economy and regional peace efforts, he continued.

Moreover, he said there was deep understanding of the fundamental nature of the American-Saudi relationship and the massive long-term value of the partnership and joint interests and goals.

Saudi Arabia is the cornerstone for American interests and its allies.

When it comes to Israeli-Palestinian peace, it would be impossible to imagine any deal or any real tangible peace progress taking place without Saudi Arabia, said Wexler from Riyadh.

He cited late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's declaration of the 2002 Arab peace initiative, saying it was a great vision of peace.

The collective challenge at hand, continued Wexler, is building sustainable peace.

Furthermore, he acknowledged that Israel is partly to blame for the collapse of the peace process in the region.

He refused to blame Tel Aviv entirely for the failure to achieve peace in the conflict with Palestinians.

Adding to his woes are recent judicial rulings by Iraq's highest courts on the constitutional interpretation of how presidents should be elected. Effectively, Iraq's highest legal authorities have stepped in to ensure that Sadr has to share power with his Shia rivals.

This is not to say that Sadr is particularly "anti-Iran", but rather that Tehran has long encouraged a form of "sibling rivalry" between its Shia proxies and associates so that no single party becomes too powerful and may one day think about striking out on its own without Iranian patronage.

By keeping its clients at each other's throats, Iran is better positioned to leverage its influence and continue to use Iraq as an instrument of its own power projection, allowing it to reach deep into Syria and even threaten Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States.

What the Iraqi parliamentary chaos shows is that the political system established by the 2003 US occupation designed it to be controlled by external forces, and democracy does not remotely factor into how the state should be run.

Unless there is root-and-branch reform of the Iraqi political system, anyone who engages in Iraqi politics and the democratic process will have to face an entrenched deep state that ensures that the nation remains at the mercy of powerful foreign players, most notably the US and Iran.

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## SYRIA

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### **42. In Syria, Russia leads effort to recruit fighters for Ukraine**

Al Jazeera, 1 Apr 22, Kareem Chehayeb

Even after a decade of civil war, Syrians have been trying to find a way out of the country to fight in another. Moscow through the mercenary company the Wagner Group and supported Syrian fighter groups have been recruiting men to fight alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. Thousands across the war-torn country have reportedly expressed an interest in signing up.

One group, dubbed the ISIS Hunters, have made calls for recruitment at least twice over the past month. Those interested have to be between 23 and 43 years old, and must submit personal identification and documents that show they have military experience.

The ISIS Hunters will then let them know whether or not they have been recruited, and will summon them for deployment "at a later time when needed".

They are closely linked to the Wagner Group, and even share an almost identical insignia.

"Moscow is taking the lead with recruitment," Omar Abu Layla, a Syrian activist based in Europe who runs Syrian media and monitoring group Deir EzZor 24, told Al Jazeera.

“If you see it as a hierarchal structure, you have Russia at the top, then the Wagner Group, then the National Defense Forces,” he explained, the latter being a network of private pro-government fighter groups.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced in March that he will approve up to 16,000 fighters from the Middle East to deploy in Ukraine’s Donbas region to support Russian-backed rebel groups.

The US Pentagon said it has seen indicators that the Wagner Group has been recruiting fighters from Syria, Libya, and other countries with a goal to deploy “a thousand or so” in the eastern province.

Russian defense-ministry-owned Zvezda TV broadcast a video of Syrian men in military garb, waving Syrian and Russian flags, pledging to fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

### **Recruitment centers**

A fighter in Homs with the recently disbanded Russia-backed group Desert Hawks Brigade said its leader, Mohamad Jaber, has been contacting former fighters to regroup and support Russia’s war in Ukraine. He accepted Jaber’s request.

The Desert Hawks was considered one of Syria’s two most significant and ruthless fighter branches in the military. It has taken part in key offensives in Aleppo, Palmyra, Lattakia, and Deraa to keep President Bashar al-Assad in power.

“Otherwise you sign up at the [ISIS] Hunters center in Homs,” said the fighter, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gregory Waters, an analyst at the Counter Extremism Project and nonresident fellow at the Middle East Institute, said there are more than a dozen recruitment centers in Syria run by Moscow-backed private pro-government armed groups.

Meanwhile, in the eastern Deir Az Zor province, the Wagner Group and allied Syrian forces have directly started recruiting Syrians to volunteer in Ukraine, Abu Layla said.

Salaries start as low as \$200-\$300 per month for volunteers to work as security guards to protect installations, but those with greater military experience are paid higher rates, exceeding \$1,000 per month, he said.

It is an attractive pay in a country where 90 percent of the population lives in poverty, and where access to adequate food and heating is becoming more out of reach.

Abu Layla said many Syrians volunteering are not just in it for the money.

“Some of these Syrian militias are hoping to get higher positions, and believe that they could do this if they show loyalty to Russia,” he explained. “But with many others in Syria hoping to emigrate to Europe, they see this as their golden ticket.”

Meanwhile, brokers claiming to help speed up recruitment for Syrians have swarmed Facebook groups and other social media platforms, including one called Job Opportunities with Our Russian Friends.

Dozens of Syrians, many dressed in camouflage in their photos, appear desperate for opportunities abroad, even if it puts their lives at risk.

Many on the page, including the Desert Hawk Brigades fighter, waiting for deployments have called them “scammers”.

“There are so many corrupted people who say you will be instantly recruited and sent to Ukraine if you pay them an advance,” he said.

One recruiter claimed in a post that volunteers deployed to Syria will be paid a monthly salary of 1,500 euros (US\$1,657), have all their personal expenses covered, and will receive a 50,000 euro (\$55,235) lump sum at their end of service. “I want to sign up, please somebody help me,” one middle-aged man said in the comment section.

However, a young man on the page, dressed in military garb in his photo, said this recruiter was a fraud.

He posted WhatsApp screenshots where the recruiter asked for broker fees, but would reduce the fee if he would find more people to recruit. “This crook says he will sign us off to go to Russia, notify the authorities!” he said in an angry post.

### **‘Stay away’**

Some analysts are skeptical about the recruitment process and whether Russia will deploy armed Syrians in Ukraine anytime soon.

“I’ve yet to see evidence of contracts,” Waters said, describing pledges as “political grandstanding”.

No Syrian fighters have reached Ukraine yet. However, some have reportedly arrived in Russia. Accountability organization Syrians for Truth and Justice, said the Wagner Group and a Syrian partner security company have transported Syrian volunteers in Benghazi, Libya to Damascus, Syria, and eventually to Russia. A Syrian government official denied this.

The Desert Hawks Brigade fighter is still waiting in Syria, and does not know when he will be called for deployment. “I don’t know what’s going on right now,” he admitted. “Once our leader tells us we’re traveling, we’ll travel.”

That said, not all Syrians are interested in fighting a new war, after more than a decade of conflict in their own country that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions. Some say despite Russia’s crucial military support to the Syrian government, Ukraine is not a war for them to fight.

One Syrian who fought with a Russian-backed fighter group said staying in Syria despite the dire economic situation is the “honorable thing to do”.

“To hell with Russia and Ukraine,” he said. “Here’s my advice, don’t sign up and stay away from the whole thing.”

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### **43. Assassinations continue in Syria's Daraa with no accountability**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Riyadh al-Zain

Since early 2022, the province of Daraa in southern Syria has witnessed 117 different types of attacks that left 97 people dead, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights announced in a report on Thursday.

It said violence and insecurity chaos has dramatically escalated in the province, where 45 attacks, murders and incidents of security instability were reported in different places in Daraa only in March, leaving 39 deaths.

The last of these attacks took place in the northern countryside of Daraa, at midnight on Wednesday, when gunmen fired at the house of a person in the town of Mahajah, north of Daraa, seriously wounding his wife and son, who were transferred to the hospital.

Last Wednesday, a little boy and his baby brother died while their sister sustained cuts all over her body, after unknown gunmen had stormed their house in Al-Harrak town in the eastern countryside of Daraa and stabbed the three with sharp tools.

The attack was part of an armed robbery, as the mother of the three victims had received a remittance from her husband who lives abroad, the Observatory said.

Also this week, a 12 year-old child was accidentally injured by members of the State Security, while he was with other children in Al-Maslakh area in Al-Hara city in Daraa countryside.

The Observatory said the rate of security incidents increased dramatically in the city of Daraa despite the so-called settlements and reconciliations conducted by the Damascus government in the city in 2018.

“Since early 2022, the number of attacks in the Daraa province has risen to 117, which left 97 people dead,” the London-based watchdog reported.

It said the victims involved 55 civilians, including a woman and two children, 32 regime military personnel and collaborators with security services, five individuals with settled-status, an ex-ISIS member, three unidentified people and a Russian-backed militiaman.

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### **44. Fears for 100 children missing from Syria jail attacked by ISIS**

**From:** CENTCOM Macdill AFB CENTCOM HQ Mailbox CCCI JOC Desk

**Sent:** Sun, 13 Mar 2022 08:49:51 +0000

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:**  
(b)(6)

**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 13 MAR 22

**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 13 MAR 22.docx, smime.p7s

Sir –

You were referenced in articles 5 and 41 in today's CENTCOM News Clips.

**5. Missiles strike near US consulate in north Iraq; no injuries**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Qassim Abdul-Zahra

EXCERPT: In an interview with The Associated Press in December, Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie said that while U.S. forces in Iraq have shifted to a non-combat role, Iran and its proxies still want all American troops to leave the country. As a result, he said, that may trigger more attacks.'

**41. Israel's growing role in CENTCOM**

Jerusalem Post, 12 Mar 22, Abraham Rabinovich

EXCERPT: The shift became official on September 1. CENTCOM's commander, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, a marine, went ahead with the symposium the following month to welcome the new regional partner, and acquaint his own senior commanders and staffs with "the ways Israel is a product of its history, identity, geography and more recent relations with its regional neighbors." The speakers, mostly from US think tanks, included several Israelis. I was invited because I had written a book on the Yom Kippur War, a subject in which McKenzie had special interest, according to the aide who called me. He said the general often spoke about the war when addressing groups of officers. Its battlefields now lay within CENTCOM's boundaries.

**CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS**

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 13, 2022

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**COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

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1. The Wall Street Journal led global media reporting on a missile strike in Erbil that allegedly targeted a new U.S. Consulate building that was soon to be opened. No injuries to U.S. military personnel or civilians were reported. Media quoted various U.S. and Kurdish officials who said the missiles were likely launched from Iran, following threats of Iranian retaliation for the Israeli strike in Syria Tuesday that killed two IRGC colonels.

2. The New York Times was one of several media outlets stating the war in Ukraine has prompted a U.S. reassessment of its foreign policy, the largest since the same undertaking took place following the 9-11 attacks. The article notes the Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela. Despite concerns a renewed focus on Europe could divert attention from Asia, several White House officials said the U.S. can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.
3. The Los Angeles Times published the latest news from Ukraine late Saturday night, emphasizing Russian forces intensified their bombing in cities including Mariupol, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, while also positioning for a possible siege of Kyiv. Earlier Moscow warned the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

## U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. Missiles from Iran struck in vicinity of U.S. Consulate in Northern Iraq, officials say** Wall Street Journal, 12 Mar 22, Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon

A missile strike early Sunday that landed in the vicinity of a new American consulate under construction in northern Iraq originated from Iran, according to U.S. officials. The attack comes as the U.S. is edging closer to cementing a deal to revive the 2015 agreement with Tehran that constrains Iran’s nuclear program.

#### **2. Ukraine War ushers in ‘new era’ for U.S. abroad** New York Times, 12 Mar 22, Michael Crowley and Edward Wong

The war in Ukraine has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.

#### **3. Russia intensifies assault, warns U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine are ‘legitimate targets’** Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Nabih Bulos and Jenny Jarvie

Russian forces kept up their bombardment of cities across Ukraine on Saturday, capturing the eastern outskirts of a key southern port and waging an increasingly violent campaign with an eye to encircling the capital even as they sought to bring a political veneer to their occupation in cities they have captured. Moscow also signaled it could soon expand the war to embroil Kyiv’s allies, warning the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (12 Mar):** I have authorized a drawdown of up to \$200 million for additional arms and equipment to Ukraine. This unprecedented fourth drawdown in less than a year will bring total U.S. security assistance provided to Ukraine to more than \$1.2 billion since January 2021.

**Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi مصطفى الكاظمي; @MAKadhimi (12 Mar):** The aggression which targeted the dear city of Erbil and spread fear amongst its inhabitants is an attack on the security of our people. I discussed these developments with the KRG PM. Our security forces will investigate and stand firm against any threats towards our people.

**Kurdish Prime Minister Masrour Barzani; @masrour\_barzani (12 Mar):** I strongly condemn the terrorist attack on Erbil and strongly call on its resilient people to keep calm and follow the guidance of the security services. -- mb

**Iraqi cleric Muqtada al Sadr; @Mu\_AlSadr (12 Mar):** In the Name of God, Erbil under the fire of loss and betrayal. And under pain of starvation. As if the Kurds were not Iraqis. Rather, they are the lung of Iraq and its indivisible part. Erbil will not kneel except for moderation, independence and sovereignty...Peace and love to you, O Erbil, and you Kurds. And, patience until a national majority government is achieved. Your brother, Muqtada alsadr

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## IRAN

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### **4. US seizing tankers has failed to stop Iran's oil exports, minister says**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

The US seizure of Iranian tankers in recent months has not stopped sanctions-hit Tehran from increasing oil exports, Iran's oil minister was quoted as saying on Saturday.

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## IRAQ

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### **5. Missiles strike near US consulate in north Iraq; no injuries**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Qassim Abdul-Zahra

As many as 12 missiles struck Iraq's northern city of Irbil on Sunday near the U.S. consulate, Iraqi security officials said. A U.S. defense official said missiles had been launched at the city from neighboring Iran.

### **6. U.S. looks into Iraq attack after Iran says Israel killed colonels in Syria**

Newsweek, 12 Mar 22, Tom O'Connor

The U.S. military is tracking reports of a missile attack near Washington's consulate in northern Iraqi city of Erbil days after two Iranian colonels were reportedly killed during an airstrike in Syria that was blamed on Israel.

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Reuters, 12 Mar 22, Amina Ismail

Iraq will host another round of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the foreign ministry in Baghdad said on Saturday, without giving further details.

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Agence France-Presse, 12 Mar 22

Two suspects have been arrested in Afghanistan in connection with the killing of seven polio vaccinators last month, police said Saturday, putting the blame on a group opposed to Taliban rule.

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Deutsche Welle (Germany), 12 Mar 22

A disturbing video showing a man being gunned down by Taliban forces in the north of Afghanistan has provoked a strong reaction on social media. The victim is wearing a uniform of the former Afghan national army but claims he is a civilian before being shot down.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **10. Russian footholds in Mideast, Africa raise threat to NATO**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Ellen Knickmeyer and Zeina Karam

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine dominates world attention. But with less global scrutiny, Putin is also busy advancing Russia's presence in the Middle East and Africa -- an expansion that military and civilian leaders view as another, if less immediate, threat to security in the West.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **13. 'Rest now, while we can.' At Estonian NATO base, troops prepare for Putin's next move**

Politico, 13 Mar 22, Charlie Duxbury

At NATO's Tapa military base in central Estonia, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sparked a heightened sense of purpose among the troops. On a recent weekday, and despite heavy snow, there were plenty of signs of activity in and around the frontline camp — just 160 kilometers from the Russian border — as soldiers wondered what Russian President Vladimir Putin's future plans might be.

#### **14. Military briefing: fear of deployment of chemical weapons in Ukraine**

Financial Times, 12 Mar 22, Daniel Dombey, John Paul Rathbone and Erika Solomon

As the west steps up its warnings that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, a broader fear lurks beneath the surface: the same poison gases that killed thousands on the front lines of the first world war could become an ever more familiar part of 21st century conflict.

#### **15. What to know about Javelin antitank missiles could play in Ukraine's fight against Russia**

Washington Post, 12 Mar 22, Claire Parker, Alex Horton and William Neff

The United States and allies have surged weapons to Ukraine in recent weeks in the face of the Russian invasion. Images of destroyed Russian tanks on social media have drawn attention to one particular weapon: the Javelin missile. The U.S. and other NATO countries sent more than 17,000 antitank weapons, including Javelin missiles, overland to Ukraine via Poland and Romania in the span of less than a week this month, the New York Times reported.

#### **16. Moon battle: New Space Force plans raise fears over militarizing the lunar surface**

Politico, 12 Mar 22, Bryan Bender

The battle is on for the moon. The U.S. military is investing in new technologies to build large structures on the lunar surface. It's designing a spy satellite to orbit the moon. And it just announced plans for a surveillance network — what it calls a "highway patrol" — for the vast domain between Earth's orbit and the moon, known as cislunar space. Top military strategists and documents, meanwhile, now consistently refer to this region as a new realm of operations.

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### ADJACENT AORs

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#### **17. The new legion of foreign fighters: who are they and where do they come from?**

Sunday Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Peter Conradi and Hugo Daniel

In happier times, Anton Bondarenko, 22, gave online English lessons. Now he is an unlikely but vital cog in Ukraine's war machine. From the bedroom of the modest flat in central Kyiv that he shares with his mother, Bondarenko and 100 or so of his colleagues elsewhere in the capital form a virtual call center. Their task? Fielding inquiries from people across the world who have answered an appeal by President Zelensky to join a new Ukrainian foreign legion to help repel the invaders.

#### **18. U.S. commission urges Biden to designate Ukraine, Georgia as major non-NATO allies**

Foreign Policy, 12 Mar 22, Amy Mackinnon

The Helsinki Commission, an independent U.S. government agency tasked with promoting human rights and security in Europe, has called on the Biden administration to upgrade the United States' defense relationship with Ukraine. The commission seeks to help facilitate military and economic assistance to Kyiv as Russian forces move to encircle the Ukrainian capital.

### **19. Nerves on edge in Poland as war next door in Ukraine revives fears of Russia**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Patrick J. McDonnell and Rima Marrouch

Military enlistments are spiking, demands for passports are surging, and memories of the bad old days of the Cold War are fraying the collective nerves of the Polish people.

### **20. Tiny kingdom in Nigeria celebrates as threat from Boko Haram fades**

Sunday Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Richard Assheton

The king rose early on the biggest day for his people in years. By 9am the walled center of the village was abuzz with the chatter of thousands who had come from the hills around. The celebrations that greeted the king were the first of their kind in nearly a decade. For much of that time the people of Sukur, a little-known, UNESCO-listed kingdom 3,000 feet up in the highlands of northeast Nigeria, lived in fear.

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## **ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY**

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### **21. Any new Iran deal would likely only be temporary**

National Review, 12 Mar 22, Carine Hajjar

There was speculation that earlier this week, the eleven months of negotiations in Vienna would finally end in a completed Iran deal. Indeed, EU foreign minister, Josep Borrell Fontelles, tweeted that the final text of the agreement is “essentially ready and on the table.” As of Thursday, however, the deal has stalled – most notably due to Russian demands for protection from sanctions on its trade with Tehran.

### **22. Don't embrace Saudi Arabia and the UAE because of the Ukraine crisis**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, William D. Hartung

The Biden administration is reportedly reaching out to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to urge them to increase their oil output to counterbalance disruptions in the global market sparked by sanctions on Russia. In doing so, it is crucial that the administration doesn't excuse their crimes in Yemen or bolster their militaries with additional arms sales or other military support.

### **23. 'A serious failure': scale of Russia's military blunders becomes clear**

Financial Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Sam Jones, John Paul Rathbone and Demetri Sevastopulo

The outcome of Russian president Vladimir Putin's war is still far from certain: little information exists on Ukrainian forces' rates of attrition, while Russia's military still outmans and outguns that of its neighbor. The chances of escalation have meanwhile increased as the Russian

leadership looks to regain the front foot. But in the first phase of its offensive, the Kremlin's military story is one of failure.

#### **24. For the sake of our national security, Congress must end its budget battles**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, Mike Rogers

On Tuesday, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued its Annual Worldwide Threats report. If you weren't already unsettled by the state of the world, reading this sobering report will certainly leave you concerned. From Russia to China, health security to transnational threats like drugs and terrorism, and more, the ODNI report shows just how unsettled the world is today and what it's anticipated to be over the course of the next year.

#### **25. Nostalgia and Kalashnikovs: Why Russia wins some sympathy in Africa and the Middle East**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

In 2019 Vladimir Putin welcomed 43 African leaders to the inaugural Russia-Africa summit, a higher turnout than Britain or France attracted to similar shindigs. At the bash in Sochi the Russian president lambasted the West for how it imposed "political or other conditions" on African countries, a reference to chiding about human rights. "We have a lot to offer to our African friends," said Mr Putin.

#### **26. Will China offer Russia financial help? A bit. But it will mostly seek to learn from Russia's mistakes**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

If you believe China's diplomats, relations with Russia are "rock solid" and the friendship between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin has "no limits". Western sanctions are about to put those warm words to the test. Russia needs an economic and financial lifeline. It would like to use China as a conduit through which to continue trading with the rest of the world. China, however, must strike a delicate balance between helping Mr Putin stand up to their joint rival, America, and retaining its own access to the global financial system. No doubt to Mr Putin's regret, its financial aid to Russia is likely to be qualified at best.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **27. Saudi Arabia executes 81 people in a single day**

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including "allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations" and holding "deviant beliefs", state news agency Saudi Press Agency said, in the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.



## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 13, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Wall Street Journal led global media reporting on a missile strike in Erbil that allegedly targeted a new U.S. Consulate building that was soon to be opened. No injuries to U.S. military personnel or civilians were reported. Media quoted various U.S. and Kurdish officials who said the missiles were likely launched from Iran, following threats of Iranian retaliation for the Israeli strike in Syria Tuesday that killed two IRGC colonels.
- 2) The New York Times was one of several media outlets stating the war in Ukraine has prompted a U.S. reassessment of its foreign policy, the largest since the same undertaking took place following the 9-11 attacks. The article notes the Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela. Despite concerns a renewed focus on Europe could divert attention from Asia, several White House officials said the U.S. can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.
- 3) The Los Angeles Times published the latest news from Ukraine late Saturday night, emphasizing Russian forces intensified their bombing in cities including Mariupol, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, while also positioning for a possible siege of Kyiv. Earlier Moscow warned the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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**1. Missiles from Iran struck in vicinity of U.S. Consulate in Northern Iraq, officials say**  
Wall Street Journal, 12 Mar 22, Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon

A missile strike early Sunday that landed in the vicinity of a new American consulate under construction in northern Iraq originated from Iran, according to U.S. officials. The attack comes as the U.S. is edging closer to cementing a deal to revive the 2015 agreement with Tehran that constrains Iran’s nuclear program.

## 2. Ukraine War ushers in ‘new era’ for U.S. abroad

New York Times, 12 Mar 22, Michael Crowley and Edward Wong

The war in Ukraine has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.

## 3. Russia intensifies assault, warns U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine are ‘legitimate targets’

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Nabih Bulos and Jenny Jarvie

Russian forces kept up their bombardment of cities across Ukraine on Saturday, capturing the eastern outskirts of a key southern port and waging an increasingly violent campaign with an eye to encircling the capital even as they sought to bring a political veneer to their occupation in cities they have captured. Moscow also signaled it could soon expand the war to embroil Kyiv’s allies, warning the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

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### NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (12 Mar):** I have authorized a drawdown of up to \$200 million for additional arms and equipment to Ukraine. This unprecedented fourth drawdown in less than a year will bring total U.S. security assistance provided to Ukraine to more than \$1.2 billion since January 2021.

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foreign ministry spokesman said after the Israeli strike that Iran would take steps to hold Israel accountable.

Israel has been carrying out airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias and Iranian personnel in Syria as it seeks to prevent Iran from transferring weapons to Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia group. The campaign includes placing mines on ships carrying oil and other goods that are bound for Syria.

The Iranians have previously sought to pressure the U.S. to constrain its Israeli ally.

In October, Iran directed five drones at the al-Tanf garrison in southern Syria, which is defended by a small contingent of U.S. forces and American-trained Syrian fighters. The Iranians said in a confidential message to the U.S. at that time that the attack was in response to an Israeli airstrike that killed two Iranian officers in Syria, U.S. officials said.

In January, the massive U.S. Embassy complex in Baghdad was struck by four rocket attacks that injured at least two individuals but no U.S. personnel were hurt. That attack originated from inside Baghdad and was believed to have been carried out by an Iranian-backed militia group.

A State Department spokesman didn't provide details of the new rocket attack, its origins or say what the targets may have been.

"The incident is being investigated by the government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government," according to a State Department statement. "We condemn this outrageous attack and display of violence."

The U.S. has a consulate inside Erbil, the capital of the semiautonomous Kurdish region in Iraq, and is building a new one 8 miles from the center of the city.

The strikes come as Washington has been rushing to complete talks to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran. That agreement, which could also lead to the release of U.S. detainees, was close to being completed until Russia raised a fresh demand that its trade with Iran be exempted from Ukraine-related sanctions, Western officials say.

In January 2020, Iran fired ballistic missiles at the Al Asad base in western Iraq where U.S. troops were deployed. That was meant to avenge President Trump's decision to order a drone strike that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's paramilitary Quds Force.

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## **2. Ukraine War ushers in 'new era' for U.S. abroad**

New York Times, 12 Mar 22, Michael Crowley and Edward Wong

The war in Ukraine has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.

The Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela.

And it has re-energized Washington's leadership role in the democratic world just months after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan ended 20 years of conflict on a dismal note.

But the new focus on Russia will come with hard choices and internal contradictions, similar to ones that defined U.S. diplomacy during the Cold War, when America sometimes overlooked human rights abuses and propped up dictators in the name of the struggle against communism.

"It feels like we're definitively in a new era," said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a former deputy national security adviser in the Obama White House. "The post-9/11 war on terror period of American hubris, and decline, is now behind us. And we're not sure what's next."

The attack by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on his neighbor has become a prism through which nearly all American foreign policy decisions will be cast for the foreseeable future, experts and officials said.

In recent weeks, Western officials have spoken in terms that often echo the grand declarations that followed the 2001 terrorist attacks. On Friday, President Biden said that "the free world is coming together" to stand up to Mr. Putin — a phrase reminiscent of President George W. Bush's talk of how "the entire free world" was at war against terrorism.

In the near term, Russia's aggression is sure to invigorate Mr. Biden's global fight for democracy against autocracies like Moscow, making vivid the threats to fledgling democracies like Ukraine. Yet three increasingly authoritarian NATO nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — play key roles in the coalition aiding Kyiv. And the United States is grappling with internal assaults to its own democracy.

The war lends urgency to Mr. Biden's climate change agenda, reinforcing the need for more reliance on renewable clean energy over the fossil fuels that fill Russian coffers. Yet it has already generated new pressure to increase the short-term supply of oil from the likes of Venezuela's isolated dictatorship and Saudi Arabia's authoritarian monarchy.

And it creates a powerful new incentive for the United States to find ways of prying President Xi Jinping of China away from Mr. Putin, who is likely counting on diplomatic and economic lifelines from Mr. Xi amid crushing Western sanctions. But some administration officials see China as a lost cause and prefer to treat China and Russia as committed partners, hoping that might galvanize policies among Asian and European allies to contain them both.

While some experts warn that a renewed focus on Europe will inevitably divert attention from Asia, several top White House officials say the United States can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.

“What we are seeing now is an unprecedented level of Asian interest and focus,” Kurt M. Campbell, the top White House official on Asia policy, said at a talk hosted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

“And I believe one of the outcomes of this tragedy will be a kind of new thinking around how to solidify institutional connections beyond what we’ve already seen between Europe and the Pacific,” he said.

America’s approach to the world was already undergoing a major shift, with the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq concluded, and conversations over Islamist terrorism no longer at the fore. Many war-weary Americans welcomed calls for a reduced military footprint overseas by President Donald J. Trump, who questioned NATO’s relevance and even flirted with withdrawing from the alliance.

Mr. Biden sought to rebuild American alliances, but did so largely in the name of confronting China. The Russian invasion has expanded his mission dramatically and urgently, setting the stage for a seismic geopolitical shift that would pit the United States and its allies against China and Russia at once if they form an entrenched anti-Western bloc.

But it also gives Washington a new and nobler sense of purpose, Mr. Rhodes said. “We’ve been trying to get to a new era for a long time,” he said. “And now I think Putin’s invasion has necessitated an American return to the moral high ground.”

Early signs of how the new American priorities are creating diplomatic quakes have already emerged.

On Friday, the United States and its European allies agreed to pause talks with Iran that just days earlier seemed on the verge of clinching a return to the 2015 deal that limited Iran’s nuclear program. Western nations are refusing a demand by Moscow, which is a party to the Obama-era agreement from which Mr. Trump withdrew, for guarantees that its future transactions with Iran be exempted from the sanctions imposed on Russia in recent weeks.

“It’s been clear since last weekend that negotiations to revive the Iran deal could not be walled off from the Ukraine war,” Dalia Dassa Kaye, an Iran expert at the RAND Corporation, said on Friday.

Last year, Mr. Biden made a new agreement a core goal of his foreign policy. It is unclear whether one can be struck without Russia, which is a member of the commission that both supervises compliance with the deal and would take control of Iran’s excess enriched uranium.

The United States is also looking at Venezuela from a new angle. Senior Biden administration officials traveled to Venezuela two weeks after the Russian invasion, becoming the first to visit the country in years. Venezuela, a partner of Russia, is under heavy U.S. sanctions imposed years ago to weaken the repressive government of President Nicolás Maduro. In 2019, the Trump administration imposed additional sanctions on the state oil company, central bank and senior officials to pressure Mr. Maduro to step down.

Now, with Mr. Biden looking to increase global oil supplies to bring down prices, U.S. officials are talking to Mr. Maduro's government about buying his oil again. The idea has drawn some sharp criticism in Congress, however, where Senator Bob Menendez, Democrat of New Jersey and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, fumed that "efforts to unify the entire world against a murderous tyrant in Moscow should not be undercut by propping up a dictator under investigation for crimes against humanity in Caracas."

The same imperative on oil is reshaping U.S. diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two Persian Gulf nations that some Biden administration officials view with suspicion or hostility because of their autocratic systems and leading roles in a war in Yemen that has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. Brett McGurk and Amos J. Hochstein, two senior administration officials, traveled to the Gulf days before the Russian invasion to discuss security and energy issues.

However, Saudi Arabia has declined so far to increase oil production, while the United Arab Emirates waited until Wednesday to ask the OPEC nations to do so. American officials were also furious with the U.A.E. for declining to vote on a United Nations Security Council resolution to condemn Russia, though it did support a similar resolution later in the U.N. General Assembly.

The unreliability of the two nations and Russia's place in the oil economy have increased momentum within the Biden administration to enact policies that would help the United States more quickly wean itself off fossil fuels and confront the climate crisis. This could lead future administrations to devote fewer diplomatic and military resources to the Gulf nations in the long term, even if U.S. officials want them to help on oil now.

"We may see more fundamental questioning about the value of these partnerships," Ms. Kaye said. "These states already believe the U.S. has checked out of the region, but their stance on Russia may only strengthen voices calling for a further reduction of U.S. forces in the region."

Israel, the closest U.S. ally in the Middle East, has also staked out a neutral position on the Ukraine war, largely because of Russia's presence in the region. But American officials have been more forgiving of Israel's stance as Prime Minister Naftali Bennett conducts shuttle diplomacy. He met with Mr. Putin for three hours in Moscow on March 5 and then spoke with Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, by phone before returning home. U.S. officials say Mr. Bennett consulted with them about the talks, and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said this past week that they "appreciate the efforts."

Mr. Zelensky told reporters on Saturday that Jerusalem could be a site for peace talks between the leaders of Ukraine and Russia.

### **Juggling Allies in Europe and Asia**

In Europe, Russia's invasion has supercharged the Biden administration's efforts to restore the morale of a NATO alliance that Mr. Trump undermined.

But the alliance includes three nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — whose democratic backsliding has troubled the Biden administration. Hungary and Turkey were pointedly excluded

from Mr. Biden's global democracy summit in December, and the European Union has cut billions of euros of funding to Poland and Hungary for what it sees as erosions of legal and democratic principles. Now all three countries are participating in the coalition against Russia.

"In times of crisis, there is sometimes a tension between our values and our interests," said Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. "In the short term, we're going to have to prioritize pushing back against Russia, at the risk of taking our foot off the gas on the democracy and human rights concerns that had been at the front and center of the Biden administration's agenda."

In the Asia-Pacific region, several important U.S. partners and allies are working with Washington on sanctions and export controls on technology against Russia. These include Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia. Some Asian nations have agreed to long-term gas swaps with Europe to help relieve a potential Russian shut-off of energy exports. And Australia has committed to spending \$50 million to send weapons to Ukraine, including missiles and ammunition.

However, India — the most populous U.S. partner in the so-called Quad coalition of democracies in Asia — has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion because of decades-old security ties with Moscow. That stance undermines Mr. Biden's insistence that democratic nations band together against autocracies.

But it is the other Asian behemoth, China, that presents the biggest diplomatic challenge for the United States. China is Russia's most powerful partner, and their bond has strengthened in recent years.

Even as the Russian military decimates Ukrainian cities and kills hundreds or thousands of civilians, China has signaled that it stands by Moscow by issuing anti-U.S. declarations and amplifying the Kremlin's propaganda and conspiracy theories.

Mr. Xi's persistent support of Mr. Putin, with whom he shares a drive to dilute American power, has made administration officials wonder whether there is any way to pull them apart on Ukraine.

On Thursday, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, told U.S. senators he believed that Mr. Xi was "unsettled" by the war. Some China analysts say that if Beijing wants to salvage its reputation with Western nations, particularly in Europe, it might agree to take steps to help Ukraine without directly breaking from Russia.

Ryan Hass, a China director on the National Security Council in the Obama White House, proposed testing Beijing with specific requests, such as asking them to provide more humanitarian aid and refrain from recognizing Russian-installed governments in Ukraine or shielding Russia from war crimes investigations.

"If China's leaders take concrete actions to relieve suffering," he said, "then lives would be saved and there would be less centrifugal pressure toward cleaving the world into rival blocs."

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### **3. Russia intensifies assault, warns U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine are ‘legitimate targets’**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Nabih Bulos and Jenny Jarvie

Russian forces kept up their bombardment of cities across Ukraine on Saturday, capturing the eastern outskirts of a key southern port and waging an increasingly violent campaign with an eye to encircling the capital even as they sought to bring a political veneer to their occupation in cities they have captured.

Moscow also signaled it could soon expand the war to embroil Kyiv’s allies, warning the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

While wide-scale Russian bombing campaigns intensified in cities including Mariupol, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, Russian forces planned to conduct a referendum that would turn the city of Kherson — the first major city captured by Russian forces earlier this month into a vassal breakaway republic, said Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

“Given zero popular support, it will be fully staged,” he wrote on Twitter, warning that it was a repeat of Russia’s

“Severe sanctions against Russia must follow if they proceed. Kherson is & will always be Ukraine.”

Sergey Khlan, a deputy in the Kherson Regional Council, said in a post on Facebook on Saturday that Russian authorities were contacting deputies and asking for their cooperation in holding the referendum to create a putative Kherson People’s Republic.

If the last few years have taught us anything, it’s that affordability is at the top of most people’s wish lists.

“The creation of Kherson People’s Republic will turn our region into a hopeless hole without life and future,” Khlan wrote.

“Do not give them a single vote! Do not give them any opportunity to legitimize [the Kherson People’s Republic]... Enter the history of Ukraine not as traitors whom nobody wants, but truly as citizens whose names will be remembered by the next generations.”

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Saturday that shipments of Western weapons to Ukraine could be attacked by Russian forces, according to Russia’s Itar-Tass news agency. Western nations’ “thoughtless transfer” of portable air defense and antitank missile systems to Kyiv, Ryabkov said, demonstrated “the escalatory component of Washington’s policy.”

The White House announced Saturday it had approved an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine, on top of \$350 million President Biden approved last month.

“We have warned the U.S. that the U.S.-orchestrated inundation of Ukraine with weapons from some countries is not just a dangerous move, but also an action that makes these convoys legitimate targets,” Ryabkov said. The Russian diplomat did not say whether Russian forces would target such convoys in Poland or Romania, NATO countries that border Ukraine.

The tough talk came on a day that Russian forces sustained “heavy losses in manpower and equipment” in areas northeast of Kyiv and were prevented from regaining a foothold on previously captured frontiers, according to the Ukrainian military.

Northwest of the capital, the bulk of Russian ground forces were gathered Saturday about 15 miles from the city center, according to the U.K.’s Ministry of Defense. Parts of the large Russian column north of Kyiv had dispersed, the ministry said, either in an effort to encircle the city or limit its risk of Ukrainian counterattacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said more than 12,700 people evacuated Saturday, taking advantage of humanitarian corridors. But not everyone was allowed safe passage.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense claimed Russian troops shot at a group of women and children who were trying to evacuate Friday from the small village of Peremoga, 18 miles northeast of Kyiv, along a previously-agreed “green” corridor.

“The result of this brutal act was seven dead,” the ministry wrote in a tweet. “One of them is a child.”

Early in the morning, loud explosions reverberated near the capital. Rumbles — louder and closer than the booms of previous days — could be heard throughout the day and well into the night in Kyiv. They served as the calling card of the Russian pincers stretching toward the capital from its northeastern and northwestern flanks.

Despite holding off enemy forces from the capital, Ukrainian officials admitted a bitter defeat, acknowledging that Russia had seized the eastern suburban fringes of Mariupol, a strategic city in the southeastern Donetsk region that could allow it to build a land corridor from pro-Moscow enclaves in the east to Russian-annexed Crimea in the south.

Russian shelling of the city hit a mosque sheltering more than 80 people, including children, according to the Ukrainian government, and repeated efforts to evacuate 430,000 residents have failed as their convoys have come under artillery fire. Dozens of buses loaded with humanitarian supplies were reported to be attempting to reach the city.

“Let’s see whether this one gets here or not,” Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov said in an interview with the BBC, noting that six previous attempts to bring food, water and medicine to his beleaguered city were unsuccessful.

“The convoys were not let through,” he said. “They were bombed, the road was mined, there was shelling in the town.”

“I think we can say we’re in the disaster phase now,” Alex Wade, an emergency coordinator for Doctors Without Borders told CNN, noting that residents had gone a week without access to clean drinking water and were using snow and rain water and breaking into heating systems to extract the water inside.

“The next phase we will see people who potentially could die from dehydration and hunger or ... fleeing from the city trying to find food and water and dying from the violence outside the city,” he said.

Some residents, he said, had taken their neighbors’ bodies and buried them in their yards to ensure they were not left to languish on the street.

In Mykolaiv, another major Black Sea port and shipbuilding center about 300 miles west of Mariupol, Mayor Olexandr Senkevitch claimed in a video posted Saturday on Instagram that eight civilians were injured and more than 160 houses, three hospitals and 11 educational institutions were damaged overnight.

“We will definitely repair and restore everything,” he said. “We heal the wounded. And defeat these damn orcs,” referring to the Ukrainian nickname for Russian forces.

With those forces assembled about 15 miles outside Kyiv, Zelensky struck a confident tone from inside the capital, where citizen militias are armed with missiles, machine guns and Molotov cocktails.

“We know 100% there will be a victory,” he said in a news conference.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, Zelensky said, about 1,300 soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had died — a fraction of the 12,000 Russians that he claimed had died. The numbers could not be independently verified.

“One in 10,” he said.

Asked if Russian troops could enter Kyiv, Zelensky said it was theoretically possible.

“If they carry out a carpet bombing and simply decide to erase the historical memory of the whole region, the history of Kyivan Rus’, the history of Europe, they will enter Kyiv,” he added. “If they destroy all of us, they will enter Kyiv. If this is the goal, they will enter and will have to live on this land alone, without us. They will not find friends among us here.”

Zelensky urged Ukrainians to keep fighting.

“The resistance of the entire Ukrainian people against these invaders has already gone down in history,” Zelensky said. “But we have no right to reduce the intensity of defense. No matter how difficult it is. We have no right to reduce the energy of resistance.”

In Melitopol, 120 miles west of Mariupol, hundreds gathered on the streets Saturday to demand the release of the southern city's mayor, Ivan Fedorov, who the Ukrainian government has said was kidnapped from a government office Friday by Russian forces.

"Fedorov!" the crowd chanted. "Free the mayor!"

After accusing Russia on Saturday of "switching to a new stage of terror" in trying to "physically eliminate" elected officials, Zelensky praised the protesters for their open resistance.

"The invaders must see that they are strangers on our land, on all our land of Ukraine, and they will never be accepted," he said in a video broadcast.

In telephone conversations with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron, Zelensky said he urged them to push for Fedorov's release.

"The demand is simple: to release him from captivity immediately," he said. "We expect them, the world leaders, to show how they can influence the situation. How they can do a simple thing: free one person. A person who represents the entire Melitopol community, Ukrainians who do not give up."

Russia's intensified assault on the cities and villages of Ukraine came as the United States continued to insist that diplomacy still had a role in the conflict.

But prospects of a resolution looked dim after Scholz and Macron unsuccessfully tried in a lengthy telephone call Saturday to persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to an immediate cease-fire or diplomatic talks.

Russia's Itar-Tass news agency also reported Saturday that Ryabkov, Russia's deputy foreign minister, said in an interview that Moscow and Washington were not negotiating or consulting on Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in the disputed Donbas region, the self-appointed head of the Luhansk People's Republic, Leonid Pasechnik, issued a decree Saturday saying the borders of the state would correspond to those declared in May 2014. (Ukrainian forces had clawed back two-thirds of the Donbas before a cease-fire later in 2014.)

The move aims to formalize gains in recent days after Russian forces — backed by separatists advanced into government-held areas of Luhansk province. A day earlier, Pasechnik issued another decree restoring names of streets that had been changed after the Ukrainian government's so-called de-communization drive.

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IRAN

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#### **4. US seizing tankers has failed to stop Iran's oil exports, minister says**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

Many people, including civil society activists, journalists, and former government officials, have shared their comments and questioned the Taliban's so-called general amnesty.

In one reaction, former Afghan intelligence chief Rahmatullah Nabil said that such "oppression and injustice" would shorten the Taliban's rule.

The Taliban has refused to comment on extra-judicial killings that occur almost daily across the country.

Local newspaper Etilaatroz reported on Saturday that a member of the former government security forces was shot dead in his house in Uruzgan province overnight.

Representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Kabul this week to discuss the extrajudicial killings of former officials among other issues with the Taliban leaders.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **10. Russian footholds in Mideast, Africa raise threat to NATO**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Ellen Knickmeyer and Zeina Karam

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine dominates world attention. But with less global scrutiny, Putin is also busy advancing Russia's presence in the Middle East and Africa -- an expansion that military and civilian leaders view as another, if less immediate, threat to security in the West.

Putin's strategy in the Mideast and Africa has been simple, and successful: He seeks out security alliances with autocrats, coup leaders, and others who have been spurned or neglected by the U.S. and Europe, either because of their bloody abuses or because of competing Western strategic interests.

- In Syria, Russia's defense minister last month showed off nuclear-capable bombers and hypersonic missiles over the Mediterranean, part of a security partnership that now has the Kremlin threatening to send Syrian fighters to Ukraine.
- In Sudan, a leader of a junta that's seized power in that East African country has a new economic alliance with the Kremlin, reviving Russia's dreams of a naval base on the Red Sea.
- In Mali, the government is the latest of more than a dozen resource-rich African nations to forge security alliances with Kremlin-allied mercenaries, according to U.S. officials.

Especially in the last five or six years, "what you've seen is a Russia that is much more expeditionary and casting its military power further and wider afield," retired U.S. Gen. Philip M. Breedlove told The Associated Press.

“Russia is trying to show itself as a great power, as at the seat in world affairs, as driving international situations,” said Breedlove, the top NATO commander from 2013 through 2016, and now a distinguished chair at the Middle East Institute think tank in Washington.

But with Putin’s hands already full battling the fierce resistance from a much weaker Ukrainian military, experts view his expansionist goals in the Middle East and Africa as a potential long-term threat, not a present danger to Europe or the NATO alliance.

“It’s threatening NATO from below,” Kristina Kausch, a European security expert at the German Marshall Fund think-tank, said of the leverage Russia is gaining. “The Russians have felt encircled by NATO – and now they want to encircle NATO,” she said.

To achieve its strategic aims, Russia provides conventional military or Kremlin-allied mercenaries to protect the regimes of often outcast leaders. In return, these leaders pay back Russia in several ways: cash or natural resources, influence in their affairs, and staging grounds for Russian fighters.

These alliances help advance Putin’s ambitions of returning Russia’s influence to its old Cold War boundaries.

Russia’s new security partnerships also aid it diplomatically. When the U.N. General Assembly condemned Putin’s Ukraine invasion this month, Syria joined Russia in voting against, and many of the African governments that have signed security deals with Russian mercenaries abstained.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that Russia would bring recruits from Syria to fight in Ukraine. The threat was seen primarily as an intimidation tactic and U.S. officials say there’s been no sign of Syrian recruits in Ukraine. Some security experts say Russian mercenaries are using Mali as a staging ground for deployment to Ukraine, but U.S. officials have not confirmed these reports.

Regardless of how imminent the threat is, U.S. and European leaders are paying increasing attention to Putin’s moves in the Middle East and Africa — and Russia’s growing alliance with China — as it formulates plans to protect the West from future aggression.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said in mid-February that the West could no longer ignore the competition for influence across Africa, where China spends billions on infrastructure projects to secure mineral rights, and Russia provides security through Kremlin-allied mercenaries.

“We see and realize that if we withdraw from this competition as liberal democracies, then others are going to fill these gaps,” Baerbock said as Western diplomats huddled on the Ukraine crisis, in the last days before Russia’s invasion.

Perhaps the boldest example of Russia flexing its global reach was when it sent defense minister Sergei Shoigu last month to Damascus to oversee Russia’s largest military drills in the Mediterranean since the Cold War, just as Russia’s military made final preparations for its assault on Ukraine.

The drills, involving 15 warships and about 30 aircraft, appeared choreographed to showcase the Russian military's capability to threaten the U.S. carrier strike group in the Mediterranean.

Russia's Hmeimeem air base on Syria's Mediterranean coast has served as its main outpost for launching attacks in Syria since September 2015. Russia's attacks in Syria, which leveled ancient cities and sent millions of refugees to Europe, allowed President Bashar al-Assad's brutal government to reclaim control over most of the country after a devastating civil war.

"Hmeimeem base is now an integral part of Russia's defense strategy not just in the Middle East but all the world," said Ibrahim Hamidi, a Syrian journalist and senior diplomatic editor for Syrian affairs at the London-based Asharq al-Awsat newspaper.

In Africa, too, Russia is open to working with leaders known for anti-democratic actions and abuses of human rights.

On the eve of Russia's invasion with Ukraine, Kremlin officials met in Moscow with an officer of a military junta that seized power in Sudan.

Isolated by the West, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo warmly responded to Russia's overture of a new economic-focused alliance. Upon returning home, Gen. Dagolo announced that Sudan would be open to allowing Russia to build its long hoped-for naval base at Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

It's far from certain that Russia would be able to take advantage anytime soon. The Ukraine invasion is straining its military and financial resources and showing Russia's military weaknesses, and international sanctions are crippling its economy.

But longer-term, a Red Sea port could help give it a greater role in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, increase Russian access in the Suez Canal and other high-traffic shipping lanes, and allow Russia to project force in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

"They certainly could create enough havoc to cause problems," said Breedlove, the former NATO commander.

Russia's expanding alliances aren't just about its conventional military.

From 2015 to 2021, Russian mercenary security outfits increased their presence around the world seven-fold, with operations in 27 countries as of last year, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The most prominent is the Wagner Group, which the U.S. and EU consider to be a surrogate of the Russian military, but which the Kremlin denies even exists.

From Libya to Madagascar, security contracts granted to Wagner Group and others give Russia access to mineral resources, staging grounds for deployments and substantial footholds challenging Western nations' influence there.

In Mali, the U.S. and Europe expressed alarm in December at reports that the Wagner Group had signed a \$10 million-a-month security contract with that government. Experts say Wagner took

advantage of local unhappiness over the failures of a years-long French-led deployment in the sub-Saharan targeting extremist factions.

Mali denied any such deployment, but some in Mali saw the arrival of Russians as a slam to Mali's colonial ruler France, which had struggled to protect them against armed extremists. They hope for better results from any Russian fighters arriving in the sub-Saharan. "Long live Russia!" cried one man in a crowd cheering the sight of a Russian delegation in the capital in January. "Long live the people of Mali!"

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## **11. Saudi Arabia says it has executed 81 convicts in single day**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Jon Gambrell

Saudi Arabia executed 81 people Saturday convicted of crimes ranging from killings to belonging to militant groups, the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

The executions carried out surpassed even the toll of a January 1980 mass execution for the 63 militants convicted of seizing the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979, the worst-ever militant attack to target the kingdom and Islam's holiest site.

It wasn't clear why the kingdom choose Saturday for the executions. The number of death penalty cases being carried out had dropped during the coronavirus pandemic, though the kingdom continued to behead convicts under King Salman and his assertive son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency announced Saturday's executions, saying they included those "convicted of various crimes, including the murdering of innocent men, women and children." The kingdom also said some of those executed were members of al-Qaida, the Islamic State group and backers of Yemen's Houthi rebels.

"The accused were provided with the right to an attorney and were guaranteed their full rights under Saudi law during the judicial process, which found them guilty of committing multiple heinous crimes that left a large number of civilians and law enforcement officers dead," the Saudi Press Agency said.

"The kingdom will continue to take a strict and unwavering stance against terrorism and extremist ideologies that threaten the stability of the entire world," the report added.

An announcement by Saudi state television described those executed as having "followed the footsteps of Satan" in carrying out their crimes.

The kingdom's last mass execution came in January 2016, when the kingdom executed 47 people, including a prominent opposition Shiite cleric who had rallied demonstrations in the kingdom.

#### **14. Military briefing: fear of deployment of chemical weapons in Ukraine**

Financial Times, 12 Mar 22, Daniel Dombey, John Paul Rathbone and Erika Solomon

As the west steps up its warnings that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, a broader fear lurks beneath the surface: the same poison gases that killed thousands on the front lines of the first world war could become an ever more familiar part of 21st century conflict.

Friday's declaration by US President Joe Biden that "Russia would pay a severe price if they use chemical weapons" came after the White House said "we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false-flag operation using them".

Those statements contrast starkly with the post-cold war hope that such weapons could soon be consigned to history, an aspiration encapsulated by the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention.

"Maybe worldwide there are fewer chemical weapons than there were during the cold war, but there is greater capacity and a willingness to use them," said Filippa Lentzos, joint director of the Centre for Science and Security Studies at King's College London.

She said Russia has an extensive range of chemical weapons – from sophisticated nerve agents to barrels of chlorine gas, the poison that inaugurated the age of chemical warfare in the first world war.

As well as Biden's declaration this week, European officials have referred more privately to the Kremlin's previous use of the nerve agent novichok to try to kill its foes.

One notorious case was the attempted murder in Salisbury in 2018 of Sergei Skripal, a former Russian spy who had defected to the UK. Another was the attempt against Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, in 2020.

"The history is there, with the Navalny and Skripal poisonings, and in Syria," said one official, also referring to chemical weapons used by the regime of Bashar al-Assad, Russia's ally. "So we cannot rule out the use of chemical weapons in an escalation scenario."

Russia, which entered the Syrian conflict in 2015 to help Assad fend off rebel forces, did not directly use chemical weapons against opposition areas itself. However, it provided diplomatic cover, backing Assad's assertion that it was rebels who had set off chemical attacks.

In Ukraine, Russia has said Kyiv, backed by western allies, plans to use chemical weapons. The UN security council on Friday convened at Russia's request to discuss Moscow's claims, presented without evidence, of US "biological activities" in Ukraine.

"Allegedly, we are preparing a chemical attack," Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky said ahead of the meeting. "This makes me really worried because . . . if you want to know Russia's plans, look at what Russia accuses others of."

Analysts said any Russian use of chemical weapons in Ukraine would be very different from the more targeted novichok attacks on Navalny and Skripal, and would mark an alarming shift towards the “normalization” of internationally banned substances.

“We think chemical weapons could be used,” said one western official, while cautioning: “There’s nothing to suggest they would use it [chemical weapons], at this point, in a major escalation of the current conflict.”

Defense officials have said they believe the Russian FSB and GRU intelligence agencies, whose operatives are active in Ukraine, have a relationship with the research institutions that produce chemical weapons.

One of the most prominent is Gosniiookht, the unit that developed novichok, which dates back to the early days of the Soviet era. It was sanctioned by the EU and the UK in 2020 in connection with the Navalny case and by the US the following year.

“What we are looking at is probably not the assassination weapons we have already seen . . . The concern is that there would be similar use of these indiscriminate chemical weapons, as in Syria, to target people who go below ground to their basement to hide from missile bombardment,” said Lentzos.

“You put chemical weapons in and people either die or they come up for air and get bombarded,” she added. “It’s a really horrific scenario, that is why there is so much effort, and extreme transparency on intelligence to call it out.”

She and other analysts see 2013 as being a turning point for chemical weapons. Despite previously claiming the use of chemical weapons by Syria would be a “red line”, the Obama administration that year opted against military action after the Assad regime killed hundreds of people with rockets containing sarin.

Despite a Russia-brokered deal to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons, the UN’s Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons subsequently found that the Assad regime used sarin and chlorine gas in 2017 and 2018.

“The international norm against chemical weapons use is under siege, most prominently by Syria and Russia,” wrote Kenneth Ward, a former US ambassador to the OPCW, last year. “The world is now precariously perched on the knife’s edge of a new era of chemical weapons use.”

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## **15. What to know about Javelin antitank missiles could play in Ukraine’s fight against Russia**

Washington Post, 12 Mar 22, Claire Parker, Alex Horton and William Neff

The United States and allies have surged weapons to Ukraine in recent weeks in the face of the Russian invasion. Images of destroyed Russian tanks on social media have drawn attention to one particular weapon: the Javelin missile.

The U.S. and other NATO countries sent more than 17,000 antitank weapons, including Javelin missiles, overland to Ukraine via Poland and Romania in the span of less than a week this month, the New York Times reported.

The Javelin has taken on a symbolic valence in pro-Ukraine online chatter. Former reporter Christian Borys created an image of a saint clutching a Javelin and its launch unit. The image on stickers and other gear has raised more than \$1 million, Borys said on Twitter, which he said will go to a humanitarian aid charity focused on Ukraine.

As a convoy of Russian military vehicles creeping toward Kyiv captures global attention, the antitank missiles are in the spotlight. Weapons experts say the Javelin could prove particularly effective against Russian tanks, though they caution that the missile systems alone are unlikely to change the trajectory of the war.

Here's what to know about how they work and the role they could play.

### **What is a Javelin?**

The Javelin is an antitank missile system that locks onto a target's thermal picture. The soldier peers through a command launch unit and selects different targets and attack types.

When fired, the missile's launch motor thrusts it out of the tube before its primary motor turns on and sends the rocket flying. The gentler start reduces debris and smoke, making it harder for the enemy to see where it was launched. It makes use of what is known as a "fire and forget" system, which allows the soldier to take cover or load a new missile while the other one is tracking to its target.

While the Javelin can target any kind of vehicle that emits heat, it is most potent against tanks because it can strike from the top. This is why it's called a Javelin, like the spear thrown in track and field events that falls to the earth at a steep angle.

Javelins can also fire directly at a target if there is protection above it, and can be used against low-flying helicopters.

### **How could they help Ukraine fight Russian forces?**

The Javelin is "probably the most sophisticated and most powerful" antitank weapon, said Mark Cancian, senior adviser for the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Ukrainian military shared images of soldiers carrying the Javelin on Twitter on Friday, along with photos of destroyed tanks.

"The very information about the presence of Javelins in the weaponry of the Ukrainian Armed Forces causes panic among the [Russian flag] occupiers," the tweet said.

Ukraine claims that Russia has lost 335 tanks and just over 1,100 armored combat vehicles in the fighting.

But there isn't reliable data on how many Javelin missiles Ukraine has used in battle and to what effect, said Arael Kotlarski, a senior analyst at Janes, an open-source defense intelligence agency.

The Ukrainian defense ministry asked Ukrainians in a Facebook post Wednesday not to share information on the purchase of weapons from foreign partners.

Experts say the Javelin is a powerful addition to Ukraine's existing arsenal of domestically produced antitank missiles.

It's easy to train fighters to use them, Cancian said, which is advantageous in Ukraine, where civilians have signed up for battle. The United States has trained Ukrainian forces in the past on how to operate the weapons.

Javelins are "particularly useful because the Russians seem to be road-bound," Cancian added, which makes it easier for Ukrainian forces to set up ambush sites or strong launch points.

### **What have Russians done to curb Javelins?**

There are few things even the most well-equipped militaries can do about Javelins. Modern tanks are covered with reactive armor, which in some cases is packed with small amounts of explosives that will detonate an incoming warhead.

The Javelin is designed to get past that armor. It uses a tandem warhead, which first either creates a channel into the reactive armor or blows it up, allowing the main warhead to slice right through and explode.

Russian tanks are particularly vulnerable to the weapon, Kotlarski said, because they were designed to be "very small, squat and compact." A Javelin missile hitting the top of the tank usually means "instant destruction," he said.

There is some evidence the Russian military is wary of Javelins, including photos showing metal canopies jury-rigged on top of tanks. There are two theories about what these are intended to do. The first is to shield a commander or the turret itself from drones that can either drop munitions or crash into them, kamikaze style. But there is also speculation the canopies are meant to blunt the Javelin's top-down attack, giving the tank and its crew a slightly better chance of survival.

The design concept is similar to that of slat armor, which U.S. and other militaries have used to surround vehicles in steel cages, to detonate rocket-propelled grenades prematurely.

Social media has been littered with photos of destroyed Russian tanks with cages. The images have acquired a symbolic resonance so quickly that Internet users have coined the term "cope cage," earning a page on the Internet's primary meme directory.

Others have suggested thermal attachments to the tank may be an attempt to complicate the missile's ability to focus on the target.

A Telegram channel associated with pro-Russian forces also published instructions for Russian soldiers on how to use Javelin systems that they capture in Ukraine.

### **What are the Javelin's limitations?**

The Javelin is "not a silver bullet," said Kotlarski, from Janes.

"There is a prevailing narrative in the public mind to sort of lionize certain weapons systems as having a defining impact on certain conflicts," he said, but "the reality is often more complex."

Though potent, particularly in open areas where Russian military vehicles are lumbering toward Ukrainian cities, the Javelin does have some drawbacks.

"It has the disadvantage of all these kinds of antitank weapons, which is that they [the tanks] can shoot back at you and you just have people hiding behind a hill or a bush," Cancian said. "It's not like an armored vehicle where you have some protection."

The weapons systems are also expensive and complicated to produce, with estimates of production costs ranging between \$80,000 and \$200,000 per missile, according to Kotlarski. U.S. weapons makers have the capacity to produce a maximum of 6,500 Javelin missiles per year, according to the Army's estimates, though the existing contract caps production at 2,100.

If the conflict drags on and Ukraine burns through existing Javelin supplies, the U.S. and European countries may worry that handing over more weapons could leave them vulnerable, Kotlarski said.

As its ground forces struggle to make progress amid fierce Ukrainian resistance, Russia is relying on shelling besieged cities and launching unguided bombs from the sky.

After more than two weeks of war, the Russian military grinds forward at a heavy cost.

And with battles expected to play out increasingly in cities, the Javelin — which is tricky to fire safely out of building windows — may not prove especially useful, Kotlarski said.

"A Javelin in itself is not going to be able to allow the Ukrainians to defeat the entire Russian army," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said weapons provided by the West so far are insufficient and called for fighter jets, setting off a fierce debate among U.S. politicians about whether to supply the aircraft. The Biden administration has so far shut down the idea.

"We believe the most effective way to support the Ukrainian military in their fight against Russia is to provide increased amounts of anti-tank weapons and air defense systems," the commander of U.S. European Command, Gen. Tod D. Wolters, said in a statement.

“Even merely rumors that British citizens have joined Ukrainian armed forces can be manipulated by the Russians into claims that British Special Forces are involved and that NATO’s escalating the conflict,” Barrons added. “It doesn’t even have to be true. Just a shred of truth provides enough meat for a propaganda machine to move the narrative to a place they want it to be.”

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### **18. U.S. commission urges Biden to designate Ukraine, Georgia as major non-NATO allies** Foreign Policy, 12 Mar 22, Amy Mackinnon

The Helsinki Commission, an independent U.S. government agency tasked with promoting human rights and security in Europe, has called on the Biden administration to upgrade the United States’ defense relationship with Ukraine. The commission seeks to help facilitate military and economic assistance to Kyiv as Russian forces move to encircle the Ukrainian capital.

In a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden obtained by Foreign Policy, the commission urged the administration to designate Ukraine and Georgia, which was invaded by Russia in 2008, as major non-NATO allies (MNNA) and to reinvigorate U.S. support for the NATO accession of both countries.

“Although the United States has consistently supported Ukraine’s and Georgia’s NATO membership, Russia’s occupations and ongoing invasion expose the tragedy of long-stalled Euro-Atlantic enlargement,” wrote the commission, which is led by Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin and Democratic Rep. Steve Cohen.

“Absent strong and proactive U.S. backing for Ukrainian and Georgian NATO membership, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin will continue to take ample advantage in his aspirations to upend security and cooperation in Europe and his neocolonial agenda,” the letter said.

Both Ukraine and Georgia were promised membership to the defense alliance during the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, in 2008. But despite extensive reform efforts, neither country has been offered a timetable for accession.

The United States has provided billions of dollars of military assistance to Ukraine since it was first invaded by Russia in 2014, with more than \$1.2 billion approved over the past year. “This designation is a fair reflection of our current bilateral defense relationships and does not commit the United States to military action,” the commission letter said, which also recommended that the administration consider extending the status to other non-NATO members along Europe’s eastern flank: Finland, Moldova, and Sweden.

Much of U.S. military aid for Ukraine has been approved through a range of ad hoc government funding mechanisms. Granting the country MNNA status would open a variety of established channels to facilitate arms transfers, financial assistance, and information sharing, smoothing the way for further cooperation. It would also send a powerful signal of support for both Kyiv and

Tbilisi. Unlike NATO membership, MNNA status does not entail any mutual security and defense obligations.

On Thursday, the White House announced it would designate Colombia and Qatar as major non-NATO allies, bringing the total number of countries to receive the title up to 19.

The title has usually been reserved for countries with no ambitions or prospects of joining NATO, which prompted the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, to express wariness about the designation last year. “MNNA is a status for countries that do not plan/can not force political or geographical reasons to join NATO. This is definitely not about us,” she wrote in a Facebook post.

NATO accession is decided between the 30 members of the alliance, and an MNNA designation by the United States would not necessarily impede Ukraine’s membership prospects.

The Helsinki Commission, formally known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, was founded in 1976 as an independent government agency to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords, a major Cold War-era diplomatic agreement that sought to reduce tensions between the Soviet Union and the West as well as establish human rights and security norms. The commission is made up of 18 members of U.S. Congress drawn from both parties and representatives from the U.S. departments of State, Defense, and Commerce.

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### **19. Nerves on edge in Poland as war next door in Ukraine revives fears of Russia**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Patrick J. McDonnell and Rima Marrouch

Military enlistments are spiking, demands for passports are surging, and memories of the bad old days of the Cold War are fraying the collective nerves of the Polish people.

The Russian invasion of neighboring Ukraine has reverberated in Poland well beyond the influx of more than 1.4 million refugees, a wave of mostly women and children that threatens to overwhelm the country’s infrastructure for providing assistance.

Poland’s historical adversary Russia appears to many here to be on an expansionist path that could end up dragging Warsaw into a broader conflict with potentially catastrophic consequences — threatening the post-Cold War order that has seen the nation prosper and develop into a European success story.

A sense of disquiet is plainly evident, even as life appears to proceed at its normal, if hectic, pace in cities such as Warsaw and Krakow.

“Yes, Polish society is terrified,” said Slawomir Debski, a foreign policy expert in Poland who has advised several governments in Warsaw. “The whole society is aware of how awful, how terrible, and dramatic, any kinetic confrontation with Russia can be.”

The fact that Poland is an established member of both the European Union and the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization tempers fears that Moscow's perceived push for a "Greater Russia" could eventually spill into Poland — which was a Soviet satellite state until the fall of Eastern Bloc communism in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down.

Poland shares a 144-mile border with Russia — along with centuries of contentious coexistence and profound mutual suspicion. And to some, especially those who lived through the Cold War, the NATO shield seems not all that persuasive.

NATO "is just a name," said Dorota Karpinska, 61, who runs one of the many street stands offering obwarzanki, chewy, bagel-like breads widely consumed here. "Who knows what they're doing?"

Poles born in the post-communist era appear less likely to fear that the conflict will envelop their country. There is a clear generational split, even if the Russian attack was a kind of wake-up call for the young as well.

"It's the old people like my parents who feel that Russia can attack anytime," said Andrzej Piszczek, 24, a student seated in a cafe thick with cigarette smoke and incense. "They say, 'You never know. We need to prepare ourselves, we need to buy flour, petrol.'"

The current situation, many note, differs greatly from the days of the Cold War, when it was widely believed that neither Russia nor the West would resort to the use of nuclear weapons capable of obliterating much of the planet. With Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and his nuclear threats, no such sense of security exists these days.

"Nuclear blackmail is [now] on the agenda almost every day," said Włodzimierz Marciniak, a political scientist and former Polish ambassador to the Russian Federation. "Right now the war is hot and it is next door."

The streets here in the ancient city Krakow have lately seen a new phenomenon: U.S. soldiers, unarmed but in military fatigues, strolling through downtown, window shopping, visiting tourist sites, stopping for a coffee. Longtime residents say the groups of uniformed GIs have emerged from their bases only in recent days, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a buildup in U.S. forces based in Poland.

On a recent afternoon, Magda, 39, a restaurant worker, requested a selfie with a group of U.S. soldiers. She said she wanted the photo for her son, 15. The soldiers quickly complied. Their presence, she said, offered both a sense of reassurance — that America has Poland's back, so to speak — and a feeling that a broader geopolitical conflict could indeed be on the horizon.

"It's confusing," Magda, who asked that her surname be withheld for privacy reasons, said after the soldiers had moved on. "I want to live through this, to see the world."

The Pentagon did not respond immediately to an inquiry about the soldiers' heightened public profile in Krakow and in the southeastern Polish city of Przemyśl, close to the Ukrainian border and a key transit point for war refugees.

As the war next door rages, some Poles are taking precautionary measures.

The Polish press has reported a run on demands for passports from those who want to be able to leave the country expeditiously if necessary.

Authorities have also seen rising numbers of new recruits for the Territorial Defense Forces, a kind of reserve arm of the military. Demand for slots has increased sevenfold since the Russian invasion, a military spokesman told Radio Krakow.

In a national poll taken just after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Poles were asked how they felt. The most common response: “I am afraid,” the choice of 78% of participants, according to the newspaper Rzeczpospolita. An additional 15.5% described themselves as worried; only 6.5% identified “calm” as their state of mind.

The conflict and its potential consequences for Poland are the prevalent topics of everyday conversation — at shops, on public transport, in parks and households. TV screens in bars, restaurants and homes relay the latest developments to edgy viewers.

“So what is the news today?” a man in line at a grocery store in Warsaw asked a fellow shopper the other day, without even having to mention Russia or Ukraine. “What happened?”

Ukrainian flags and lapel pins are everywhere, as are declarations stenciled on walls affirming “Solidarity” with Ukraine.

“We can say that every single one of us is at war now, and fighting by doing whatever we can to help,” said Mikolaj Szlachta, 19, one of many volunteers in green vests assisting crowds of exhausted Ukrainian refugees at the central rail station in Krakow. “This is how we fight.”

The volunteers seen at train and bus depots throughout the country are part of an extraordinary outpouring of support for the massive influx of refugees who have fled into Poland since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. In the capital, Warsaw, the surge has approached a breaking point, with the mayor on Friday asking for international help. Many see the disastrous scenario unfolding in neighboring Ukraine as something that could also happen in Poland, which has for centuries been caught up in Great Power intrigues involving Russia, Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian empire.

“We still, as a nation, recall the history from World War II, when we were in this situation, when we were asking for help and we were asking for shelter and food,” said Karolina Micolajczyk, who manages a hotel in Krakow’s Kazimierz district.

A Ukrainian flag hangs outside the hotel. Ukrainians filled all 28 rooms on a recent evening, she said.

Traces of the last global conflagration are never far off in Poland. Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded at the outset of World War II, at a staggering cost in human life. The Kazimierz neighborhood was long the heart of Krakow’s Jewish community, which represented about one-quarter of the city’s prewar population before the Nazi mass murder campaign.

The former Jewish quarter is now a shabby-chic haven featuring hip bars, trendy cafes and boutique hotels. Signs in downtown Krakow feature bus tours to the infamous Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, an hour's drive to the west.

The post-invasion fear of Russia has also hit the cultural sphere. A Warsaw orchestra recently decided to dedicate its performance to Ukraine and dropped a planned performance of a piano concerto by Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian composer. The orchestra substituted a concerto by Frederic Chopin, the Polish virtuoso.

There have also been scattered reports of harassment and vandalism. Ukrainians working for a Russian restaurant owner in Warsaw received threatening phone calls urging them to quit, according to reports widely circulated on social media. Meanwhile, Polish police were investigating the destruction of a Red Army monument in the northwestern city of Koszalin.

However, many Poles interviewed were quick to distinguish between the Russian people and its government.

"I don't identify every Russian person with what's happening in Ukraine," said Szlachta, the student volunteering in the Krakow train station.

He, too, was skeptical that the invasion would escalate into Poland.

"I don't think Russia's leaders are dumb enough to attack a NATO country — that would mean a global conflict and World War III," he said. "I hope it won't get to that. But, then, anything can happen. You never know."

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## **20. Tiny kingdom in Nigeria celebrates as threat from Boko Haram fades**

Sunday Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Richard Assheton

The king rose early on the biggest day for his people in years. By 9am the walled center of the village was abuzz with the chatter of thousands who had come from the hills around.

The celebrations that greeted the king were the first of their kind in nearly a decade. For much of that time the people of Sukur, a little-known, UNESCO-listed kingdom 3,000 feet up in the highlands of northeast Nigeria, lived in fear. Their unique culture, with its own language, calendar and distinctive dry stone walls, was under threat from Boko Haram, the Islamist group that has terrorized the region since 2009. In 2014 militants climbed the steep track to the settlement, razing houses and burning crops. People scattered, abandoning the terraced agriculture that along with a tradition of iron smelting had in 1999 helped win Sukur Africa's first world heritage recognition for a cultural landscape.

Now, though, Boko Haram is weaker, allowing the Sukur Yawal festival to mark the coming rainy season for the first time since 2014. At last, Sukur folk are focusing again on the question that preoccupies them: how do they cling on to their culture?

breakout capability; the deal would only push that up to under six months (well before a new president takes office).

Most crucially, it will gain up to \$130.5 billion in sanctions relief. Iran needs money now. According to Rubin, the country's leaders have "driven their economy into the ground even before sanctions, and the cash infusion really will allow them to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat." This is especially true for Iran's proxies. Rubin, who visited Hezbollah territory in Lebanon last year, reported that "Residents there — including former Hezbollah members said the group was losing its members in droves as the money dried up." Rubin believes that a new deal would "throw a lifeline to Hezbollah."

Given a likely impending red wave, the current deal on the table would likely be scrapped. But that probably doesn't matter to Iran, which gets plenty of goodies in the meantime.

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## **22. Don't embrace Saudi Arabia and the UAE because of the Ukraine crisis**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, William D. Hartung

The Biden administration is reportedly reaching out to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to urge them to increase their oil output to counterbalance disruptions in the global market sparked by sanctions on Russia. In doing so, it is crucial that the administration doesn't excuse their crimes in Yemen or bolster their militaries with additional arms sales or other military support.

As the Wall Street Journal has noted, the de facto rulers of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed, appear to be pressuring the Biden administration over the oil issue to get more support for their devastating war in Yemen. Both men have declined to speak by phone with President Biden in an attempt to draw U.S. attention to the quid pro quo they are seeking — more oil output for more arms and assistance in fighting the Houthi movement in Yemen.

The UAE announced on Wednesday that it would increase its oil output, but it is unclear whether the Biden administration offered anything to the UAE in return. Giving in to the Saudi and UAE demands on Yemen would be a disastrous mistake, both for U.S. interests in the Middle East and, most tragically, for the people of Yemen. There are other ways to get more oil onto the international market, including lifting sanctions on Iran as a revived nuclear deal under the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA) moves closer to fruition.

As the humanitarian suffering caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine has come front and center, it has been all too easy to forget the devastation caused by the U.S.-backed Saudi war in Yemen. The United Nations estimates that there have been at least 377,000 direct and indirect deaths as a result of the war, which was initiated by a Saudi-led coalition seven years ago this month. Saudi air strikes are at their highest levels since April 2018, and the Saudi blockade of Yemen has choked off imports of fuel that are essential for powering hospitals and fulfilling the

needs of daily life, causing further suffering and unnecessary deaths of innocent civilians. This is no time to be stepping up U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Biden administration has ample leverage to pressure Saudi Arabia to end indiscriminate air strikes and lift its naval and air blockade on Yemen. Nearly two-thirds of Saudi combat aircraft are of U.S. origin, and they could not operate for long without U.S. spare parts and maintenance. Cutting off this support and holding off on new arms sales would be an effective tool to change Saudi conduct in Yemen and persuade the regime to participate in comprehensive peace talks to end the war.

Closer U.S. military relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE pose serious human rights issues, which should be reason enough to cut off U.S. military support. But cozying up to these regimes also undermines U.S. security interests in the Middle East and beyond. The war in Yemen has stoked anti-U.S. sentiment there and destabilized that country in ways that may create an opening for a resurgence of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The UAE has supplied weapons to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya in violation of a United Nations arms embargo, and has launched drone strikes there that have killed scores of civilians. This reckless behavior by U.S.-armed allies not only diminishes the United States' reputation and influence in the greater Middle East, but it also threatens to pull us into more conflicts there at a time when we should be reassessing our military footprint in the region.

If the Biden administration decides to continue or increase military support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE in exchange for an upsurge in oil production, Congress should push back. It could do so by passing resolutions under the War Powers Act that would end U.S. support for the Saudi and UAE militaries, a move that would get the attention of both regimes and help end their brutal war in Yemen. Last month, Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) and Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) announced that they will be introducing a new Yemen War Powers Resolution.

These efforts should move forward. Embracing Saudi Arabia and the UAE at this moment is the wrong thing to do. Doing it with the excuse that it might cushion the impacts of sanctions on Russia on the U.S. economy is not justified given the damage they are doing, both to U.S. interests and to the people of the Middle East.

*William D. Hartung is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.*

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### **23. 'A serious failure': scale of Russia's military blunders becomes clear**

Financial Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Sam Jones, John Paul Rathbone and Demetri Sevastopulo

Three weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, the scale of Russia's military blunders is becoming clear.

The outcome of Russian president Vladimir Putin's war is still far from certain: little information exists on Ukrainian forces' rates of attrition, while Russia's military still outmans and outguns that of its neighbor. The chances of escalation have meanwhile increased as the Russian leadership looks to regain the front foot.

But in the first phase of its offensive, the Kremlin's military story is one of failure.

Western defense officials have estimated Russian casualties at between 2,000 and 6,000. Based on ratios in similar conflicts, that implies three to four times as many captured and wounded. At its midpoint, such an estimate is more, in three weeks, than the losses of US and UK servicemen combined during 20 years in Afghanistan.

Russia's losses in materiel are also significant. The Oryx blog has recorded 1,034 Russian vehicles, artillery pieces and aircraft destroyed, damaged, abandoned or captured. These include 173 tanks, 261 armored and infantry fighting vehicles, and 28 surface-to-air missile systems.

Justin Bronk, research fellow at the UK's Royal United Services Institute, who co-wrote a book on Russia's military modernization under Putin, said the losses "are massively more than in any other recent conflict" including Georgia, Chechnya or Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Analysts and western military officials agree on the primary cause of the flaws in Russia's military offensive: a failure of intelligence that skewed military planning.

Flowing from this were failures linked to rash decision-making, logistical unpreparedness, poor maintenance of equipment and the use of young, inexperienced troops that together have culminated in a collapse of front-line Russian morale.

General Sir Richard Barrons, former head of the UK's Joint Forces Command, said: "There is something here that is systemically wrong . . . somewhere in the Russian intelligence architecture, facts on the ground are being converted into an analysis, but that analysis is actually a narrative to support the preconceptions of the senior [Kremlin] leadership."

As a result, Russia's intended campaign — an assault strike predicated on speed and Ukrainian political weakness — has tipped into a joint combat operation requiring logistical and communications planning that does not seem to have been in place, say analysts.

Russia's first failures occurred within the opening 24 hours of the war, when pre-positioned covert spetsnaz troops, whose job it was to cripple the Ukrainian political leadership, were stopped. Airborne forces of the elite VDV, known for their sky-blue berets, that were supposed to secure key sites such as Hostomel airport just north of the capital, were, after initial success, repelled by strong Ukrainian resistance. Two transport aircraft were downed above Hostomel by Ukrainian forces.

"The Ukrainian military as a whole have been expecting this kind of invasion to come since 2014," said Barrons. "And then they were handed the gift of these light forces coming in piecemeal, underestimating them, which they were able to pick off."

The second component of the initial assault — the rapid advance of Russian forces, avoiding cities and intended to quickly encircle regional Ukrainian military units they believed would be paralyzed because of a leaderless central government — further extended Russian vulnerability.

“It is as if they were treating this as a military policing mission, not an actual invasion against a modern military,” said one western military official. Videos on social media even show troops from Rosguardia, Russia’s domestic militia, advancing into towns, unsupported, as the frontline force.

When, several days in, Russian commanders realized they needed to pivot to using more serious firepower, they did so chaotically: huge columns of tanks and artillery moved forward, but the Ukrainians blew up bridges, causing advances to stall. Russian planners appear to have failed to anticipate this basic response, another western military official said, pointing out that engineering units and bridge builders were not even near the front of the advance in some columns.

“What we have seen on the ground is an extremely bad plan coupled with absolutely no warning to operational commanders they were about to throw their troops into operational combat which has created an enormous number of problems for them,” said Rusi’s Bronk. It is, he added, a “serious failure” of “TTPs” — tactics, techniques and procedures.

Even Russia’s feared anti-aircraft systems were left vulnerable to cheap Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones operated by the Ukrainians. Footage on Twitter, for example, shows Ukrainian TB2’s picking off Buk launchers, the same missile system used to shoot down the MH17 commercial aircraft in 2014.

On the ground, meanwhile, the thousands of anti-tank missiles western powers have been supplying to Ukraine for weeks have proved effective, with mobile foot soldiers able to ambush and attack isolated advanced clusters of Russian light vehicles and stationary heavy units stuck in columns with unprotected flanks.

Open-source intelligence suggests that Russia’s military communications infrastructure has performed poorly: the cutting-edge encrypted Azart and Akveduk radios that supposedly began to be rolled out to Russian units in 2017 appear to be in short supply or have inadequate range, noted a Rusi report.

On social media, pictures have been posted of Russians using cheap, unencrypted Chinese radios, and their own mobile phones to contact commanders. As a result even amateur radio enthusiasts hundreds of miles away have been able to tune into real-time Russian military communications, as Twitter threads with dozens of recorded Russian messages show.

Inadequate equipment has been the cause of other failings: images have been shared by Ukrainians of Russian vehicles with shredded tires stuck in mud. Experts say the tires are almost certainly cheap, civilian-grade versions of those the Russian military need, suggesting, as in the case of the radios, endemic corruption in Russia’s defense procurement.

“The Russians are very good at military parades. They spend weeks getting everything shiny. But it’s a facade,” said one European defense official.

The biggest question that continues to perplex analysts, though, is why Russia has still not made use of its vastly superior air power to better protect its forces, and reverse the debacle on the ground.

A senior US defense official said that Ukraine had been “very creative” in how it used its air defenses, making highly effective use of cheap drones, and the country’s forces were staging a much fiercer resistance than Russian intelligence expected. “They are putting resources where they’re most needed [and] they’re doing it quickly. They are being adaptive and nimble . . . in almost a sort of a hit-and-run kind of style,” he said.

Russia’s military has no experience fighting such an extensive joint ground-and-air war, the official said. “This is an operation that they have never conducted before, never meaning since World War two.”

The official said Russia was also having trouble integrating its ground and air forces into a “joint” force. He said that while the Russia had upgraded its military and acquired sophisticated systems, “it doesn’t appear . . . that they have developed the proper operational concepts to use these modern capabilities”.

The failures have resulted in a widespread, if perhaps temporary, collapse in morale, according to the Pentagon and British defense intelligence. There is even evidence of Russian soldiers sabotaging their own equipment, officials have said.

The average age of Russian soldiers in Ukraine is 20-25 years old, according to one western military official, compared with 30-35 for the Ukrainians, who are better-supplied and have a cause on their side.

Many of the young Russian soldiers deployed meanwhile did not even know they were being sent into Ukraine, let alone that they would have to fire on fellow Russian-speakers.

“It has become clear that a lot of Russian infantry are simply not willing to go into the attack,” said Chris Donnelly, an adviser on the Soviet military to four Nato secretaries-general. “Once morale really starts to collapse like this, you don’t have an army any more.”

The Russians have used conscripts and poorly trained junior troops, Donnelly said, in an apparently knee-jerk reversion by operational commanders to the textbook Soviet tactic of sending in expendable forces first to “soak up firepower”.

The question is how Russia will adapt. In recent days, Russian forces have stepped up the use of long-range fire, and have launched more than 800 missiles in total. There were also signs that columns of forces to the north and east of Kyiv were preparing to try a new approach.

Some of the tanks and other vehicles in a long convoy that at its closest point is 15km from Kyiv have also gone off the main road. It is unclear whether they are being sent in a different direction or taking cover under trees.

Elsewhere, Russia’s objectives seem to be to surround and besiege a sufficient number of Ukrainian cities, seize Kyiv and oust the Zelensky government. While Russian forces have struggled in the north, in the south they have had far more success, and can still apply considerable force.

Questions remain about Ukrainian forces' ability to continue to fight and how much in anti-aircraft munitions they have remaining.

Within the Ukrainian military there is also growing dismay over western flip-flopping over additional military support, such as gifting MiG jets or heavier, vehicle-mounted long-range anti-aircraft weaponry.

Russia's use of crude artillery and dumb bombs is meanwhile wreaking a heavy civilian toll. And most signs point towards a further escalation by the Kremlin.

The danger, said one retired senior British intelligence officer, is that in seeking to extricate itself from its tactical disasters in Ukraine, Moscow "blunders into a strategic dead-end with even worse consequences" for Ukraine, and possibly the world.

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#### **24. For the sake of our national security, Congress must end its budget battles**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, Mike Rogers

On Tuesday, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued its Annual Worldwide Threats report.

If you weren't already unsettled by the state of the world, reading this sobering report will certainly leave you concerned. From Russia to China, health security to transnational threats like drugs and terrorism, and more, the ODNI report shows just how unsettled the world is today and what it's anticipated to be over the course of the next year.

Dealing with threats like these means putting and keeping our budgetary house in order, but too often, we're operating on temporary funding, and we can't keep doing so.

We often talk about how we are a global leader, a guarantor of international security, yet Congress continues to fail to provide regular annual funding for the military. Until Thursday night, as Russia invaded its neighbor — a country slightly smaller than the state of Texas — our military was operating under previous funding levels at a time when it needed to be investing in the future while meeting the threats of today.

For the fourth time since October of last year and for the 12th year out of 13, Congress risked financial catastrophe if it failed to approve an annual funding measure. To make matters worse, if Congress hadn't passed a funding bill (or yet another continuing resolution) by today, the government would have shut down, again.

There are few times more perilous for the government to play chicken with a budget shutdown than when Moscow is marching towards Kyiv and our NATO allies are looking to Washington for leadership. We're rightly sending weapons and humanitarian aid to Ukraine and deploying troops to reassure our allies in NATO, but at home, we were relying on continuing resolutions rather than passing a budget. It's the sheer entanglement of bad politics.

This is no way to run a government and no way to manage our military and security affairs and shouldn't be a partisan issue. The administration controls all three branches of government and struggled to get a budget finalized. There simply isn't any excuse for this political failure. Our country has the need and there is a clear sense of urgency, yet they seemed uninterested or incapable of getting the basic business of government done.

Relying on continuing resolutions is sophomoric and leaves our servicemen and women in the lurch while Congress plays politics. The services cannot plan for long-term acquisition or events, they cannot invest in next-generation systems and they cannot re-arm and re-equip stores that are being rapidly depleted due to foreign support. Failing to manage our fiscal house leaves our adversaries emboldened and allies questioning our seriousness.

And you should be certain that our adversaries are watching our every move. As the ODNI writes, "Beijing, Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang have demonstrated the capability and intent to advance their interests at the expense of the United States and its allies." China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are looking for weaknesses to exploit, and our failure to budget for potential conflict with each is just the kind of opportunity they would seize upon.

What does this look like in practice? "Major adversaries and competitors are enhancing and exercising their military, cyber and other capabilities, raising the risks to U.S. and allied forces, weakening our conventional deterrence, and worsening the longstanding threat from weapons of mass destruction." Just last year, Beijing tested an advanced hypersonic missile over the South China Sea. Defending against that kind of threat and preparing our own capabilities is not cheap, and requires long-term planning. China doesn't need to worry about the budget cycle, but we do and we must get our house in order.

Providing our military with budgetary stability and predictability in an unpredictable world is Congress' first duty and responsibility and too often it is found wanting. It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide and execute strategic guidance when the legislative branch cannot agree on basic funding. We need our eyes and attention on strategic competition, not partisan budget fights. This means passing a budget, not just now, but regularly in the future, and this needs bipartisan leadership.

*Mike Rogers served as the Republican representative in Congress for the 8th District of Michigan from 2000 until 2015, including as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee from 2011-2015.*

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## **25. Nostalgia and Kalashnikovs: Why Russia wins some sympathy in Africa and the Middle East**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

In 2019 Vladimir Putin welcomed 43 African leaders to the inaugural Russia-Africa summit, a higher turnout than Britain or France attracted to similar shindigs. At the bash in Sochi the Russian president lambasted the West for how it imposed "political or other conditions" on

African countries, a reference to chiding about human rights. “We have a lot to offer to our African friends,” said Mr Putin.

The summit stressed Russia’s increasingly muscular approach to Africa. After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and the West imposed sanctions, it boosted efforts to sell arms, extract resources and prop up shaky regimes. Now that Russia is suffering far more sweeping sanctions, it may wish to redouble its activities on the continent. But do African governments think it still has enough to offer?

The vote on March 2nd at the un General Assembly to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine suggests many are hedging their bets. Of the 54 African countries, 28 backed the motion but 17 abstained and eight were no-shows. Eritrea, a gulag state, joined Russia, Belarus, North Korea and Syria in voting against.

Whether these votes reflect ordinary Africans’ views is unclear. Mobile-phone surveys carried out last week in six African states for The Economist by Premise, an American research firm, suggest that governments’ ambivalence is reflected in public attitudes (see chart 1). In Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda pluralities held Russia most responsible for the war. But in Mali and the Ivory Coast, NATO was most often cited as the guilty party.

The votes at the un partly reflect historical ties between Russia and ruling parties, especially in southern Africa. Many of the region’s elite studied in the Soviet Union; some have fond memories of their time there. The liberation parties that still run Angola, Mozambique (whose flag features a Kalashnikov), Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe saw the Soviet Union as an ally in their fight to end white rule, and consider Russia to be its successor. All abstained, even though Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, too.

This nostalgia goes hand-in-hand with latent anti-Western views. Murithi Mutiga of International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think-tank, notes “resentment” in the Horn at “the way the us behaved in its unipolar moment”. NATO’s intervention in Libya in 2011, which ignored the African Union, angered leaders like Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (another abstainer). The subsequent chaos, which spilled over into the Sahel, alienated governments there.

But Africa’s relations with Russia are mainly about self-interest, not history or ideology. This is acutely so for countries that rely on mercenaries from the Wagner Group, which is backed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a chum of Mr Putin. There are an estimated 2,000 Wagner troops in the Central African Republic (car) keeping rebels from toppling President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, reportedly in exchange for gold and diamonds. He is too dependent on them to change tack.

The junta in charge of Mali since a coup last year has also turned to Wagner. About 800 guns-for-hire operate there, says Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, who is withdrawing French forces partly because of the Russian arrivistes. European attention to the Sahel will further diminish because of the war in Ukraine, reckons Paul Stronski of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, another think-tank, leaving a “relatively open door” for Wagner. He adds

that Russia will see the battle for influence in the Sahel as part of a wider contest against Western enemies – an echo of proxy conflicts during the Cold War.

Guinea is another African country unusually dependent on Russia. It is already a “collateral victim” of the war, laments Amadou Bah of Action Mines Guinée, an NGO. Rusal, a huge Russian aluminum producer with three mines in Guinea, has stopped operations at its refinery in Ukraine, which processes bauxite mined in Guinea. Its junta recently suspended an honorary consul from Ukraine, presumably to keep Mr Putin sweet.

On February 24th, as Russian tanks were rolling into Ukraine, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a powerful Sudanese general known as Hemedti, was hobnobbing with Russian officials. Russia has long sought a military presence at Port Sudan on the Red Sea and reportedly buys smuggled gold from the country. But in the coming months Sudanese angry at high bread prices (see earlier article) may renew protests against their Russian-backed junta.

Russia has tried to extend its reach beyond a few rickety states. It is the biggest arms exporter to Africa. Its trade with the continent has increased since 2014, though it still accounts for just 2% of Africa’s trade in goods with the rest of the world. Kremlin-linked firms have formed an Africa-focused trade association. A subsidiary of VEB (a bank under sanctions) has shares in Afreximbank, a development bank.

For most countries Russia is but one player among many. Like many African leaders, João Lourenço, Angola’s president since 2017, has tried to build a “portfolio of foreign-policy interests”, notes Ricardo Soares de Oliveira of Oxford University. Angola sells its oil to China, has an IMF program and digs for diamonds with Alrosa, a Russian miner. “Historically we have relations with all these countries. I don’t see it as a major issue,” says an Angolan cabinet minister.

Ethiopia, which did not vote at the un, is in a similar spot. Russia is its largest arms supplier. At the un Russia has stymied efforts to constrain Ethiopia’s government in a civil war against rebels from its northern region of Tigray. Gazprom bank has shown interest in a project in Ethiopia’s eastern Somali region. However, “I’m not convinced we need [Russia] more than the West,” says an Ethiopian official.

### **The newly fickle Gulf**

Self-interest and fence-sitting prevail in the Middle East, too. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) shocked America by abstaining in the un Security Council on February 25th. The Arab League’s statement on the war three days later did not even mention Russia. Though their governments voted in favor of the General Assembly motion, officials in Egypt and other Gulf states argue that this is not their war: they have no formal alliances with either side.

Oil is one reason. Saudi Arabia is keen to preserve OPEC+, an alliance of big producers of which it and Russia are the biggest. Weapons are another factor. Egypt is the region’s second-biggest recipient of American military aid. But President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has sought to diversify, including by buying Russian fighter jets.

Gulf states have relied on America for protection. But they now think its security umbrella has holes. Diplomats hope staying neutral on Ukraine will send a message to America. “If we can’t count on you, you can’t count on us,” as one puts it.

Western governments are less likely to chastise African countries for abstaining. They know that all states have interests. “It’s very unlikely that African countries will be forced to choose a side,” says Folashadé Soulé, an academic also at Oxford.

But if Russian firms struggle to find dollars they will be less attractive to Africans. “I don’t think the government of Sudan wants rubles,” says a sanctions lawyer. Big energy or mining deals often involve ancillary Western firms, which may not want Russians involved, if only for reputational risk. If the West stops buying Russian hydrocarbons, that too could have knock-on effects on African buyers.

The next Russia-Africa summit is due later this year in Ethiopia. Its VIP list will show how many “African friends” Mr Putin still has. It may well be less than 43.

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## **26. Will China offer Russia financial help? A bit. But it will mostly seek to learn from Russia’s mistakes**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

If you believe China’s diplomats, relations with Russia are “rock solid” and the friendship between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin has “no limits”. Western sanctions are about to put those warm words to the test. Russia needs an economic and financial lifeline. It would like to use China as a conduit through which to continue trading with the rest of the world. China, however, must strike a delicate balance between helping Mr Putin stand up to their joint rival, America, and retaining its own access to the global financial system. No doubt to Mr Putin’s regret, its financial aid to Russia is likely to be qualified at best.

Although China abstained in un votes condemning Russia for invading Ukraine, its rhetorical support has been more fulsome. On March 7th, as civilian casualties mounted, Wang Yi, the foreign minister, called Russia his country’s “most important strategic partner”. It is just a month since Mr Xi and Mr Putin heralded a new era for their countries. As well as preserving relations, China probably wants to undermine the legitimacy of sanctions as a tool of Western policy, given they have been used against it over Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Chinese firms may spot an opening in Russia as Western ones, such as McDonald’s and Shell, close their doors. Bloomberg News says that some are eyeing cheap energy assets.

Yet this embargo-busting brotherhood faces several problems. China’s technical abilities are no substitute for the West’s. CIPS, its payments network, has a small global footprint and low volumes and relies on sending messages through swift, a European body from which some Russian banks are now barred. Another difficulty is that Chinese multinationals with a legal presence in Western-allied countries may fall foul of the existing sanctions regime. China’s international banks are wary. Volvo (based in Sweden but owned by a Chinese firm) and TikTok

(run from Singapore but Chinese-owned) have suspended some operations in Russia. Even Chinese firms without a legal presence in the West could be hit by “secondary sanctions”, which take aim at third countries that help the subject of primary ones. America has not yet used this weapon over Russia, but it might. Chinese banks that dealt with Iran and North Korea were penalized by America.

Given all this, China’s help to Russia is likely to be half-hearted. It may stick to its existing Russian trade arrangements, hoping that America will tolerate them. Chief among these is energy. China received 32% of all Russian crude exports in 2020 and 17% of its exports of liquefied natural gas. China may also conduct trade and financial transactions through smaller banks that do not have a legal presence in the West, using rubles and yuan rather than the dollar. It may also grant Russia’s central bank access to its yuan holdings. Last, China will probably try to limit the overall scale of trade volumes and payment flows so as to avoid provoking a direct confrontation with America.

Chinese officials must juggle several priorities. China wants to see Russia survive these sanctions, to teach America and allies that they are not a magic weapon, but is anxious to limit collateral damage to Chinese interests. In the process, it plans to learn from Russia’s mistakes. If it comes to blows with America, China wants its financial system to be shielded. Its aims will include improving its payments system and diversifying its \$3.2trn of reserve holdings out of Western currencies and accounts by, for example, investing in commodities. It could get foreign firms and governments to issue more securities in China’s own capital markets, creating a new pool of assets for China to buy. Russia may hope for a Chinese bail-out; China’s priority will be to learn from a case study of failure.

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **27. Saudi Arabia executes 81 people in a single day**

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including “allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations” and holding “deviant beliefs”, state news agency Saudi Press Agency said, in the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

The number dwarfed the 67 executions reported in the kingdom in 2021 and the 27 in 2020.

“These individuals ... were convicted of various crimes including murdering innocent men, women and children,” SPA said on Saturday, citing a statement from the interior ministry.

“Crimes committed by these individuals also include pledging allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations, such as ISIS [ISIL], al-Qaeda and the Houthis,” it added.

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**Sent:** Mon, 14 Mar 2022 08:50:00 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 14 MAR 22  
**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 14 MAR 22.docx, smime.p7s

## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate  
March 14, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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1. Reuters led follow-up media reporting on Sunday morning's Iranian ballistic missile attack in the vicinity of the U.S. Consulate under construction in Erbil. The article highlighted that U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the Biden Administration was working to help get Iraq missile defense capabilities to defend itself against future attacks. Sullivan said the Administration was in consultation with both the Iraqi and Kurdish governments.
2. The Wall Street Journal cited a senior U.S. official who said the U.S. would not negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia to save the 2015-revised JCPOA agreement with Iran. The official said the Biden Administration would likely begin exploring options to the agreement over the next week if Russia doesn't back away from its demands for guarantees exempting it from Ukraine-linked sanctions.
3. The New York Times led global media reporting updating events on Ukraine. A U.S. official told media that Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the war in Ukraine after President Putin ordered military operations to begin in February. a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials. NSA Sullivan is scheduled to meet on Monday in Rome with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo and director of the party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission to discuss the Ukraine situation. Separately, media reported that Ukraine and Russian negotiators would be meeting Monday following "positive" talks this weekend that could result in an agreement to end Russia's invasion.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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**1. U.S. working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities - Sullivan**

Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Andrea Shalal

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday condemned Iran's ballistic missile attack on Iraq's northern Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, and said Washington was working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities to defend itself.

## **2. U.S. won't negotiate Ukraine-related sanctions with Russia to save Iran nuclear deal**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Laurence Norman and Dion Nissenbaum

The U.S. won't negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and could try to strike a separate accord excluding Moscow, a senior U.S. official said, a diplomatic effort complicated by an Iranian missile attack on Iraq that sent American troops rushing for shelter.

## **3. Russia asked China for military and economic aid for Ukraine War, U.S. officials say**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Julian E. Barnes

Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the war in Ukraine after President Vladimir V. Putin began a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (13 Mar):** Spoke with Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs @MBA\_AlThani\_ yesterday about the urgent need for Russia to end its brutal and unprovoked war on Ukraine. I also thanked Qatar for continued assistance with Afghanistan diplomacy.

**State Department Spokesman Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (13 Mar):** The United States strongly condemns the missile strikes on Erbil, Iraq last night that emanated from Iran. The strikes were an outrageous violation of Iraq's sovereignty. No U.S. facilities were damaged or personnel injured, and we have no indications the attack was directed at the United States. Iran must immediately cease its attacks, respect Iraqi sovereignty, and halt its interference in Iraq's internal affairs. The United States stands with our Iraqi partners, including in the Kurdistan Region, and will help our partners in the region defend themselves.

**Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs; @PCOCMOFA (13 Mar):** The Chad Peace Negotiations that started in Doha today are Chad-Chad negotiations owned and led by the Chadians, and the State of Qatar will do everything in its power to make them a success as a facilitator and host.

**Prime Minister of Iraq Mustafa Al-Kadhimi; @MAKadhimi (13 Mar):** The Ministerial Council for National Security held an extraordinary meeting, today, Sunday, headed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Prime Minister @MAKadhimi, to discuss the attack that targeted the city of Erbil at dawn today, and caused losses and terrorized the city's residents.

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## IRAN

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## **4. Iran attacks Iraq's Erbil with missiles in warning to U.S., allies**

Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Amina Ismail and John Davison

Iran attacked Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Sunday with a dozen ballistic missiles in an unprecedented assault on the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region that appeared to target the United States and its allies.

### **5. Iran nuclear talks stumble as US rebuffs Russian demands**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, James Politi

The US has ruled out offering any sanctions relief to Russia in order to clinch its support for an agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, rebuffing a last-minute demand from Moscow.

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## IRAQ

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### **6. Iraqis widely condemn Iran missile attack on Irbil**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Namo Abdulla

Iran's ballistic missile strike on the northern city of Irbil, which damaged some residential structures but caused no casualties, has been criticized by leaders from across Iraq's political spectrum.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **7. Afghan aviators hide as Taliban urge them to return to duty**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, David Zucchino and Yaqoob Akbary

Last year, the three Afghan aviators served in the elite Special Mission Wing of the Afghan Air Force. Trained by Americans to fight the Taliban from the air, they were some of the Afghan military's most elite troops. Now they are on the run, hunted by the Taliban while moving their families from one safe house to the next. When the Taliban recently invited former air force members to join the new government's fledging air force, promising them amnesty, they never considered it.

### **8. Bachelet: Future of Afghanistan uncertain**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Lisa Schlein

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet warns humanitarian and economic issues are likely to claim more lives in Afghanistan than conflict.

### **9. Six killed in spate of murders across Afghanistan**

Deutsche Welle (Germany), 13 Mar 22

At least six killings were reported across Afghanistan on Sunday, amid a rise in mysterious deaths following the Taliban's rise to power.

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## YEMEN

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### **10. Saudis fight to turn the tide in Yemen's Civil War**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Dion Nissenbaum

Saudi Arabia and its allies, with their local proxies, trying to hold their ground and with Washington having scaled back support for the conflict, are struggling to turn the tide in Yemen, stepping up aerial bombing and missile strikes.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **11. White House faces oil standoff with Saudi Arabia and UAE as prices soar**

The Guardian (UK), 13 Mar 22, Martin Chulov and Julian Borger

Joe Biden's hardline stance on Russia has won him widespread plaudits, but with the most serious oil shock in decades now a reality, the US president's attempt to cushion the blowback continues to meet resistance from the two allies he needs most.

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **12. Criminal investigation into nephew of former Kazakhstan president**

The Times (UK), 14 Mar 22, Maxim Tucker

The nephew of Kazakhstan's former president is being investigated for crimes "undermining the security of the state" after the violent uprising in January in which at least 227 people died.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **13. US officials say Russia has asked China for military help in Ukraine**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia has asked China for military equipment to support its invasion of Ukraine, according to US officials, sparking concern in the White House that Beijing may undermine western efforts to help Ukrainian forces defend their country.

### **14. US, China officials to meet as tensions mount over Russia**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Amer Madhani and Josh Boak

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Feb. 11, 2022, in Washington. President Biden is sending Sullivan for talks with a senior Chinese official in Rome on Monday, March 14, 2022. The meeting comes as concerns grow that China is amplifying Russian disinformation in the Ukraine war.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **15. Bipartisan lawmakers ramp up calls on Biden to give Ukraine weapons, fighter jets**

Washington Post, 13 Mar 22, Amy B. Wang

A growing number of U.S. lawmakers ratcheted up pressure on President Biden on Sunday to increase military aid to Ukraine, including sending fighter jets and air defense systems that the administration rejected last week.

#### **16. Russia turns to Syria playbook with shifting claims over grounds for war**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Max Seddon in Riga and Erika Solomon

As Russia began to build a pretext for war with Ukraine in February, it accused Kyiv of firing into Russian soil and blowing up a remote border checkpoint — albeit with no reported casualties. Now, as its forces lay siege to Ukrainian cities with increasing brutality, Moscow has justified its invasion by citing fears that Ukraine was restarting its nuclear weapons program. Russia also claimed to have found documents showing Ukraine had developed chemical and biological weapons under the orders of “curators from the Pentagon”.

#### **17. More Ukraine-Russia talks scheduled as attack on base kills dozens**

Reuters, 14 Mar 22, Pavel Polityuk and Natalia Zinets

Diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine were stepping up on Monday, with Ukrainian and Russian negotiators set to talk again after both sides cited progress, even after Russia attacked a base near the Polish border and fighting raged elsewhere.

#### **18. Zelensky says Russian missiles will strike NATO without no-fly zone over Ukraine**

Washington Examiner, 13 Mar 22, Daniel Chaitin

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Russia is on the verge of attacking NATO territory after a deadly Russian missile strike on a Ukrainian training center roughly 10 miles from the border with Poland.

#### **19. US Official: war widening to the west of Ukraine was anticipated**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Steve Herman

U.S. officials say Russia’s lethal shelling in the western part of Ukraine on Sunday, close to the border with Poland, is something that they had anticipated. At least 35 people died and 134 were wounded early Sunday when Russia fired cruise missiles at the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security, a military base in western Ukraine.

#### **20. Russia ‘using banned white phosphorus bombs’ in attack on Ukrainian city**

The Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Henry Zeffman

President Putin wants to turn Ukrainian cities into “Aleppos”, a Ukrainian official has said, claiming that Russia used white phosphorus in bombing attacks. Markiyan Lubkivsky, from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, warned that Putin was replicating Russian tactics from Syria and spoke of “more terrible attacks” on Ukraine.

#### **21. Biden's CIA head leads the charge against Putin's information war**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Morgan Chalfant and Rebecca Beitsch

As Russia began amassing troops on Ukraine's border late last year, CIA Director William Burns was ready. A career ambassador, Burns spent two tours at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and is one of the Biden administration's foremost experts on Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin.

## **22. India unsure of Russian arms to meet China, Pakistan threats**

Associated Press, 14 Mar 22, Ashok Sharma

India is exploring ways to avoid a major disruption in its supply of Russian-made weaponry amid U.S. sanctions following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tightrope walk could become more difficult due to a continuing border standoff with China.

## **23. War censorship exposes Putin's leaky internet controls**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Frank Bajak and Barbara Ortutay

Long before waging war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin was working to make Russia's internet a powerful tool of surveillance and social control akin to China's so-called Great Firewall. So when Western tech companies began cutting ties with Russia following its invasion, Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov was alarmed. He'd spent years exposing Russian censorship and feared that well-intentioned efforts to aid Ukraine would instead help Putin isolate Russians from the free flow of information, aiding the Kremlin's propaganda war.

## **24. Russia-Ukraine War threatens wheat supply, jolts prices**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Ryan Dezember

Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens a big portion of the world's wheat supply and has sent prices on a dizzying ride to new highs as well as the sharpest weekly drop in years.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **25. Iran missile attack on Erbil goes beyond retaliation for IRGC deaths**

Al-Monitor, 13 Mar 22, Amberin Zaman

Iran's brazen ballistic missile attack on Erbil in the early hours of Sunday is a further chilling reminder of the continued vulnerability of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, seen as easy prey by its large and aggressive neighbors, Turkey and Iran.

## **26. Iran sends its missile regards**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Editorial Board

The Biden Administration's hell-bent pursuit of a new nuclear deal with Iran grows harder to understand with each provocation from Tehran. The latest came Sunday in a missile attack near a U.S. consulate under construction in northern Iraq.

## **27. How does it End? A way out of the Ukraine War proves elusive.**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt

The United States accurately predicted the start of the war in Ukraine, sounding the alarm that an invasion was imminent despite Moscow's denials and Europe's skepticism. Predicting how it might end is proving far more difficult.

### **28. China wanted to appear neutral between Russia and Ukraine. It isn't**

Los Angeles Times, 13 Mar 22, Doyle McManus

When Russia invaded Ukraine last month, a spate of wishful thinking ran through the West that China, a great power with friends on both sides, might step in to mediate a cease-fire. China's government struck a pose of neutrality, called for a peaceful resolution and said it supported the principle of "territorial integrity." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made a public plea to China's Xi Jinping to intervene. But Xi has been missing in action — and in practice, his policies have been far less neutral than advertised.

### **29. Is it time to call Putin's War in Ukraine genocide?**

New Yorker, 13 Mar 22, Philip Gourevitch

"We have to call this what it is," Volodymyr Zelensky said, late last month, a few days after Vladimir Putin had ordered the invasion and conquest of Ukraine. "Russia's criminal actions against Ukraine show signs of genocide." President Zelensky, who lost family members during the Holocaust, and who also happens to have a law degree, sounded suitably cautious about invoking genocide, and he called for the International Criminal Court in The Hague to send war-crimes investigators as a first step.

### **30. The West must decide how far is too far with Russia**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Joshua C. Huminski

Russia's ultimate aims in Ukraine remain unclear. Now two weeks into the invasion, Moscow's initial attempts at a lightning assault appear stymied, and as a consequence, the Kremlin is increasing the intensity and brutality of its campaign. Thus far, however, Russia's so-called "special military operation" has remained limited to Ukraine. There is, however, a risk that this does not remain the case, and should the conflict expand the consequences could be dire for Europe and indeed the world.

### **31. Why doesn't the Arab world break with Putin? Consider Sudan's example**

Salon.com, 13 Mar 22, Mohammad Ali Salih

There is considerable current discussion about whether the decades-long push of NATO's expansion eastward, encouraged by the United States, is to be blamed for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as famous "realist" John Mearsheimer, of the University of Chicago, has argued. That discussion should also include whether the U.S. is to blame for the refusal, or at least the hesitancy, of some Arab countries to condemn the Russian invasion, which reflects widespread Arab resentment of U.S. policy over the last several decades.

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

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## IRAN

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### **32. US says Iran fired ballistic missiles into Iraq as nuclear talks stumble**

The National, 13 Mar 22, Robert Tollast

Iran launched up to 12 missiles targeting a US consulate complex under construction in Erbil on Sunday in an attack described by Iraqi president as a "terror" act. Iraq President, Barham Salih, said the missile attack at Erbil in northern Iraq early on Sunday represented a "terror" act designed to sabotage the country's political process in forming a new government, the state news agency said.

### **33. Oil concerns give Iran the upper hand in nuclear talks: Lawmakers**

Al Jazeera, 13 Mar 22, Maziar Motamedi

Iran should use the opportunity provided by instability in the global energy markets and push its demands in nuclear talks in Vienna, a majority of Iranian lawmakers have suggested. They also called for "economic, technical and political" guarantees that the United States will not renege on the country's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers again as it did in 2018, and said American sanctions must be lifted effectively and comprehensively.

### **34. Iran 'temporarily suspends' direct talks with Saudi Arabia**

Al Jazeera, 13 Mar 22, Maziar Motamedi

Iran has "temporarily suspended" direct talks with Saudi Arabia, according to an outlet linked with the country's top security body.

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## IRAQ

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### **35. Al-Sadr: Claims about Israeli sites should not undermine Iraq's security**

Shafaq News, 13 Mar 22

The leader of the Sadrist movement, Muqtada al-Sadr, called for sending a "protest note" to the United Nations and the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad following the missile attack waged by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on the capital of the Kurdistan region, Erbil, in the early hours of Sunday.

### **36. Shiite rivals to name a "consensus candidate" for premiership within 72 hours, MP says**

Shafaq News, 13 Mar 22

A joint committee from the Coordination Framework and the Sadrist movement will select a prime minister-designate from a shortlist of three "consensus candidates" in the next few 72 hours, MP of the former revealed on Sunday.

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## SYRIA

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### **37. Russian military patrols Syria's Golan Heights**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 13 Mar 22

Russia media published a video of Russian military units patrolling the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967. The video showed soldiers and vehicles separating the Syrian and Israeli armies and observation points on hills and high areas in the region. Some of the soldiers were seen wearing combat fatigue bearing the letter "Z," the symbol of the military campaign in Ukraine.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **38. 15,000 pieces of former government military equipment collected**

TOLOnews, 13 Mar 22

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) said more than 15,000 pieces of weaponry and equipment, including vehicles, belonging to the former government were collected from the eastern provinces of the country.

### **39. US diplomat asks IEA to change policy on women if it wants recognition**

Ariana News, 13 Mar 22

A senior US diplomat has called on the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to change its policy on women if it wants to be recognized by the international community as a legitimate government.

### **40. Efforts on to improve government inclusivity, says Muttaqi**

Pajhwok News13 Mar 2022

Serious efforts are ongoing to make the interim government more inclusive, says Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **41. Third wheat shipment off to Afghanistan**

DAWN, 13 Mar 22, Khalid Hasnain

A convoy of 40 trucks returned to Afghanistan after collecting a consignment of 2,200 tons wheat from India via the Wagah border. India had earlier announced to give 50,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds.

### **42. State's responsibility to stop horse-trading, says PM Imran**

Pakistan Express Tribune, 13 Mar 22

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday said it was the responsibility of the state and judiciary to stop the "corrupt" and "convicted" politicians who were trying to "topple the state" through horse-trading.

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## YEMEN

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### **43. These Yemeni women went from marginalized to the forefront**

Jerusalem Post, 13 Mar 22, Mohammed Al-Hassani

With Yemen's civil war deep into its seventh year and no end in sight, women and children continue to be its principal victims. Women are still searching to establish their own identities and seeking to break the restrictions imposed on them by current conditions as well as by Yemeni customs and traditions.

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EGYPT

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### **44. Egypt to receive 189,000 tons of wheat from Russia, Ukraine, and Romania within coming days**

Ahram Online, 13 Mar 22, Mai Ghandour

Egypt is set to receive a total amount of 189,000 tons of wheat from Russia, Ukraine and Romania in the coming days, a statement by the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade said on Sunday.

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ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **45. Did Russia empower Iran's attack on Erbil?**

Jerusalem Post, 13 Mar 22, Seth J. Frantzman

Iran's attack on Erbil using a dozen large ballistic missiles is a major escalation of affairs in the region. The missiles targeted key areas, including a new US consulate currently being built, in a message to the US: Iran can do a lot more damage. Had Iran wanted to, it could have aimed more at the airport runways or targeted civilian areas more heavily. Beyond just wreaking havoc or proving the extent to which it can do so, Iran showed the US the potential it has. And it all may be linked to a collapse of the Iran talks.

### **46. Ukraine crisis and Pakistan**

DAWN, 13 Mar 22, Riaz Mohammad Khan

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a point of inflection in world affairs, similar to the US outreach to China in the early 1970s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The situation is unfolding. There are many imponderables including how it will impact Russia itself. Its consequential character is obvious but the direction is not clear. Pakistan should be concerned about what the development portends for the future.

### **47. Iran is attacking US facilities in Kurdish region in message to America**

Jerusalem Post, 13 Mar 22, Seth J. Frantzman

A large attack was carried out on Erbil, Iraq, overnight between Saturday and Sunday, with the Kurdistan Regional Government counter-terrorism units reporting that the 12 missiles were launched at 1:30 a.m. The missiles struck near a large new US consulate currently being built in Erbil. The consulate is not in the center of the city and it is clear that coordinates for the

consulate would have to be put into precision strikes of ballistic-style missiles. This is a tactic Iran has deployed before.

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 14, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) Reuters led follow-up media reporting on Sunday morning's Iranian ballistic missile attack in the vicinity of the U.S. Consulate under construction in Erbil. The article highlighted that U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the Biden Administration was working to help get Iraq missile defense capabilities to defend itself against future attacks. Sullivan said the Administration was in consultation with both the Iraqi and Kurdish governments.
- 2) The Wall Street Journal cited a senior U.S. official who said the U.S. would not negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia to save the 2015-revised JCPOA agreement with Iran. The official said the Biden Administration would likely begin exploring options to the agreement over the next week if Russia doesn't back away from its demands for guarantees exempting it from Ukraine-linked sanctions.
- 3) The New York Times led global media reporting updating events on Ukraine. A U.S. official told media that Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the war in Ukraine after President Putin ordered military operations to begin in February, a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials. NSA Sullivan is scheduled to meet on Monday in Rome with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo and director of the party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission to discuss the Ukraine situation. Separately, media reported that Ukraine and Russian negotiators would be meeting Monday following "positive" talks this weekend that could result in an agreement to end Russia's invasion.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. U.S. working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities - Sullivan** Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Andrea Shalal

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday condemned Iran's ballistic missile attack on Iraq's northern Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, and said Washington was working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities to defend itself.

**2. U.S. won't negotiate Ukraine-related sanctions with Russia to save Iran nuclear deal**  
Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Laurence Norman and Dion Nissenbaum

The U.S. won't negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and could try to strike a separate accord excluding Moscow, a senior U.S. official said, a diplomatic effort complicated by an Iranian missile attack on Iraq that sent American troops rushing for shelter.

**3. Russia asked China for military and economic aid for Ukraine War, U.S. officials say**  
New York Times, 13 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Julian E. Barnes

Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the war in Ukraine after President Vladimir V. Putin began a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials.

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NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (13 Mar):** Spoke with Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs @MBA\_AlThani\_ yesterday about the urgent need for Russia to end its brutal and unprovoked war on Ukraine. I also thanked Qatar for continued assistance with Afghanistan diplomacy.

**State Department Spokesman Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (13 Mar):** The United States strongly condemns the missile strikes on Erbil, Iraq last night that emanated from Iran. The strikes were an outrageous violation of Iraq's sovereignty. No U.S. facilities were damaged or personnel injured, and we have no indications the attack was directed at the United States. Iran must immediately cease its attacks, respect Iraqi sovereignty, and halt its interference in Iraq's internal affairs. The United States stands with our Iraqi partners, including in the Kurdistan Region, and will help our partners in the region defend themselves.

**Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs; @PCOCMOFA (13 Mar):** The Chad Peace Negotiations that started in Doha today are Chad-Chad negotiations owned and led by the Chadians, and the State of Qatar will do everything in its power to make them a success as a facilitator and host.

**Prime Minister of Iraq Mustafa Al-Kadhimi; @MAKadhimi (13 Mar):** The Ministerial Council for National Security held an extraordinary meeting, today, Sunday, headed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Prime Minister @MAKadhimi, to discuss the attack that targeted the city of Erbil at dawn today, and caused losses and terrorized the city's residents.

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IRAN

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**4. Iran attacks Iraq's Erbil with missiles in warning to U.S., allies**  
Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Amina Ismail and John Davison

Iran attacked Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Sunday with a dozen ballistic missiles in an unprecedented assault on the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region that appeared to target the United States and its allies.

## **5. Iran nuclear talks stumble as US rebuffs Russian demands**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, James Politi

The US has ruled out offering any sanctions relief to Russia in order to clinch its support for an agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, rebuffing a last-minute demand from Moscow.

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## IRAQ

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## **6. Iraqis widely condemn Iran missile attack on Irbil**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Namu Abdulla

Iran's ballistic missile strike on the northern city of Irbil, which damaged some residential structures but caused no casualties, has been criticized by leaders from across Iraq's political spectrum.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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## **7. Afghan aviators hide as Taliban urge them to return to duty**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, David Zucchino and Yaqoob Akbary

Last year, the three Afghan aviators served in the elite Special Mission Wing of the Afghan Air Force. Trained by Americans to fight the Taliban from the air, they were some of the Afghan military's most elite troops. Now they are on the run, hunted by the Taliban while moving their families from one safe house to the next. When the Taliban recently invited former air force members to join the new government's fledgling air force, promising them amnesty, they never considered it.

## **8. Bachelet: Future of Afghanistan uncertain**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Lisa Schlein

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet warns humanitarian and economic issues are likely to claim more lives in Afghanistan than conflict.

## **9. Six killed in spate of murders across Afghanistan**

Deutsche Welle (Germany), 13 Mar 22

At least six killings were reported across Afghanistan on Sunday, amid a rise in mysterious deaths following the Taliban's rise to power.

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## YEMEN

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## **10. Saudis fight to turn the tide in Yemen's Civil War**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Dion Nissenbaum

Saudi Arabia and its allies, with their local proxies, trying to hold their ground and with Washington having scaled back support for the conflict, are struggling to turn the tide in Yemen, stepping up aerial bombing and missile strikes.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **11. White House faces oil standoff with Saudi Arabia and UAE as prices soar**

The Guardian (UK), 13 Mar 22, Martin Chulov and Julian Borger

Joe Biden's hardline stance on Russia has won him widespread plaudits, but with the most serious oil shock in decades now a reality, the US president's attempt to cushion the blowback continues to meet resistance from the two allies he needs most.

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **12. Criminal investigation into nephew of former Kazakhstan president**

The Times (UK), 14 Mar 22, Maxim Tucker

The nephew of Kazakhstan's former president is being investigated for crimes "undermining the security of the state" after the violent uprising in January in which at least 227 people died.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **13. US officials say Russia has asked China for military help in Ukraine**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia has asked China for military equipment to support its invasion of Ukraine, according to US officials, sparking concern in the White House that Beijing may undermine western efforts to help Ukrainian forces defend their country.

### **14. US, China officials to meet as tensions mount over Russia**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Amer Madhani and Josh Boak

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Feb. 11, 2022, in Washington. President Biden is sending Sullivan for talks with a senior Chinese official in Rome on Monday, March 14, 2022. The meeting comes as concerns grow that China is amplifying Russian disinformation in the Ukraine war.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **15. Bipartisan lawmakers ramp up calls on Biden to give Ukraine weapons, fighter jets**

Washington Post, 13 Mar 22, Amy B. Wang

A growing number of U.S. lawmakers ratcheted up pressure on President Biden on Sunday to increase military aid to Ukraine, including sending fighter jets and air defense systems that the administration rejected last week.

## **16. Russia turns to Syria playbook with shifting claims over grounds for war**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Max Seddon in Riga and Erika Solomon

As Russia began to build a pretext for war with Ukraine in February, it accused Kyiv of firing into Russian soil and blowing up a remote border checkpoint — albeit with no reported casualties. Now, as its forces lay siege to Ukrainian cities with increasing brutality, Moscow has justified its invasion by citing fears that Ukraine was restarting its nuclear weapons program. Russia also claimed to have found documents showing Ukraine had developed chemical and biological weapons under the orders of “curators from the Pentagon”.

## **17. More Ukraine-Russia talks scheduled as attack on base kills dozens**

Reuters, 14 Mar 22, Pavel Polityuk and Natalia Zinets

Diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine were stepping up on Monday, with Ukrainian and Russian negotiators set to talk again after both sides cited progress, even after Russia attacked a base near the Polish border and fighting raged elsewhere.

## **18. Zelensky says Russian missiles will strike NATO without no-fly zone over Ukraine**

Washington Examiner, 13 Mar 22, Daniel Chaitin

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Russia is on the verge of attacking NATO territory after a deadly Russian missile strike on a Ukrainian training center roughly 10 miles from the border with Poland.

## **19. US Official: war widening to the west of Ukraine was anticipated**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Steve Herman

U.S. officials say Russia’s lethal shelling in the western part of Ukraine on Sunday, close to the border with Poland, is something that they had anticipated. At least 35 people died and 134 were wounded early Sunday when Russia fired cruise missiles at the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security, a military base in western Ukraine.

## **20. Russia ‘using banned white phosphorus bombs’ in attack on Ukrainian city**

The Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Henry Zeffman

President Putin wants to turn Ukrainian cities into “Aleppos”, a Ukrainian official has said, claiming that Russia used white phosphorus in bombing attacks. Markiyan Lubkivsky, from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, warned that Putin was replicating Russian tactics from Syria and spoke of “more terrible attacks” on Ukraine.

## **21. Biden's CIA head leads the charge against Putin's information war**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Morgan Chalfant and Rebecca Beitsch

As Russia began amassing troops on Ukraine’s border late last year, CIA Director William Burns was ready. A career ambassador, Burns spent two tours at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and is one of the Biden administration’s foremost experts on Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin.

## **22. India unsure of Russian arms to meet China, Pakistan threats**

Associated Press, 14 Mar 22, Ashok Sharma

India is exploring ways to avoid a major disruption in its supply of Russian-made weaponry amid U.S. sanctions following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tightrope walk could become more difficult due to a continuing border standoff with China.

## **23. War censorship exposes Putin's leaky internet controls**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Frank Bajak and Barbara Ortutay

Long before waging war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin was working to make Russia's internet a powerful tool of surveillance and social control akin to China's so-called Great Firewall. So when Western tech companies began cutting ties with Russia following its invasion, Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov was alarmed. He'd spent years exposing Russian censorship and feared that well-intentioned efforts to aid Ukraine would instead help Putin isolate Russians from the free flow of information, aiding the Kremlin's propaganda war.

## **24. Russia-Ukraine War threatens wheat supply, jolts prices**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Ryan Dezember

Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens a big portion of the world's wheat supply and has sent prices on a dizzying ride to new highs as well as the sharpest weekly drop in years.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **25. Iran missile attack on Erbil goes beyond retaliation for IRGC deaths**

Al-Monitor, 13 Mar 22, Amberin Zaman

Iran's brazen ballistic missile attack on Erbil in the early hours of Sunday is a further chilling reminder of the continued vulnerability of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, seen as easy prey by its large and aggressive neighbors, Turkey and Iran.

## **26. Iran sends its missile regards**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Editorial Board

The Biden Administration's hell-bent pursuit of a new nuclear deal with Iran grows harder to understand with each provocation from Tehran. The latest came Sunday in a missile attack near a U.S. consulate under construction in northern Iraq.

## **27. How does it End? A way out of the Ukraine War proves elusive.**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt

The United States accurately predicted the start of the war in Ukraine, sounding the alarm that an invasion was imminent despite Moscow's denials and Europe's skepticism. Predicting how it might end is proving far more difficult.

### **28. China wanted to appear neutral between Russia and Ukraine. It isn't**

Los Angeles Times, 13 Mar 22, Doyle McManus

When Russia invaded Ukraine last month, a spate of wishful thinking ran through the West that China, a great power with friends on both sides, might step in to mediate a cease-fire. China's government struck a pose of neutrality, called for a peaceful resolution and said it supported the principle of "territorial integrity." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made a public plea to China's Xi Jinping to intervene. But Xi has been missing in action — and in practice, his policies have been far less neutral than advertised.

### **29. Is it time to call Putin's War in Ukraine genocide?**

New Yorker, 13 Mar 22, Philip Gourevitch

"We have to call this what it is," Volodymyr Zelensky said, late last month, a few days after Vladimir Putin had ordered the invasion and conquest of Ukraine. "Russia's criminal actions against Ukraine show signs of genocide." President Zelensky, who lost family members during the Holocaust, and who also happens to have a law degree, sounded suitably cautious about invoking genocide, and he called for the International Criminal Court in The Hague to send war-crimes investigators as a first step.

### **30. The West must decide how far is too far with Russia**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Joshua C. Huminski

Russia's ultimate aims in Ukraine remain unclear. Now two weeks into the invasion, Moscow's initial attempts at a lightning assault appear stymied, and as a consequence, the Kremlin is increasing the intensity and brutality of its campaign. Thus far, however, Russia's so-called "special military operation" has remained limited to Ukraine. There is, however, a risk that this does not remain the case, and should the conflict expand the consequences could be dire for Europe and indeed the world.

### **31. Why doesn't the Arab world break with Putin? Consider Sudan's example**

Salon.com, 13 Mar 22, Mohammad Ali Salih

There is considerable current discussion about whether the decades-long push of NATO's expansion eastward, encouraged by the United States, is to be blamed for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as famous "realist" John Mearsheimer, of the University of Chicago, has argued. That discussion should also include whether the U.S. is to blame for the refusal, or at least the hesitancy, of some Arab countries to condemn the Russian invasion, which reflects widespread Arab resentment of U.S. policy over the last several decades.

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

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IRAN

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consulate would have to be put into precision strikes of ballistic-style missiles. This is a tactic Iran has deployed before.

## U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. U.S. working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities - Sullivan**

Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Andrea Shalal

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday condemned Iran's ballistic missile attack on Iraq's northern Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, and said Washington was working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities to defend itself.

Sullivan told CBS's "Face the Nation" program that no U.S. citizens were harmed in the attack, and no U.S. facilities were hit, but the United States would do whatever it takes to defend its people, interests and allies.

"We are in consultation with the Iraqi government and the government in Iraqi Kurdistan, in part to help them get the missile defense capabilities to be able to defend themselves in their cities," Sullivan said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards claimed responsibility for a dozen ballistic missiles that struck Iraq's northern Kurdish regional capital of Erbil in the early hours of Sunday, Iran's state media reported.

The missiles targeted the U.S. consulate among other sites, according to the Kurdish regional government.

Sullivan, in a subsequent statement released by the White House, said the United States backs Baghdad and governments across the region in the face of threats from Tehran.

"We will support the Government of Iraq in holding Iran accountable, and we will support our partners throughout the Middle East in confronting similar threats from Iran," he said.

Asked about the impact on negotiations over a nuclear agreement with Iran that are already at an impasse, Sullivan said: "The various negotiators are back home in their capitals and we will have to see what happens in the days ahead with respect to the diplomacy around the nuclear deal."

He said President Joe Biden remained strongly committed to stopping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

"One thing I will say is that the only thing more dangerous than Iran armed with ballistic missiles and advanced military capabilities is an Iran that has all of those things and a nuclear weapon," he said.

U.S. forces stationed at the Erbil International Airport complex had previously come under fire from rocket and drone attacks Washington blames on Iran-aligned militia groups, but no such attacks have occurred for several months.

The Defense Department referred all queries about Sullivan's comments on missile defense capabilities to the State Department, which oversees security assistance agreements with other countries.

The State Department had no immediate comment on any new security assistance packages for Iraq.

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## **2. U.S. won't negotiate Ukraine-related sanctions with Russia to save Iran nuclear deal** Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Laurence Norman and Dion Nissenbaum

The U.S. won't negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and could try to strike a separate accord excluding Moscow, a senior U.S. official said, a diplomatic effort complicated by an Iranian missile attack on Iraq that sent American troops rushing for shelter.

With one of President Biden's top foreign-policy goals imperiled, the U.S. official said Washington would start exploring alternatives to the deal over the next week if Russia didn't back away from its demands for written guarantees exempting Russia from Ukraine-related sanctions that could curtail its future trade with Iran. Such guarantees could undercut the West's punishing array of sanctions leveled at Russia over the Ukraine invasion.

"I don't see the scope for going beyond what is within the confines of the JCPOA," the U.S. official said, referring to the 2015 nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. "I think it's pretty safe to say that there is no room for making exemptions beyond those."

Meanwhile, Iran's top paramilitary force took responsibility for a missile attack early Sunday on what it claimed were Israeli targets. It said the strike was in response to recent Israeli actions in the region, which included an airstrike last week in Syria that killed two of the group's commanders.

The Iranian attack is likely to create more regional resistance to American efforts to strike a new nuclear containment deal with Iran. The U.S. effort to resurrect the deal with Iran, which then-President Donald Trump withdrew from in 2018, has drawn criticism from Israeli and Persian Gulf leaders who worry that it will allow Tehran to continue to arm allies across the region and carry out its own missile strikes with impunity.

American, Iraqi and other world leaders condemned Sunday's missile strike as a destabilizing act, as the Israeli military stepped up its defenses and U.S. officials considered how to respond. The French foreign ministry warned that the strike could imperil talks over the nuclear deal.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said U.S. officials are still seeking an agreement to curb Iran's nuclear program despite the Iranian missile strike in Iraq.

"If Iran has a nuclear weapon, its ability to project power into the Middle East and to deter us, our allies, and partners, is enormous," Ms. Sherman said on Fox News Sunday. "So President Biden believes very strongly, as does Secretary Blinken, as do I, that we need to make sure that Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon, and then we also need to deal with their malign behavior in the region."

Time is pressing. U.S. and European officials say that Iran's nuclear work has expanded close to a point that the deal's main benefit to the West—keeping Iran months away from amassing enough nuclear fuel for a nuclear weapon—would be impossible. Iran is currently just a few weeks from that so-called breakout point.

The senior U.S. official said an agreement between Iran and the U.S. was "within reach," saying only a few issues were holding up a deal when talks in Vienna were broken off Friday because of Russia's demand. The official called Russia's demands "the most serious stumbling block and obstacle to reaching a deal."

There was no comment from Iran or Russia.

European officials say Russia had promised to respond with its precise demands for guarantees in the next few days. They have also started to explore among themselves options for pursuing a deal without Russia, two diplomats said.

"We would know within a week whether or not Russia is prepared to back down," the U.S. official said.

Earlier this month, as Western diplomats were seeking to wrap up the talks, Russia requested guarantees that its work under the JCPOA would be exempted from Western sanctions over Ukraine. The U.S. had given sanctions waivers for the 2015 deal.

However, after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters Moscow wanted much broader guarantees, its chief negotiator in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, presented a second paper to European negotiators on Tuesday seeking to protect all future trade and investment against Ukraine-related sanctions.

It couldn't be determined whether Iran would be willing to negotiate an alternative deal without Russia, or whether China—which has grown closer to Russia—would participate.

Mr. Ulyanov on Friday said his country's demands weren't the only reason an agreement on reviving the nuclear deal hadn't been reached. Since negotiations hadn't concluded, it was his country's right to raise its concerns, he said.

The U.S. push to salvage the deal also comes as the Biden administration is on the hunt for new oil supplies during the war in Ukraine, as it seeks to contain surging energy prices. Iran could supply up to a million barrels a day of new crude supplies eventually if sanctions are lifted.

One option for the U.S. and its partners would be to create an interim deal that could freeze some of Iran's activities and wind back aspects of its nuclear program in return for some level of sanctions relief from the U.S. Iran has always rejected the idea of an interim deal.

Another option would be to create what the senior U.S. official called a "replica of the JCPOA," without Russia, which would assign Moscow's tasks in the agreement elsewhere.

"I do think we would be open to various alternatives. We are beginning to think about what those might be," the official said. "We...at this point wouldn't rule anything out."

Further complicating any attempt to re-craft a deal with Iran: Tehran has refused to let its negotiators talk directly to the U.S. until Washington lifts its sanctions.

Any new deal would also trigger U.S. legislation giving Congress time for an in-depth review of the accord.

The negotiations in Vienna, which have dragged on for close to a year, aim to agree on the steps the U.S. and Iran would take to return into compliance with the nuclear deal. If Russia's demands can be resolved, negotiators have said they could be back in Vienna within a few days to finish the talks.

Iran has avoided calling out Russia and has continued to blame the failure to complete the talks on Washington. However there have been hints of irritation from Iranian officials, who have said they wouldn't let external factors get in the way of their interests.

The senior U.S. official declined to say whether an agreement would have been concluded by now without the Russian intervention. Among the issues still on the table is whether Iran's Revolutionary Guards would have their Foreign Terrorist Organizations listing removed and what any conditions might be around that, Western diplomats say.

Sunday's missile attack, which the Revolutionary Guards claimed, could make any immediate attempt to remove them from the FTO listing more politically explosive.

The missile strikes injured at least two people, blasted holes in nearby homes, and sent U.S. forces rushing for cover at the American military base in Erbil. At least one missile hit within about a mile of a new U.S. consulate under construction. Erbil is the capital of the semiautonomous Kurdish region in Iraq.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement that the U.S. "condemns in the strongest terms Iran's missile attack on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This attack targeted a civilian residence in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region's capital city, without any justification." He added that the U.S. would stand with other allies in the Middle East "in confronting similar threats from Iran."

Iran claimed that it was targeting Israelis in the strike. Israel has strong relations with the Kurdish region, but Israeli officials declined to comment on reports that Sunday's strike was aimed at Israeli spies working in northern Iraq.

Israel has been carrying out airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias and Iranian personnel in Syria as it seeks to prevent Iran from transferring weapons to Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia group. The campaign includes placing mines on ships carrying oil and other goods that are bound for Syria.

The Iranians, in turn, have often sought to pressure the U.S. to constrain its Israeli ally.

In October, Iran directed five drones at the al-Tanf garrison in southern Syria, which is defended by a small contingent of U.S. forces and American-trained Syrian fighters. The Iranians said in a confidential message to the U.S. at that time that the attack was in response to an Israeli airstrike that killed two Iranian officers in Syria, U.S. officials said.

In January, the massive U.S. Embassy complex in Baghdad was struck by four rocket attacks that injured at least two individuals but no U.S. personnel were hurt. That attack originated from inside Baghdad and was believed to have been carried out by an Iranian-backed militia group.

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### **3. Russia asked China for military and economic aid for Ukraine War, U.S. officials say** New York Times, 13 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Julian E. Barnes

Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the war in Ukraine after President Vladimir V. Putin began a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials.

Russia has also asked China for additional economic assistance, to help counteract the battering its economy has taken from broad sanctions imposed by the United States and European and Asian nations, according to an official.

American officials, determined to keep secret their means of collecting the intelligence on Russia's requests, declined to describe further the kind of military weapons or aid that Moscow is seeking. The officials also declined to discuss any reaction by China to the requests.

President Xi Jinping of China has strengthened a partnership with Mr. Putin and has stood by him as Russia has stepped up its military campaign in Ukraine, destroying cities and killing hundreds or thousands of civilians. American officials are watching China closely to see whether it will act on any requests of aid from Russia. Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, is scheduled to meet on Monday in Rome with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's elite Politburo and director of the party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission.

Mr. Sullivan intends to warn Mr. Yang about any future Chinese efforts to bolster Russia in its war or undercut Ukraine, the United States and their partners.

"We are communicating directly, privately to Beijing that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them," Mr. Sullivan said on CNN on Sunday.

“We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country, anywhere in the world,” he said.

Mr. Sullivan did not make any explicit mention of potential military support from China, but other U.S. officials spoke about the request from Russia on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of diplomatic and intelligence matters.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said he had never heard of the request from Russia. “The current situation in Ukraine is indeed disconcerting,” he said, adding that Beijing wants to see a peaceful settlement. “The high priority now is to prevent the tense situation from escalating or even getting out of control.”

The Biden administration is seeking to lay out for China the consequences of its alignment with Russia and penalties it will incur if it continues or increases its support. Some U.S. officials argue it might be possible to dissuade Beijing from ramping up its assistance to Moscow. Chinese leaders may be content to offer rhetorical support for Moscow and may not want to further enmesh themselves with Mr. Putin by providing military support for the war, those U.S. officials say.

Mr. Sullivan said China “was aware before the invasion took place that Vladimir Putin was planning something,” but added that the Chinese might not have known the full extent of the Russian leader’s plans. “It’s very possible that Putin lied to them, the same way he lied to Europeans and others,” he said.

Mr. Xi has met with Mr. Putin 38 times as national leaders, more than with any other head of state, and the two share a drive to weaken American power.

Traditionally, China has bought military equipment from Russia rather than the other way around. Russia has increased its sales of weaponry to China in recent years. But China has advanced missile and drone capabilities that Russia could use in its Ukraine campaign.

Although Russia on Sunday launched a missile barrage on a military training ground in western Ukraine that killed at least 35 people, there has been some evidence that Russian missile supplies have been running low, according to independent analysts.

Last week, the White House criticized China for helping spread Kremlin disinformation about the United States and Ukraine. In recent days, Chinese diplomats, state media organizations and government agencies have used a range of platforms and official social media accounts to amplify a conspiracy theory that says the Pentagon has been financing biological and chemical weapons labs in Ukraine. Right-wing political figures in the United States have also promoted the theory.

On Friday, Russia called a United Nations Security Council meeting to present its claims about the labs, and the Chinese ambassador to the U.N., Zhang Jun, supported his Russian counterpart.

“Now that Russia has made these false claims, and China has seemingly endorsed this propaganda, we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological

weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false flag operation using them,” Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, wrote on Twitter last Wednesday.

China is also involved in the Iran nuclear negotiations, which have stalled because of new demands from Russia on relief from the sanctions imposed by Western nations in response to the Ukraine war.

American officials are trying to determine to what degree China would support Russia’s position in those talks. Before Russia raised the requests, officials from the nations involved had been close to clinching a return to a version of the Obama-era nuclear limits agreement from which President Donald J. Trump withdrew. Mr. Sullivan might bring up Iran with Mr. Yang on Monday.

Current and former U.S. officials say the Rome meeting is important, given the lives at stake in the Ukraine war and the possibility of Russia and China presenting a geopolitical united front against the United States and its allies in the years ahead.

“This meeting is critical and possibly a defining moment in the relationship,” said Evan Medeiros, a Georgetown University professor who was a senior Asia director on the National Security Council during the Obama administration.

“I think what the U.S. is probably going to do is lay out the costs and consequences of China’s complicity and possible enabling of Russia’s invasion,” he said. “I don’t think anyone in the administration has illusions that the U.S. can pull China away from Russia.”

Some U.S. officials are looking for ways to compel Mr. Xi to distance himself from Mr. Putin on the war. Others see Mr. Xi as a lost cause and prefer to treat China and Russia as committed partners, hoping that might galvanize policies and coordination among Asian and European allies to contain them both.

Chinese officials have consistently voiced sympathy for Russia during the Ukraine war by reiterating Mr. Putin’s criticism of NATO and blaming the United States for starting the conflict. They have refrained from any mention of a Russian “war” or “invasion,” even as they express general concern for the humanitarian crisis.

They mention support for “sovereignty and territorial integrity,” a common catchphrase in Chinese diplomacy, but do not say explicitly which nation’s sovereignty they support — meaning the phrase could be interpreted as backing for Ukraine or an endorsement of Mr. Putin’s claims to restoring the territory of imperial Russia.

China and Russia issued a 5,000-word statement on Feb. 4 saying their partnership had “no limits” when Mr. Putin met with Mr. Xi before the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Beijing. Around that time, senior Chinese officials asked senior Russian officials not to invade Ukraine before the end of the Games, according to U.S. and European officials who cite a Western intelligence report.

Starting last November, American officials quietly held talks with Chinese officials, including the ambassador in Washington and the foreign minister, to discuss intelligence showing Mr. Putin's troop buildup to persuade the Chinese to tell the Russians not to launch a war, U.S. officials said. The Chinese officials rebuffed the Americans at every meeting and expressed skepticism that Mr. Putin intended to invade Ukraine, the U.S. officials said.

William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, said on Thursday in a Senate hearing that he believed Mr. Xi was "unsettled" by the Ukraine war.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Xi repeated China's standard talking points on the war in a video call with the leaders of France and Germany. He also said that all nations should show "maximum restraint" and that China was "deeply grieved by the outbreak of war again on the European continent," according to a Chinese readout. He did not say Russia had started the fighting.

U.S. and European officials say large Chinese companies will most likely refrain from openly violating sanctions on Russia for fear of jeopardizing their global commerce. On Thursday, some Russian news articles and commentary questioned China's commitment to Russia after news agencies reported that China was refusing to send aircraft parts to the country.

Russia, as U.S. officials often remind the public, has relatively few friends or allies. And officials have said Russia's outreach to its partners is a sign of the difficulties it is encountering in trying to subdue Ukraine.

As the United States and Europe have increased pressure and sanctions, Moscow has sought more aid.

In the buildup to war, Russia got assistance from Belarus, using its territory to launch part of the invasion. Minsk has also tried to help Moscow evade sanctions. Those actions prompted the European Union to impose sanctions on Belarus. The penalties limit money flowing into Belarus from Europe and block some Belarusian banks from using the SWIFT financial messaging system.

Michael Carpenter, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, accused Belarus of being a "co-aggressor" and having "stabbed your neighbor in the back," referring to Ukraine.

President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus has said his military will not join in the war. But Russia has launched missiles from Belarus and evacuated some injured Russian soldiers to hospitals in that country.

President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who owes his government's survival to Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, also declared support for Moscow's invasion. Russia has tried to recruit Syrian fighters to join the Ukraine war, according to the Pentagon.

While there are no details of how many recruits Moscow has enlisted or if they have arrived in Ukraine, American officials said Russia's efforts were an indicator of the strategic and tactical problems that have plagued its commanders.

Before the start of the war, European officials said, Russian military contractors with experience fighting in Syria and Libya secretly entered eastern Ukraine to help lay the groundwork for the invasion.

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## IRAN

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### **4. Iran attacks Iraq's Erbil with missiles in warning to U.S., allies**

Reuters, 13 Mar 22, Amina Ismail and John Davison

Iran attacked Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Sunday with a dozen ballistic missiles in an unprecedented assault on the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region that appeared to target the United States and its allies.

The missiles came down in areas near a new U.S. consulate building, according to Kurdish officials. U.S. officials said no Americans were hurt and nor were U.S. facilities hit. Kurdish authorities said only one civilian was hurt and no one killed.

Iranian state media said Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps carried out the attack against Israeli "strategic centers" in Erbil, suggesting it was revenge for recent Israeli air strikes that killed Iranian military personnel in Syria.

The attack, in which huge blasts shook windows of homes in Erbil after midnight, was a rare publicly declared assault by Tehran against allies of Washington.

The last time Iran fired missiles directly at U.S. facilities was when it struck the Ain Al Asad air base in western Iraq in January 2020 - a retaliation for the U.S. killing of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani.

Sunday's attack comes as talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal face the prospect of collapse after a last-minute Russian demand forced world powers to pause negotiations for an undetermined time despite having a largely completed text.

It also comes days after Israel carried out an air raid in Syria which the IRGC said killed two of its members and for which it vowed retaliation.

#### **'Response to Israel'**

The IRGC issued a statement about Sunday's attack which was reported by Iranian state media.

"Any repetition of attacks by Israel will be met with a harsh, decisive and destructive response," it said.

The Iraqi Kurdish regional government said the attack only targeted civilian residential areas, not sites belonging to foreign countries, and called on the international community to carry out an investigation.

million of other property. The same year the National Crime Agency lost a legal battle to freeze three properties linked to the pair, who were represented by the law firm Mishcon de Reya.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **13. US officials say Russia has asked China for military help in Ukraine**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia has asked China for military equipment to support its invasion of Ukraine, according to US officials, sparking concern in the White House that Beijing may undermine western efforts to help Ukrainian forces defend their country.

US officials told the Financial Times that Russia had requested military equipment and other assistance since the start of the invasion. They declined to give details of what Russia had requested.

Another person familiar with the situation said the US was preparing to warn its allies, amid some indications that China may be preparing to help Russia. Other US officials have said there were signs that Russia was running out of some kinds of weaponry as the war in Ukraine extends into its third week.

The White House did not comment.

Liu Pengyu, the Chinese embassy spokesperson in Washington, said he was unaware of any suggestions that China might be willing to help Russia.

“China is deeply concerned and grieved on the Ukraine situation,” Liu said. “We sincerely hope that the situation will ease and peace will return at an early date.”

The revelation comes as Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser, heads to Rome for talks on Monday with Yang Jiechi, China’s top foreign policy official.

Before leaving Washington on Sunday, Sullivan warned China not to try to “bail out” Russia by helping Moscow to circumvent the sanctions that the US and its allies have imposed on President Vladimir Putin and his regime.

“We will ensure that neither China, nor anyone else, can compensate Russia for these losses,” Sullivan told NBC television on Sunday. “In terms of the specific means of doing that, again, I’m not going to lay all of that out in public, but we will communicate that privately to China, as we have already done and will continue to do.”

The request for equipment and other kinds of unspecified military assistance was made as the Russian military struggles to make as much progress in Ukraine as western intelligence believe they expected.

It also raises fresh questions over the China-Russia relationship, which has grown stronger as both countries express their opposition to the US over everything from Nato to sanctions.

China has portrayed itself as a neutral actor in the Ukraine crisis and has refused to condemn Russia for invading the country. The US has also seen no sign that President Xi Jinping is willing to put any pressure on Putin.

The two leaders signed a joint statement in Beijing last month describing the Beijing-Moscow partnership as having “no limits”, in another sign that the two capitals were drawing even closer together.

Chris Johnson, a former top CIA China analyst, said the Russian request underscored that Russia-China ties were the closest they had been since before the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s.

“But it also highlights China’s position as the clear senior partner in the relationship now,” said Johnson, who heads the political risk firm China Strategies Group.

“Moreover, if they even are considering providing assistance, that speaks volumes about the personalized nature of the relationship amidst Chinese fears that Putin could fall, unleashing chaos on their northern border unseen since the collapse of the Soviet Union.”

Separately, the White House said President Joe Biden spoke with Emmanuel Macron, the French president, about the war on Sunday.

“They . . . underscored their commitment to hold Russia accountable for its actions and to support the government and people of Ukraine,” the White House said.

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#### **14. US, China officials to meet as tensions mount over Russia**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Amer Madhani and Josh Boak

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Feb. 11, 2022, in Washington. President Biden is sending Sullivan for talks with a senior Chinese official in Rome on Monday, March 14, 2022. The meeting comes as concerns grow that China is amplifying Russian disinformation in the Ukraine war.

The U.S. and China are sending top aides to meet in Rome on Monday amid mounting tensions between the two countries over the Russia-Ukraine war and as a U.S. official reports that Russia in recent days has asked China for military equipment to help press its campaign.

In advance of the talks, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan bluntly warned China to avoid helping Russia evade punishment from global sanctions that have hammered the Russian economy. “We will not allow that to go forward,” he said.

U.S. officials are also accusing China of spreading Russian disinformation that could be a pretext for chemical or biological weapons attacks launched by Vladimir Putin's forces in Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put China in a delicate spot with two of its biggest trading partners: the U.S. and European Union. China needs access to those markets, yet it also has made gestures supportive of Moscow, joining with Russia in declaring a friendship with "no limits."

In his talks with senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi, Sullivan will indeed be looking for limits in what Beijing will do for Moscow.

"I'm not going to sit here publicly and brandish threats," he told CNN in a round of Sunday news show interviews. "But what I will tell you is we are communicating directly and privately to Beijing that there absolutely will be consequences" if China helps Russia "backfill" its losses from the sanctions.

"We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country anywhere in the world," he said.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said that in recent days, Russia had requested support from China, including military equipment, to press forward in its ongoing war with Ukraine. The official did not provide details on the scope of the request. The request was first reported by The Washington Post.

The White House said the talks will focus on the direct impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on regional and global security.

Biden administration officials say Beijing is spreading false Russian claims that Ukraine was running chemical and biological weapons labs with U.S. support. They say China is effectively providing cover if Russia moves ahead with a biological or chemical weapons attack on Ukrainians.

When Russia starts accusing other countries of preparing to launch biological or chemical attacks, Sullivan told NBC's "Meet the Press," "it's a good tell that they may be on the cusp of doing it themselves."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby, on ABC's "This Week," said "we haven't seen anything that indicates some sort of imminent chemical or biological attack right now, but we're watching this very, very closely."

The striking U.S. accusations about Russian disinformation and Chinese complicity came after Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova alleged with no evidence that the U.S. was financing Ukrainian chemical and biological weapons labs.

The Russian claim was echoed by Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian, who claimed there were 26 bio-labs and related facilities in "which the U.S. Department of Defense has absolute control." The United Nations has said it has received no information backing up such accusations.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki called the claims "preposterous."

"Now that Russia has made these false claims, and China has seemingly endorsed this propaganda, we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false flag operation using them," Psaki tweeted last week. "It's a clear pattern."

Sullivan told "Face the Nation" on CBS that the Russian rhetoric on chemical and biological warfare is "an indicator that, in fact, the Russians are getting ready to do it and try and pin the blame elsewhere and nobody should fall for that."

The international community for years has assessed that Russia has used chemical weapons in carrying out assassination attempts against Putin detractors such as Alexei Navalny and former spy Sergei Skripal. Russia also supports the Assad government in Syria, which has used chemical weapons against its people in a decade-long civil war.

Testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Thursday, CIA Director William Burns also noted grave concern that Russia might be laying the groundwork for a chemical or biological attack of its own, which it would then blame on the U.S. or Ukraine in a false flag operation.

"This is something, as all of you know very well, is very much a part of Russia's playbook," he said. "They've used these weapons against their own citizens, they've at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere, so it's something we take very seriously."

China has been one of few countries to avoid criticizing the Russians for its invasion of Ukraine. China's Xi Jinping hosted Putin for the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, just weeks before Russia launched the Feb. 24 invasion.

During Putin's visit to China last month, the two leaders issued a 5,000-word statement declaring limitless friendship.

The Chinese abstained on U.N. votes censuring Russia and has criticized economic sanctions against Moscow. It has expressed its support for peace talks and offered its services as a mediator, despite questions about its neutrality and scant experience mediating international conflict.

But questions remain over how far Beijing will go to alienate the alliance and put its own economy at risk. Sullivan said China and all countries are on notice that they cannot "basically bail Russia out ... give Russia a workaround to the sanctions," with impunity.

Chinese officials have said Washington shouldn't be able to complain about Russia's actions because the U.S. invaded Iraq under false pretenses. The U.S. claimed to have evidence Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction though none was ever found.

On CNN, Sullivan said the administration believes China knew that Putin "was planning something" before the invasion of Ukraine. But he said the Chinese government "may not have understood the full extent of it because it's very possible that Putin lied to them the same way that he lied to Europeans and others."

Sullivan and Yang last met for face-to-face talks in Switzerland, where Sullivan raised the Biden administration's concerns about China's military provocations against Taiwan, human rights abuses against ethnic minorities and efforts to squelch pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.

That meeting set the stage for a three-hour long virtual meeting in November between Biden and Xi.

Sullivan is also to meet Luigi Mattiolo, diplomatic adviser to Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, while in Rome.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **15. Bipartisan lawmakers ramp up calls on Biden to give Ukraine weapons, fighter jets** Washington Post, 13 Mar 22, Amy B. Wang

A growing number of U.S. lawmakers ratcheted up pressure on President Biden on Sunday to increase military aid to Ukraine, including sending fighter jets and air defense systems that the administration rejected last week.

The public calls from both Republicans and Democrats to answer Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's urgent pleas for air assistance come as the Biden administration declined an offer from Poland to deliver MiG-29 airplanes to Ukraine for fear such a move could be interpreted by the Russians as an escalation of the United States' role in the war.

The bipartisan push underscores the growing hawkishness among many leaders on Capitol Hill, who have been urging Biden to do more to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian attacks as the war rages into its third week.

“[Russian President] Vladimir Putin and the Russians seem to be saying everything is escalatory. And yet they're escalating every single day by coming into Ukraine with these weapons,” Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) said Sunday on CNN's “State of the Union.”

“This is an illegal — this is a brutal — totally unprovoked attack,” he added, emphasizing the horrors of civilian targets hit. “So, as they escalate, what the Ukrainian people are asking for is just the ability to defend themselves.”

Portman was part of a four-person bipartisan delegation of senators who traveled to Poland on Sunday who called on the White House to send air assistance to Ukraine, arguing that the country increasingly needs help to push back Russian forces. The others on the trip were Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), a staunch supporter of former president Donald Trump; moderate Democrat Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.); and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), one of the more liberal members of the Democratic caucus.

Portman argued that because Putin has already declared other forms of U.S. military aid escalatory, sending planes to Ukraine would not risk intensifying the conflict.

Separately, 58 members of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus on Sunday again urged the Biden administration to try to facilitate the fighter jet deal with Poland, as well as to provide Ukraine with other air defense systems, including drones and surface-to-air missiles.

“Russia’s advantage in this domain could soon develop into air dominance if the Ukrainians do not receive necessary military aid,” the caucus members, who are evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, said in a new statement. “We commend the Polish government for taking proactive steps to deliver MiG-29 jets to the Ukrainian Air Force. We urge assistance to help facilitate this deal, commit to replenishing our allies’ fleets with American-made aircraft and help advance the transfer of [other] aircraft to Ukraine as well.”

The entreaties by both Democrats and Republicans on the White House come as Russia has continued to escalate its attacks in Ukraine. In addition, Russia has turned to China for military equipment and aid in the weeks since it began its invasion of Ukraine, U.S. officials familiar with the matter told The Washington Post, a move that could draw in a major world power into the conflict.

Russian forces are closing in on Kyiv and, early Sunday, unleashing missile attacks on a military facility a mere 15 miles from the border with Poland, a NATO member country. The strikes killed at least 35 and injured 134, and intensified fears that NATO could be drawn into a direct conflict with Russia.

Speaking from near the Poland-Ukraine border on Sunday, Portman said the bombing of the military facility in western Ukraine was close enough to be heard on the Polish side.

Ukrainians, he added, badly needed air defense systems to have better control over the skies for a “fighting chance” at winning the war. Portman also noted the United States has already provided shoulder-fired Stinger missiles and military helicopters to Ukraine, as recently as January.

“And those are directly from the United States. In this case, this would be Poland providing these airplanes, which are Soviet-style planes, old planes, MiG-29s,” Portman, a co-chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, said on CNN.

The White House has defended its decision to decline Poland’s offer, saying there were “a range of logistical operational challenges” that would come with delivering the warplanes.

Poland had said it was ready to deploy all of its MiG-29 jets to the Ramstein Air Base, an American military facility in Germany, but the Pentagon struck down the proposal, saying fighter jets departing from a U.S. or NATO base could be seen as an escalation of tensions with Russia. The Kremlin also warned on Saturday that convoys carrying U.S. or NATO weapons into Ukraine would be “legitimate targets” for attack.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Sunday that Biden had consulted with NATO allies and military advisers and “ultimately determined that the risk/benefit analysis of flying planes from NATO bases into contested airspace over Ukraine did not make sense.” Biden has, however, been in contact with Zelensky about providing other anti-air systems, he said.

Klobuchar did not explicitly criticize the Biden administration on Sunday. But, breaking with most other Democrats, she said she would still like to see the United States send fighter planes to Ukraine, even if they weren't the specific MiG-29 jets discussed.

"At some point, there's been so much focus on these planes, especially these particular planes, that they themselves could become a target," Klobuchar said on CNN's "State of the Union."

She suggested that other effective weapons like drones and Javelins would also help Ukrainians in their fight. "One of the things we have to remember is, this is all about air defense," she said.

Klobuchar said she had spoken with Biden 10 days ago to make her position clear, but understood that "things shift" in wartime. She stressed that there were negotiations about military aid that could and likely were happening outside of the public view for security reasons.

"I still don't rule out having planes at some point," Klobuchar said. "But, again, you take one day at a time and make the best defense system decisions. And that can't always be discussed on the air, or you would be giving Vladimir Putin the road map to what NATO wants to do here to help protect Ukraine."

Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday that the debate over the Polish fighter jets last week reminded him of a ping-pong game, with the two sides hitting a ball back and forth in what, to him, was a "diplomatic mystery."

"We have no time for this kind of ping-pong diplomacy. We need planes to save lives of our people," Kuleba said.

Ukrainian officials have continued their pleas for the United States and its NATO allies to help enact a "no-fly zone" over Ukrainian airspace, a move the allies have thus far rejected, also out of fear it would be seen by Russia as an escalation into a wider war.

But those who have urged more military support for Ukraine argue that the war and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine are already rapidly intensifying. An American journalist, Brent Renaud, was fatally shot while reporting outside of Kyiv, and Russian forces reportedly kidnapped a second mayor.

Republicans have for weeks pushed for more sanctions, earlier, and have accused Biden of responding to Putin from a position of weakness.

Though some GOP support for NATO eroded during the Trump administration — led by the former president's public disdain for the NATO alliance — many Republican lawmakers have been quick to criticize Biden for doing too little, too late, to lead his European allies.

"The world needs the Biden administration to be flying this plane," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Thursday, arguing that supporting Ukraine is not a provocation. "Too often it feels like the plane is flying them."

Democrats so far have defended Biden's approach to the crisis, saying that Biden has succeeded in uniting the world to oppose Putin and rally support for Ukraine.

"I don't know that it's constructive for us to continue to try to manage this crisis day to day," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said last week. "I think there is a bit of a blind momentum around this question of, more and more and more. That is not always connected to what Ukraine actually needs to defend themselves."

Sullivan acknowledged Sunday that Russia's bombing of the military base in western Ukraine suggested Putin would likely ramp up his invasion.

"What it shows is that Vladimir Putin is frustrated by the fact that his forces are not making the kind of progress that he thought that they would make against major cities, including Kyiv," Sullivan said. "That he is expanding the number of targets that he is lashing out [at] and that he is trying to cause damage in every part of the country."

Sullivan reiterated on "Face the Nation" Biden's insistence that U.S. military forces would not be drawn into fighting Russian troops on Ukrainian soil, but if Russian attacks spread to Poland or another NATO ally, that would "bring the full force of the NATO alliance to bear in responding."

When it came to reports that Russia may be preparing to use chemical weapons to attack Ukraine, Sullivan declined to specify if that would be a new "red line" for increased U.S. intervention.

"Sitting here before you today, I'm not going to go further than what President Biden said on Friday, which is that the Russians would pay a severe price if they were to move forward with chemical weapons," Sullivan said.

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## **16. Russia turns to Syria playbook with shifting claims over grounds for war**

Financial Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Max Seddon in Riga and Erika Solomon

As Russia began to build a pretext for war with Ukraine in February, it accused Kyiv of firing into Russian soil and blowing up a remote border checkpoint — albeit with no reported casualties.

Now, as its forces lay siege to Ukrainian cities with increasing brutality, Moscow has justified its invasion by citing fears that Ukraine was restarting its nuclear weapons programme. Russia also claimed to have found documents showing Ukraine had developed chemical and biological weapons under the orders of "curators from the Pentagon".

Russia's reasons for launching the war, however, are ever evolving. They now include accusations Ukraine was developing ethnically targeted bioweapons to massacre Slavs and that Kyiv had researched the bat coronavirus in ways suggesting it could have been responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ukraine and its western allies fear the claims could be laying the groundwork for a grisly new Russian attack.

“We are accused of attacks on allegedly peaceful Russia. And now what?” Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video address on Thursday. “What else have you prepared for us? Where will you strike with chemical weapons?”

Experts have drawn parallels with Moscow’s support for President Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria. There, Russia often blamed chemical weapons attacks that hit opposition areas on the rebels themselves. Analysts now say Russia may be pre-emptively developing a similar narrative about Ukraine to justify more aggressive attacks.

“Essentially, the game here is to create a narrative where you are arguing that your opponent is about to use these heinous weapons to justify brutal military action against them,” said Hanna Notte, a senior research associate at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.

“If we’re moving towards an attack on Kyiv or on other major Ukrainian cities in the coming days then this narrative could be part of laying the groundwork for that.”

Russia’s messaging around chemical weapons carries strong echoes of a gas attack in rebel-held suburbs in Damascus in 2013. In an opinion piece in the New York Times, President Vladimir Putin argued that rebels had staged a false-flag attack to encourage international intervention, after US president Barack Obama had called chemical weapons his “red line” in Syria.

Chemical weapons strikes re-emerged years later after Russia had intervened militarily in Syria on Assad’s behalf. Chemical weapons analysts blamed Assad forces for most of these attacks. But Russian officials said not only that the attacks were false flags, they also insisted some were staged.

Moscow’s arguments played into skepticism about US justifications for war, after Washington justified the 2003 Iraq invasion by alleging that Baghdad was developing weapons of mass destruction, claims that turned out to be false.

Now, the rhetoric appears to have resurfaced in Ukraine, according to Tobias Schneider, a fellow at the Global Public Policy Institute who has researched chemical weapons in Syria.

“What it looks like is that the people the Russians have working on Ukraine simply opened the playbook and pulled out the old tropes they had been using for years — and particularly the ones the west had already used against them,” Schneider said.

Russia’s accusations to justify the war have shifted after it failed to achieve the quick victory it appears to have expected.

Moscow initially said it was protecting Russian-speaking Ukrainians from a US-backed “neo-Nazi” regime and had acted after learning of plans to attack Russia. Later Russia began to claim that Ukraine was set on restarting its nuclear programme and that its “capabilities were much greater than those of Iran or North Korea”.

On March 6 those claims disappeared from Russian state media in favor of a new narrative: Russia claimed to have discovered Ukrainian work on “bioagents capable of infecting specific ethnic groups” and studies on the migratory routes of birds that could carry the deadly pathogens into Russian territory.

Three days later Russia said “Ukrainian nationalists” had stashed 80 tons of ammonia near Kharkiv, a city badly hit by Russia’s siege, “in preparation for a provocation using poisonous substances to accuse Russia of supposedly using chemical weapons”.

Biological weapons appear to have grown in the Kremlin’s assessment of the threats it faces, though Moscow has provided little evidence.

Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia’s security council, said last year that US-controlled bioweapons facilities were “growing as if on yeast [ . . . ] by some strange coincidence, mostly at the Russian and Chinese borders”.

Moscow has repeatedly accused the US since 2018 of developing biological weapons in a lab in Georgia, which lost a five-day war with Russia in 2008. Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of Russia’s Communist party, claimed this week that American scientists wanted “to poison everything Russian and eradicate our country”.

As the war continues the various Russian claims help the Kremlin tell its population that it had acted to protect them from Ukrainian threats, said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Centre.

“It’s very important to explain that it’s a preventive war,” Gabuev said.

On Friday, Russia took its claim to the UN, where Vasily Nebeznya, its ambassador, accused the US and Ukraine of using birds, bats and insects to send “dangerous pathogens” around Europe. His western counterparts rejected the claim, which they said they feared could preclude a “false flag attack” in Ukraine.

But the notions alone have advanced Russia’s cause, Schneider said.

“For them, the fact of it being true or not doesn’t matter, and I think they think the Americans are exactly the same way,” Schneider added. “What it does is provide them [with] leverage . . . they can use this to play games at the UN or the OPCW.”

It also “simply muddies the waters on every level,” he said. “If you keep using this narrative that was used in Syria, you leave people thinking that [these accusations are] just thrown around in every war. Who knows what’s true?”

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## **17. More Ukraine-Russia talks scheduled as attack on base kills dozens**

Reuters, 14 Mar 22, Pavel Polityuk and Natalia Zinets

Diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine were stepping up on Monday, with Ukrainian and Russian negotiators set to talk again after both sides cited progress, even after Russia attacked a base near the Polish border and fighting raged elsewhere.

A barrage of Russian missiles hit Ukraine's Yavoriv International Centre for Peacekeeping and Security, a base just 15 miles (25 km) from the Polish border that has previously hosted NATO military instructors, killing 35 people and wounding 134, a Ukrainian official said on Sunday.

Russia's defense ministry said up to 180 "foreign mercenaries" and a large number of foreign weapons were destroyed. Reuters could not independently verify the casualties reported by either side.

Thousands of people have died since Feb 24, when Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what he called a special military operation to rid Ukraine of dangerous nationalists and Nazis.

The United States, which had watched Russia's build-up on Ukraine's borders with mounting alarm for weeks, says it was a premeditated, unjustified and unlawful "war of choice".

In a telephone call, U.S. President Joe Biden and France's Emmanuel Macron underscored their commitment to holding Russia accountable for the invasion, the White House said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, also discussed diplomatic efforts to stop Russia's invasion, the State Department said.

Hopes were boosted after Russia and Ukraine gave their most upbeat assessments after weekend negotiations.

"Russia is already beginning to talk constructively," Ukrainian negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak said in a video online. "I think that we will achieve some results literally in a matter of days."

A Russian delegate to the talks, Leonid Slutsky, was quoted by the RIA news agency as saying they had made significant progress and it was possible the delegations could soon reach draft agreements.

Neither side said what these would cover. Three rounds of talks between the two sides in Belarus, most recently last Monday, had focused mainly on humanitarian issues.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the countries' delegations have been speaking daily by video link and a clear aim of his negotiators was to "do everything" to arrange for him to meet Putin.

"We must hold on. We must fight. And we will win," Zelenskiy said in a late night video speech.

## **Harsh sanctions**

Global financial markets, battered by fears the conflict could spread and drag in NATO, rallied on hopes for progress in peace talks. Stocks rose while oil prices gave up some of their massive recent gains.

Western nations have sought to isolate Putin by imposing harsh economic sanctions and supplying Ukraine with weapons.

Increasingly isolated, Russia asked China for military equipment after its invasion, sparking concern in the White House that Beijing may undermine Western efforts to help Ukrainian forces defend their country, several U.S. officials said.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, who is due to meet China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi in Rome on Monday, warned Beijing it would "absolutely" face consequences if it helped Moscow evade sanctions.

Asked about Russia's request for military aid, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for China's embassy in Washington, said, "I've never heard of that."

He said China found the current situation in Ukraine "disconcerting" and added, "We support and encourage all efforts that are conducive to a peaceful settlement of the crisis."

Still, violence and bloodshed continued.

Air raid sirens sounded before dawn in many cities and regions of Ukraine, including Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa, Ivano-Frankivsk and Cherkasy.

In the capital, authorities said they were stockpiling two weeks' worth of food for the 2 million people who have not yet fled from Russian forces attempting to encircle the city.

An American journalist was shot and killed by Russian forces in the town of Irpin, northwest of Kyiv, and another journalist was wounded, the regional police chief said.

Britain's defense ministry said Russian naval forces had established a distant blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, isolating the country from international maritime trade.

In eastern Ukraine, Russian troops were trying to surround Ukrainian forces as they advance from the port of Mariupol in the south and the second city Kharkiv in the north, it added.

The Russian-controlled eastern city of Donbass and Crimea - which was seized by Russia in 2014 - are now connected by a road controlled by pro-Russian forces, Russia's RIA news agency quoted Georgy Muradov, the deputy prime minister of the Russian-backed government in Crimea, as saying.

The report could not be independently confirmed.

Russia's invasion has sent more than 2.5 million people fleeing across Ukraine's borders and trapped hundreds of thousands in besieged cities.

"It is terrifying how violent and inhuman it is," Olga, a refugee from Kyiv, told Reuters after crossing into Romania.

The United Nations says at least 596 civilians have died since the invasion began and the toll is probably considerably higher as it is difficult to confirm deaths in places such as Mariupol.

The city council in Mariupol said 2,187 residents had been killed since the start of the invasion. Reuters was not able to verify that toll.

Moscow denies targeting civilians. It blames Ukraine for failed attempts to evacuate civilians from encircled cities, an accusation Ukraine and its Western allies strongly reject.

Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, has suffered some of the heaviest bombardment and dozens of civilians have been killed.

"We will stitch up the wounds and the pain of our country and our city," said Aliev, a 23-year-old musician. "We're not going anywhere."

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### **18. Zelensky says Russian missiles will strike NATO without no-fly zone over Ukraine**

Washington Examiner, 13 Mar 22, Daniel Chaitin

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Russia is on the verge of attacking NATO territory after a deadly Russian missile strike on a Ukrainian training center roughly 10 miles from the border with Poland.

In a video address posted shortly after midnight Monday, Zelensky made another urgent plea to NATO members to set aside their fear of escalation and establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine because war is already on their doorstep and will spill into their territory without one.

"If you do not close our sky, it is only a matter of time before Russian missiles fall on your territory, on NATO territory, on the homes of NATO citizens," Zelensky said, according to Agence France-Presse.

The United States and its allies have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, and have dedicated hundreds of millions of dollars in lethal aid to helping Ukraine defend itself from the invaders. Zelensky has welcomed the financial penalties, but argued they came too late. "Last year, I made a clear warning to NATO leaders that if there were no tough preventive sanctions against Russia, it would start a war," he said.

The Biden administration has been hesitant to support certain actions that officials say could draw the U.S. into direct combat with the Russian military, which includes closing the sky over Ukraine.

"No-fly zone has a nice air policing sound to it, but I participated in one as a young officer on an aircraft carrier way back in the early '90s. It is combat. You have to be willing to shoot and to be shot at," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on ABC's This Week on Sunday.

"President Biden has made it clear that U.S. troops are not going to be fighting in Ukraine, and there's a good reason for that because the United States getting involved in combat in Ukraine right now or over the skies of Ukraine right now leads to war with Russia. And there's very little that you can see that would make sense for this war to be escalated between two nuclear powers," Kirby added.

Should Russia's military assault expand into NATO territory, President Joe Biden promised the United States is ready to help protect the alliance. But, the commander in chief forewarned, that outcome is tantamount to another world war.

"As we provide this support to Ukraine, we're going to continue to stand together with our allies in Europe and send an unmistakable message that we will defend every inch of NATO territory every single inch with a united, galvanized NATO. One movement," Biden said in a speech Friday. "That's why I've moved over 12,000 American forces along the borders with Russia — Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, etc. — because they move once. Granted, if we respond, it is World War III, but we have a sacred obligation on NATO territory — a sacred obligation Article 5. And we will not although we will not fight the third World War in Ukraine. Putin's war against Ukraine is never going to be a victory."

In his video address posted to Facebook, Zelensky argued Russia is already taking the fight to the West in some ways. He referred to the death of U.S. photojournalist journalist Andriy Nebitov, who police in the Kyiv region say was killed by Russian forces in the town of Irpin.

"An American journalist was killed in the Kyiv region today. Brent Renaud. His colleague was wounded. It was a deliberate attack by the Russian military. They knew what they were doing. But not everyone in the West seems to know what they are doing," Zelensky said.

Eighteen days into the invasion of Ukraine, Russia's military advance has been slow but its forces have been making gains, including its navy blockading Ukraine's Black Sea coast, effectively cutting the country off from international maritime trade, according to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defense.

Although peace talks have made little tangible progress, Zelensky said discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin's negotiations remain constant.

"Representatives of our countries' delegations speak in video format every day. Our delegation has a clear task — to do everything to ensure a meeting of the presidents, the meeting that I am sure people are waiting for," the Ukrainian president said.

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## **19. US Official: war widening to the west of Ukraine was anticipated**

Voice of America, 13 Mar 22, Steve Herman

U.S. officials say Russia's lethal shelling in the western part of Ukraine on Sunday, close to the border with Poland, is something that they had anticipated.

"This does not come as a surprise to the American intelligence and national security community," said U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan during a Sunday morning appearance on CNN. "What it shows is that Vladimir Putin is frustrated by the fact that his forces are not making the kind of progress that he thought that they would make."

At least 35 people died and 134 were wounded early Sunday when Russia fired cruise missiles at the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security, a military base in western Ukraine.

The facility, not far from Lviv, is where NATO units train with Ukrainian troops.

NATO troops in Poland are a scant 25 kilometers away, prompting concern that even a misstep by Russia's military could cause the war to further widen.

"If Russia attacks, fires upon, takes a shot at NATO territory, the NATO alliance would respond to that," warned Sullivan in an interview on the CBS network's "Face the Nation" program.

Sullivan and officials from the National Security Council and State Department are scheduled to be in Rome on Monday to meet Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi.

The discussion will be "part of our ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication between the United States and the People's Republic of China [PRC]. The two sides will discuss ongoing efforts to manage the competition between our two countries and discuss the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on regional and global security," according to NSC spokesperson Emily Horne.

Sullivan on Sunday also responded to growing concern Russia will use chemical weapons in Ukraine.

"We can't predict a time and place," said Sullivan on CBS, noting an escalation of rhetoric from Moscow falsely accusing the United States and Ukraine of developing chemical or biological weapons to use against Russian troops.

"That's an indicator that the Russians are getting ready to do it" and blame it on others, according to Sullivan.

On NBC's "Meet the Press," Sullivan said, "We've consulted with our allies and partners about it, and we are prepared for that eventuality." He echoed U.S. President Joe Biden's warning from last week that Russia would face severe consequences if such weapons are deployed.

In a video released shortly early Monday local time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed a plea for NATO to impose a no-fly zone over his country, predicting if that does not happen "it is only a matter of time before Russian rockets fall on your territory, on NATO territory."

In recent days, satellite imagery and media reporters have indicated Russian armored units are poised to relaunch a major offensive to attempt to take Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, after a lull.

An award-winning American filmmaker and journalist is among the latest casualties of the conflict near the capital.

Brent Renaud died in Irpin, a suburb of Kyiv, according to officials.

“It is one more example of the brutality of Vladimir Putin and his forces as they’ve targeted schools and mosques and hospitals and journalists,” said Sullivan on CNN’s “State of the Union” program.

Renaud, who had previously worked for The New York Times, NBC and HBO, “paid with his life for attempting to expose the insidiousness, cruelty and ruthlessness of the aggressor,” said a statement from Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to Ukraine’s interior minister.

In recent days, the focus of the invasion has shifted to the besieged southeastern Ukrainian port city of Mariupol.

“We have already evacuated almost 125,000 people to the safe territory through humanitarian corridors,” President Zelenskyy said in a video address released earlier Sunday. “We’re doing everything to counter occupiers who are even blocking Orthodox priests accompanying this aid, food, water and medicine. There are 100 tons of the most necessary things that Ukraine sent to its citizens.”

Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry tweeted Saturday that Russian forces had shelled a mosque in Mariupol where 80 people were sheltering, including some from Turkey.

Seven civilians, including a child, were killed Saturday in a designated humanitarian corridor when Russia struck the convoy, forcing the civilians to turn around, Ukraine’s Defense Ministry said.

Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said only nine of 14 humanitarian corridors were open Saturday.

About 13,000 people were evacuated along the routes that had been agreed upon as safe passage exits for civilians, according to Vereschuk.

Also Saturday, a Russian missile attack destroyed a Ukrainian air base in the city of Vasytkiv, according to Mayor Natalia Balasynovych who said an oil depot also was destroyed.

Russia’s Interfax News Agency quoted Balasynovych as saying Russian rockets also destroyed an ammunition depot near Vasytkiv.

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## **20. Russia ‘using banned white phosphorus bombs’ in attack on Ukrainian city**

The Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Henry Zeffman

President Putin wants to turn Ukrainian cities into “Aleppos”, a Ukrainian official has said, claiming that Russia used white phosphorus in bombing attacks.

Markiyanyan Lubkivsky, from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, warned that Putin was replicating Russian tactics from Syria and spoke of “more terrible attacks” on Ukraine.

“The plan of Putin is to make from Ukrainian cities numerous Aleppos,” Lubkivsky told the BBC, referring to the Syrian city that suffered mass destruction during its civil war. “The situation is quite critical.”

He said attacks on Lutsk, a city in western Ukraine, had involved the use of phosphorus bombs. International law prohibits the use of white phosphorous shells in heavily populated civilian areas but allows them in open spaces to be used as cover for troops.

“One more terrible night, more terrible attacks on Ukraine,” Lubkivsky said. “The geography of Putin’s attack is becoming wider. This night Russians attacked Lutsk, Lutsk airport is almost totally demolished. Lutsk is in the western part of Ukraine. Russia uses phosphorus munitions, which are prohibited by international conventions. So, a lot of people are suffering everyday, a lot of refugees are trying to get to Poland, to the western border — one more very hard night for Ukraine.”

A senior police officer also claimed that Russian forces had used phosphorous in the eastern region of Luhansk.

Oleksii Biloshytsky, head of police in Popasna, about 60 miles west of Lugansk city, made the accusation in a Facebook post on Saturday. He wrote: “It’s what the Nazis called a ‘flaming onion’ and that’s what the Russcists [amalgamation of ‘Russians’ and ‘fascists’] are dropping on our towns. Indescribable suffering and fires.”

The Luhansk and Donetsk regions of eastern Ukraine, collectively known as the Donbas, were partially controlled by Moscow-backed separatist rebels before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

Overnight on Saturday, a train evacuating people from the Donbas to the western city of Lviv was shelled, according to the Donetsk military commander Pavlo Kirilenko. One person was killed and another wounded, he said.

Two Orthodox churches sheltering civilians in the Donbas were also hit, the regional authorities said.

President Duda of Poland said that if Putin used chemical weapons it would be a “game changer” for the world. “Of course everybody hopes that he will not dare do that — that he will not use weapons of mass destruction, neither chemical weapons nor biological weapons nor any form of nuclear weapons. Everybody is hoping that this is not going to happen.

“But as we say in Poland, using a little bit of an English expression, if he use any weapons of mass destruction then this will be a game changer in the whole thing.

“And for sure the North Atlantic alliance and its leaders, led by the United States will have to sit at the table and they will really have to think seriously what to do. Because then it starts to be dangerous. Not only for Europe, not only for our part of Europe or our region, for central Europe, but for the whole world.”

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## **21. Biden's CIA head leads the charge against Putin's information war**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Morgan Chalfant and Rebecca Beitsch

As Russia began amassing troops on Ukraine’s border late last year, CIA Director William Burns was ready.

A career ambassador, Burns spent two tours at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and is one of the Biden administration’s foremost experts on Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin.

President Biden in November quietly dispatched the former U.S. ambassador to Russia to try to negotiate with the Kremlin and warn them of consequences should they move forward into Ukraine.

Eventually, Burns was central to the unusual decision by the administration to proactively declassify and release intelligence on Russian “false flag” operations in Ukraine as a way to disrupt Putin’s messaging and endgame.

“The fact that the administration sent him to Moscow was the right call. That’s who I would send,” said Daniel Fried, former ambassador to Poland and distinguished fellow with the Atlantic Council.

“He was effective, skillful, and he got along with the Russians as well as anybody possibly could because he’s low key, soft spoken, thoughtful, and he was there during better periods of relations, during the [George W.] Bush administration. So he saw Putin when things weren’t great, but they weren’t so bad,” Fried added. “That personal knowledge is deep and real.”

Atop the CIA, Burns helms a vast bureaucracy whose work is supposed to be kept secret under usual circumstances.

But the Biden administration, principally Burns and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, decided to take a novel and risky approach as Russia escalated threats to Ukraine, one that the administration believes has paid off in disrupting Putin’s war plans.

“In all the years I spent as a career diplomat, I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians,” Burns recently told the Senate Intelligence Committee.

“In this case, I think we have had a great deal of effect in disrupting their tactics and their calculations and demonstrating to the entire world that this is a premeditated and unprovoked aggression built on a body of lies and false narratives. So this is one information war that I think Putin is losing,” he said.

While many older Russians largely have access to only government-controlled media, a younger, tech-savvy generation has been able to access reactions and reports from the U.S. and Europe as citizens protest the Ukrainian invasion in the streets despite thousands of arrests.

“For many years now, Moscow has worked to perfect the use of misinformation and propaganda to drive wedges and create confusion in the West. Calling out Putin’s machinations, like those we have seen in the run-up to the invasion, help to deny him the pretext he sought to justify his offensive,” a U.S. intelligence official told The Hill.

Burns was confirmed to lead the CIA early on in the Biden administration. His nomination was noncontroversial, and he enjoys broad respect in national security circles and among Democrats and Republicans. He is the first career diplomat to lead the agency.

Some see Burns as a natural fit, particularly as the Biden administration navigates the burgeoning crisis in Europe, given his decades of experience in foreign capitals and particularly his dealings with the Kremlin.

"He may be the perfect man in the perfect space," said Steve Cash, a national security lawyer who previously worked at the CIA and as counsel to the Senate Intelligence Committee. “It’s clear to me that what we’re seeing is maybe the best example of a whole of government approach in a really coordinated way to a foreign policy crisis.”

James Clapper, who served as director of national intelligence under Obama and worked alongside Burns, noted that he awarded Burns the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal for “his astute use of intelligence” when Burns retired as deputy secretary of State toward the end of 2014.

“I thought it was an inspired choice when his nomination was announced, and, from all reports I get, he is highly regarded by the work force at CIA,” Clapper told The Hill in an email.

Burns took the helm of the CIA at a time of low morale for the intelligence community, whose work former President Trump often dismissed.

Burns has stressed he saw the agency as an asset in his longtime career as a diplomat and hopes his work at the State Department brings a fresh perspective.

“Working with those colleagues over those nearly 35 years made me a better diplomat, a better negotiator, a better policymaker because of the intelligence that they collected and the insights that they provided. And I'd like to think, at least I hope, that my experience as an ambassador, as a policymaker will make me a better director of CIA,” he said during a discussion at Stanford University in October.

In his short tenure, Burns has made some visible changes at the CIA. He launched a new mission center focused on China in October, a nod to the administration's focus on the threat posed by Beijing.

Biden has leaned on Burns's experience in back-channel negotiations, dispatching the veteran diplomat to meet with the leader of the Taliban last summer as the Biden administration grappled with the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

But perhaps his most valuable and visible work has had to do with Russia.

Burns, who spent three years working with high-level Russian officials during his ambassadorship, has been essential as the U.S. tries to analyze Putin's mindset.

Even as some in Washington harbored doubts about Putin's intentions last winter, Burns cautioned during a Wall Street Journal event that he would "never underestimate President Putin's risk appetite on Ukraine."

"The person who knows [Putin], whose judgment I would trust, is of course Bill Burns," Fried said.

Burns, who also served as ambassador to Jordan, likes to quip he earned most of his snowy white hair from his time spent in Moscow.

"I think Putin is angry and frustrated right now," he told lawmakers in recent appearances before both chambers' intelligence committees, describing Putin as someone who has been "stewing in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition for many years" while his inner circle of advisers shrinks as he rejects those who disagree with him.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) said Burns had "shown extraordinary insight into Putin's thinking," while Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.) thanked Burns "for just not letting us forget just who and what we are dealing with."

Burns had left Moscow by the time Putin waged his first incursion into Ukraine, annexing the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. By then, he was serving as deputy secretary of State and was among a cadre of officials who were responding to Russia's aggression from the Situation Room.

The Biden White House, which is home to many Obama-era officials, has communicated that one of the major lessons learned from the 2014 crisis is the need to push back more aggressively on Russian disinformation.

Russia has tried to use disinformation tactics to obscure what is transpiring in Ukraine and convince sympathetic audiences that Putin is not the aggressor, but it has so far failed at controlling the narrative.

"That is a fog that can be dispersed in part by excellent intelligence work," said Cash.

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## **22. India unsure of Russian arms to meet China, Pakistan threats**

Associated Press, 14 Mar 22, Ashok Sharma

India is exploring ways to avoid a major disruption in its supply of Russian-made weaponry amid U.S. sanctions following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tightrope walk could become more difficult due to a continuing border standoff with China.

Experts say up to 60% of Indian defense equipment comes from Russia, and New Delhi finds itself in a bind at a time when it is facing a two-year-old standoff with China in eastern Ladakh over a territorial dispute, with tens of thousands of soldiers within shooting distance. Twenty Indian soldiers and four Chinese soldiers died in a clash in 2020.

"The nightmare scenario for India would be if the U.S. comes to the conclusion that it confronts a greater threat from Russia and that this justifies a strategic accommodation with China. In blunt terms, concede Chinese dominance in Asia while safeguarding its European flank," Shyam Saran, India's former foreign secretary, wrote in a recent blog post.

Would China, drawing lessons from Ukraine, be an aggressor in disputed eastern Ladakh or in Taiwan?

"It is very possible they might do it," said Jitendra Nath Misra, a retired diplomat and distinguished fellow in the Jindal School of International Affairs.

President Joe Biden has spoken about unresolved differences with India after the country abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions against Russian aggression in Ukraine. Modi has so far avoided voting against Russia or criticizing Putin for invading Ukraine.

In the early 1990s, about 70% of Indian army weapons, 80% of its air force systems and 85% of its navy platforms were of Soviet origin. India is now reducing its dependency on Russian arms and diversifying its defense procurements, buying more from countries like the United States, Israel, France and Italy.

From 2016-20, Russia accounted for nearly 49% of India's defense imports while French and Israeli shares were 18% and 13%, respectively, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

India not only depends on Russian weaponry, but it also relies hugely on Moscow for military upgrades and modernization as it moves toward self-reliance in its defense sector, said Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda, a former Indian military commander.

"Russia is the only country that leased a nuclear submarine to India. Will any other country lease India a nuclear submarine?" Hooda asked.

Sushant Singh, a senior fellow at the Center for Policy Research, said: "India's navy has one aircraft carrier. It's Russian. India's bulk of fighter jets and about 90% of its battle tanks are Russian."

In 1987, the Indian navy leased a Chakra-1, a Charlie-class nuclear cruise missile submarine, from the former Soviet Union for training. It later got another Soviet submarine, Chakra-2, in its place. In 2019, India signed a \$3 billion contract to lease an Akula-1-class nuclear-powered attack submarine from Russia for 10 years. It is expected to be delivered by 2025.

India bought its only aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, from the Russia in 2004. The carrier had served during the former Soviet Union and later for the Russian navy. India's first indigenous 40,000-tonne aircraft carrier is undergoing sea trials ahead of its planned induction by next year.

India also has four nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines on the way.

India's air force presently operates more than 410 Soviet and Russian fighters, comprising a mix of imported and license-built platforms. India's inventory of Russian-made military equipment also includes submarines, tanks, helicopters, submarines, frigates and missiles.

Misra said the U.S. hasn't shown any willingness to provide technology transfers to India.

"I would like to ask our American friends: What kinds of defense technology have you given us? What the U.S. is offering is the F-16 fighter aircraft rebranded as the F-21. The F-16 is obsolete from the Indian point of view. We went for the Mig-21 in the 1960s because the F-104 was denied to India. We are seeing the same kind of thing," he said.

"Under the AUKUS agreement, the U.S. is willing to share the nuclear propulsion technology for submarines with Australia but is not willing to share it with India," he added, referring to the trilateral security pact between the U.S., U.K. and Australia.

Australia in September decided to cancel a multibillion-dollar contract to buy diesel-electric French submarines and said it would instead acquire U.S. nuclear-powered vessels in a new Indo-Pacific defense deal under AUKUS.

During the Donald Trump presidency, the U.S. and India concluded defense deals worth over \$3 billion. Bilateral defense trade increased from near zero in 2008 to \$15 billion in 2019. Major Indian purchases from the United States included long-range maritime patrol aircraft, C-130 transport aircraft, missiles and drones.

As the Ukraine crisis deepens, the challenge for India is how to navigate international sanctions against Russia.

The Russian S-400 missile system deal with Moscow has put India at risk of U.S. sanctions after Washington asked its partners to avoid purchasing Russian military equipment. The S-400 is a sophisticated surface-to-air defense system and is expected to give India strategic deterrence against rivals China and Pakistan.

New Delhi has sought support from Washington and its allies in confronting China, a common ground for the Indo-Pacific security alliance known as "the Quad" that also includes Australia and Japan.

Tracing the history of India's acquisition of Soviet arms, S.C.S. Bangara, a retired navy admiral, said India began looking for arms and ammunition after its war with China in 1962.

The Cold War resulted in the United States cozying up with China. Pakistan as a facilitator held a trump card that could be used to enlist the complete support of the U.S. government in the event of an India-Pakistan conflict, he said.

During India's war with Pakistan in December 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh, the U.S. deployed a task force led by the USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal in support of Pakistan.

In the mid-1960s, India negotiated a series of acquisition agreements with the Soviet Union that continued for the next 40 years, Bangara said.

"It was not seamless, particularly when the Soviet Union collapsed. The long chain of training facilities along with the supply chain of logistics collapsed when the Union broke into smaller states," he said.

Even as India diversifies its defense acquisitions from the U.S., Israel, France and other countries, it may take 20 years to get over its dependence on Russian supplies and spares, Bangara said.

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### **23. War censorship exposes Putin's leaky internet controls**

Associated Press, 13 Mar 22, Frank Bajak and Barbara Ortutay

Long before waging war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin was working to make Russia's internet a powerful tool of surveillance and social control akin to China's so-called Great Firewall.

So when Western tech companies began cutting ties with Russia following its invasion, Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov was alarmed. He'd spent years exposing Russian censorship and feared that well-intentioned efforts to aid Ukraine would instead help Putin isolate Russians from the free flow of information, aiding the Kremlin's propaganda war.

"Look, guys the only space the Russians have to talk about Ukraine. and what is going on in Russia. is Facebook," Soldatov, now exiled in London. wrote on Facebook in the war's first week. "You cannot just, like, kill our access."

Facebook didn't, although the Kremlin soon picked up that baton, throttling both Facebook and Twitter so badly they are effectively unreachable on the Russian internet. Putin has also blocked access to both Western media and independent news sites in the country, and a new law criminalizes spreading information that contradicts the government's line. On Friday, the Kremlin said it would also restrict access to Instagram.

Yet the Kremlin's latest censorship efforts have also revealed serious shortcomings in the government's bigger plans to straightjacket the internet. Any Russian with a modicum of tech smarts can circumvent Kremlin efforts to starve Russians of fact.

That puts providers of internet bandwidth and associated services sympathetic to Ukraine's plight in a tough spot. On one side, they face public pressure to punish the Russian state and economic reasons to limit services at a time when bills might well go unpaid. On the other, they're wary of helping stifle a free flow of information that can counter Kremlin disinformation — for instance, the state's claim that Russia's military is heroically "liberating" Ukraine from fascists.

Amazon Web Services, a major provider of cloud computing services, continues to operate in Russia, although it says it's not taking on any new customers. Both Cloudflare, which helps shield websites from denial-of-service attacks and malware, and Akamai, which boosts site performance by putting internet content closer to its audience, also continue to serve their Russian customers, with exceptions including cutting off state-owned companies and firms under sanctions.

Microsoft, by contrast, hasn't said whether it will halt its cloud services in the country, although it has suspended all new sales of products and services.

U.S.-based Cogent, which provides a major "backbone" for internet traffic, has cut direct connections inside Russia but left open the pipes through subsidiaries of Russian network providers at exchanges physically outside the country. Another major U.S. backbone provider, Lumen, has done the same.

"We have no desire to cut off Russian individuals and think that an open internet is critical to the world," Cogent CEO Dave Schaeffer said in an interview. Direct connections to servers inside Russia, he said, could potentially "be used for offensive cyber efforts by the Russian government."

Schaeffer said the decision didn't reflect "financial considerations," although he acknowledged that the ruble's sharp drop, which makes imported goods and services more expensive in Russia, could make it difficult to collect customer payments. Meanwhile, he said, Cogent is providing Ukrainian customers free service during the conflict.

Schaeffer said these moves might impair internet video in Russia but will leave plenty of bandwidth for smaller files.

Other major backbone providers in Europe and Asia also continue to serve Russia, a net importer of bandwidth, said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis for the network management firm Kentik. He has noted no appreciable drop in connectivity from outside providers.

Cloudflare continues to operate four data centers in Russia even though Russian authorities ordered government websites to drop foreign-owned hosting providers as of Friday. In a March 7 blog post the company said it had determined "Russia needs more Internet access, not less."

Under a 2019 "sovereign internet" law, Russia is supposed to be able to operate its internet independent of the rest of the world. In practice, that has brought Russia closer to the kind of intensive internet monitoring and control practiced by China and Iran.

Its telecommunications oversight agency, Rozkomnadzor, successfully tested the system at scale a year ago when it throttled access to Twitter. It uses hundreds of so-called middleboxes — router-like devices run and remotely controlled by bureaucrats that can block individual websites and services — installed by law at all internet providers inside Russia.

But the system, which also lets the FSB security service spy on Russian citizens, is a relative sieve compared to China's Great Firewall. Andrew Sullivan, president of the nonprofit Internet Society, said there's no evidence it has the ability to successfully disconnect Russia from the wider internet.

"Walling off a country's internet is complicated, culturally, economically and technologically. And it becomes far more complicated with a country like Russia, whose internet, unlike China's, was not originally built out with government control in mind," he said.

"When it comes to censorship, the only ones who can really do it are the Chinese," said Serge Droze, a senior security engineer at Swiss-based Proton Technologies, which offers software for creating "virtual private networks," or VPNs, a principal tool for circumventing state censorship.

ProtonVPN, which Droze says has been inventive in finding ways to circumvent Russian blocking, reports clocking ten times as many daily signups than before the war. VPN services tracked by researchers at Top10VPN.com found Facebook and Twitter downloads surging eight times higher than average. Its research found the Kremlin to have blocked more than 270 news and financial sites since the invasion, including BBC News and Voice of America's Russian-language services.

Russia's elites are believed to be big VPN users. No one expects them to disconnect.

Russian authorities are also having some success blocking the privacy-protecting Tor browser, which like VPNs lets users visit content at special ".onion" sites on the so-called dark web, researchers say. Twitter just created a Tor site; other outlets such as The New York Times also have them.

The Kremlin has not, however, blocked the popular Telegram messaging app. It's an important conduit for Ukrainian government ministries and also for Meduza, the Latvia-based independent Russian-language news organization whose website is blocked in Russia. Meduza has 1 million followers on Telegram.

One reason may be that Telegram is also a vital conduit for Kremlin propagandists, analysts say.

Additionally, Telegram does not feature default end-to-end encryption, which renders messages unreadable by the company and outsiders, as the popular U.S.-based messaging apps Signal and WhatsApp do. WhatsApp is owned by Facebook's parent, Meta. Telegram does offer users fully encrypted "private chats," although users have to make sure to activate them.

After the invasion, Signal founder Moxie Marlinspike tweeted a reminder that sensitive communication on insecure apps can literally be a matter of life and death in war. A Signal spokesman would not share user numbers, but WhatsApp has an estimated 63 million users in Russia.

Being able to access outside websites and apps vital to staying informed depend, however, on foreign-based VPN services that Russians say they are having trouble paying for since Visa and Mastercard cut off their country.

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#### **24. Russia-Ukraine War threatens wheat supply, jolts prices**

Wall Street Journal, 13 Mar 22, Ryan Dezember

Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens a big portion of the world's wheat supply and has sent prices on a dizzying ride to new highs as well as the sharpest weekly drop in years.

Wheat stockpiles were already running low and prices were the highest in years thanks to two years of poor growing weather when Russia's attack jammed up Black Sea trading and endangered nearly a third of the world's exports. The invasion prompted fears of food shortages in countries fed with imported grain and pushed prices to new highs.

Milling wheat in Paris and the most-traded U.S. futures contract, for soft red winter wheat delivered to Chicago, notched record prices early in the week. Then they plunged. Chicago futures ended the week 8.5% lower, the worst weekly performance since 2014 when wheat was coming down from a drought-induced spike. French markets, as well as on-the-spot trading in St. Louis and Kansas City, followed similar arcs.

Still, the benchmark U.S. price, at \$11.07 a bushel, is 72% higher than a year earlier and analysts expect the war will keep wheat high. Germany's Commerzbank AG on Friday boosted its spring-quarter price forecasts by 19% for Chicago futures and by about 14% in Paris.

Rising wheat points to further inflation of food prices and another force blunting the post-pandemic economic recovery. Global food prices hit an all-time high in February, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. U.S. food prices in February were up 7.9% from a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, taking a big bite out of Americans' purchasing power.

Analysts and traders don't know yet the extent to which global wheat supplies will be dented by the war. What remains of last year's crop has been kept off market due to the closure of Ukrainian ports and shippers' hesitancy to enter a war zone to fetch Russian wheat. Meanwhile, it is unclear if growers in the region will be able to harvest winter wheat, which was planted in autumn, or plant spring crops in the coming weeks.

"Russian ports are operating normally but no one is willing to pay extremely high insurance costs to book cargoes from there," said Will Osnato, senior research analyst with Gro Intelligence, an agricultural data firm.

Since wheat is priced in dollars, exporters in Russia, where the currency has plunged about 40% in 2022, could take cues from South American growers who in years past hedged their own currency devaluations by holding on to grains.

“This is the fog of war,” said Dave Whitcomb, head of research at Switzerland’s Peak Trading Research. “We just don’t know.”

The uncertainty inspired a frenzy of speculation that exacerbated the price swings. Investors poured so much cash into the Teucrium Wheat Fund, WEAT 3.40% which holds futures, that it ran out of shares to sell on Monday. The previous trading day, March 4, the exchange-traded fund issued about 16 million new shares, which was more than the 13 million or so that were outstanding before the invasion. U.S. financial regulators granted the fund permission on Wednesday to create and sell additional shares.

The fund’s assets under management ballooned to nearly \$500 million, up from \$86 million before Russia’s attack, but dropped to about \$341 million by the end of the week as wheat futures shed price.

“In six weeks they’ll start planting in Ukraine and Russia,” said Sal Gilbertie, president of Teucrium Trading LLC, which manages the wheat fund. “If it’s disrupted that means a future reduction in supplies that the world is counting on.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Wednesday lowered its expectations for Russian and Ukrainian wheat exports during the current marketing year, which began in June, by about 12%. Some of the lost supply will be replaced by exports from Australia, where a record harvest is expected, and India, which has been ramping up shipments abroad amid a string of bumper crops, the Agriculture Department said in its monthly market forecast.

The Agriculture Department expects U.S. farmers to plant slightly more wheat than last year, when the fewest acres were sown in more than a century. Lower yields are anticipated, due to continuing drought in the West and Northern Plains.

While American consumers can expect more sticker shock at the grocery store, the loss of Black Sea exports risks leaving some countries that rely on imports unable to meet their grain needs, analysts and traders say.

Egypt, the world’s largest wheat importer, recently canceled a tender after receiving a limited number of pricey offers. Turkey reduced an order size. Tanzania recently said that its wheat import bill jumped 50% for the 12 months through January, before the Russian attack roiled the market.

“The world’s poorest are going to suffer from this war,” said Mr. Gilbertie. “It’s a crime against humanity.”

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deal bars Iran-Russia transactions it will open up new sanctions-evading opportunities. The world will see it as one more sign of American weakness.

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## **27. How does it End? A way out of the Ukraine War proves elusive.**

New York Times, 13 Mar 22, David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt

The United States accurately predicted the start of the war in Ukraine, sounding the alarm that an invasion was imminent despite Moscow's denials and Europe's skepticism. Predicting how it might end is proving far more difficult.

There are three separate back-channel efforts underway to start negotiations — by the leaders of France; Israel and Turkey; and, in a recent entree, the new chancellor of Germany. But so far, all have hit the stone wall of President Vladimir V. Putin's refusal to engage in any serious negotiation. At the Pentagon, there are models of a sloggling conflict that brings more needless death and destruction to a nascent European democracy, and others in which Mr. Putin settles for what some believe was his original objective: seizing a broad swath of the south and east, connecting Russia by land to Crimea, which he annexed in 2014.

And there is a more terrifying endgame, in which NATO nations get sucked more directly into the conflict, by accident or design. That possibility became more vivid on Sunday, when Russian missiles landed in Ukraine's western reaches, an area unscathed until now by the 18-day-old conflict, about a dozen miles from the Polish border. Russia declared over the weekend that continued efforts to funnel weapons through that region to the Ukrainian forces would make the convoys "legitimate targets," a warning that just because the weapons are being massed on NATO territory does not mean they are immune from attack.

In interviews with senior American and European officials in recent days, there is a consensus on one point: Just as the last two weeks revealed that Russia's vaunted military faltered in its invasion plan, the next two or three may reveal whether Ukraine can survive as a state, and negotiate an end to the war. So far even the most basic progress, such as establishing safe humanitarian corridors, has proved elusive.

And now, what troubles officials is that Mr. Putin may double down and expand the fight beyond Ukraine.

In private, officials express concern that Mr. Putin might seek to take Moldova, another former Soviet republic that has never joined NATO and is considered particularly vulnerable. There is renewed apprehension about Georgia, which fought a war with Russia in 2008 that today seems like a test run for the far larger conflict playing out.

And there is the possibility that Mr. Putin, angered by the slowness of his offensive in Ukraine, may reach for other weapons: chemical, biological, nuclear and cyber.

Jake Sullivan, Mr. Biden's national security adviser, mentioned that scenario on Sunday, appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation." "Part of the reason why Putin is resorting to the

possibility of extreme tactics like the use of chemical weapons is because he's frustrated because his forces aren't advancing," he said.

Mr. Sullivan said that Russia would suffer "severe consequences" if it used chemical weapons, without specifying what those would be. He sidestepped the question of how Mr. Biden would react. So far he has said the only thing that would bring the United States and its allies directly into the war would be an attack on NATO nations. Quietly, the White House and the senior American military leadership have been modeling how they would respond to a series of escalations, including major cyberattacks on American financial institutions and the use of a tactical or "battlefield" nuclear weapon by Mr. Putin to signal to the rest of the world that he would brook no interference as he moves to crush Ukraine.

Even with Ukrainians begging for more offensive weapons and American intervention, Mr. Biden has stuck to his determination that he will not directly engage the forces of a nuclear-armed superpower.

"The idea that we're going to send in offensive equipment," Mr. Biden said in Philadelphia to the House Democratic Caucus on Friday, "and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews, just understand — and don't kid yourself, no matter what you all say — that's called 'World War III.' OK? Let's get it straight here."

### **Diplomacy: Deciphering Putin's Bottom Line**

Early last week there was a glimmer of hope that a real negotiation would begin that could establish humanitarian corridors for Ukrainians to escape the horror of intense shelling and missile attacks, and perhaps lead to peace talks. Dmitri Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman and a confidant of Mr. Putin, said that if Ukraine changed its constitution to accept some form of "neutrality" rather than an aspiration to join NATO; recognized that the separatist areas of Donetsk and Lugansk were independent states, and that Crimea was part of Russia; the military strikes would stop "in a moment."

In an interview with ABC News the next day, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine seemed surprisingly open to the idea. He said he had "cooled down" on joining NATO, saying it was clear the Western alliance "is not prepared to accept Ukraine." And while he did not say he could accept a carve-out of part of the country, he said that "we can discuss and find a compromise on how these territories will live on."

But it is unclear whether Mr. Putin himself would take that deal. Separate conversations between the Russian leader and President Emmanuel Macron of France, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett of Israel and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey all circled the same issues, but left his interlocutors wondering if they were being played for time as the war ground on.

A French government account of a call to Mr. Putin on Saturday by Mr. Macron and Mr. Scholz termed it "disappointing with Putin's insincerity: He is determined to continue the war." Wendy

Sherman, the deputy secretary of state, said there was no evidence from the conversations so far that Mr. Putin has changed course; he remains “intent on destroying Ukraine.”

Each of those leaders checked in with senior U.S. administration officials before and after their talks with Mr. Putin, and they have been speaking with Mr. Zelensky as well. The United States has kept some distance — in part because no senior Russian officials will communicate with their American counterparts, including with the kind of talks that were routine in the run-up to the war.

The best hope, American and European officials say, is that Mr. Putin concludes that he must scale back his goals in the face of the economic sanctions — especially the crippling of Russia’s central bank and the prospect that the country will default quickly on its obligations. Yet should Mr. Zelensky actually strike a deal with Mr. Putin, that could lead to a hard decision for the United States: whether to lift any of the sanctions that it has coordinated with nations around the world.

### **A Worse Alternative: Long, Slow Slog**

Despite his military’s logistical problems, Mr. Putin appears intent on intensifying his campaign and laying siege to Kyiv, the capital; Kharkiv, the country’s second-largest city; and other Ukrainian urban centers.

But even as Mr. Putin presses on with his strategy to pound Kyiv into submission, Russian air and ground forces are confronting Ukrainians motivated to fight, senior Pentagon and U.S. intelligence officials said.

William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, told lawmakers last week that he was anticipating an “ugly next few weeks.”

“I think Putin is angry and frustrated right now,” Mr. Burns said. He is likely to “try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties,” he added.

Indeed, even as Russia widened its artillery, missile and bombing strikes on Sunday, Russian and Ukrainian forces were girding for what is shaping up to be a climactic battle in Kyiv.

Mr. Putin has demonstrated in past conflicts in Syria and Chechnya a willingness not only to bomb heavily populated areas but also to use civilian casualties as leverage against his enemies. Senior U.S. officials said the coming weeks could see a long, drawn-out fight with thousands of casualties on both sides, as well as among the roughly 1.5 million citizens remaining in the city.

Russian and Ukrainian forces are now pitted in fierce street fighting in the suburban towns around the capital. Russian forces greatly outnumber the Ukrainian Army, but the Ukrainians have been ambushing them with Javelin anti-tank missiles supplied by NATO and the United States.

Lt. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told lawmakers last week there was a limit to how long Kyiv could hold on as Russian forces edged closer from the

east, north and south, tightening the vise. “With supplies being cut off, it will become somewhat desperate in, I would say, 10 days to two weeks,” General Berrier said.

Another senior U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss confidential intelligence assessments, said it could take up to two weeks for Russian forces to encircle Kyiv and then at least another month to seize it. That would require a combination of relentless bombardment and what could be weeks or months of door-to-door street fighting.

“It will come at a very high price in Russian blood,” said retired Adm. James G. Stavridis, the former supreme allied commander for Europe. That high cost, he added, could cause Mr. Putin to destroy the city with an onslaught of missiles, artillery and bombs — “continuing a swath of war crimes unlike any we have seen in the 21st century.”

### **Abandoning Plan A, and Dividing the Nation**

The Russian assault has so far failed to achieve any of Mr. Putin’s initial objectives. But on the battlefield, he is closer to some goals than others.

Beyond Kyiv, the northern cities of Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Sumy remain encircled, or nearly so, and continue to suffer heavy Russian shelling. Progress in the east and south, while slow, has been grindingly steady. But it also hints what a divided Ukraine might look like.

Russian forces are still subjecting Mariupol to siege and bombardment, but are close to securing that strategic southern port city and, with it, a land bridge from Crimea in the south to the Donbas region in the east that has been controlled by Russian-backed separatists since 2014.

And if Russia can seize Odessa, a pivotal Black Sea port city, and perhaps the remaining Ukrainian coast to the southeast, it would deprive Ukraine of important access to the sea.

Senior Pentagon officials said the key issue now is maintaining extreme pressure on Russia in hopes that Mr. Putin will cut his losses and settle for the Russian-speaking south and east.

Yet the Russian attacks in western Ukraine over the past two days underscore Mr. Putin’s continued determination to control the entire country, starting with Kyiv. It remains unclear how he would find the forces to occupy it, which could require a bloody, yearslong guerrilla war.

“The most probable endgame, sadly, is a partition of Ukraine,” said Mr. Stavridis, pointing to the outcome of the Balkan wars in the 1990s as a model. “Putin would take the southeast of the country, and the ethnic Russians would gravitate there. The rest of the nation, overwhelmingly Ukrainian, would continue as a sovereign state.”

### **Worst-Case Scenario: Escalation**

The fear now is that the war could expand.

The more the fighting moves west, the more likely it is that an errant missile lands in NATO territory, or the Russians take down a NATO aircraft.

Mr. Putin has used chemical weapons before against political opponents and defectors, and he might be inclined to do so again. Using battlefield nuclear weapons would cross a threshold, which most American officials believe even Mr. Putin would not do unless he believed he was facing the need to withdraw his troops. But the possibility of a nuclear detonation has been discussed more in the past two weeks than in years, officials say.

And finally, there are cyberattacks, which have been strangely missing from the conflict so far. They may be Mr. Putin's most effective way of retaliating against the United States for grievous harm to the Russian economy.

So far there are none of the procedures in place that American and Russian pilots use over Syria, for example, to prevent accidental conflict. And Mr. Putin has twice issued thinly veiled reminders of his nuclear capabilities, reminding the world that if the conflict does not go his way he has far larger, and far more fearsome, weapons to call into play.

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## **28. China wanted to appear neutral between Russia and Ukraine. It isn't**

Los Angeles Times, 13 Mar 22, Doyle McManus

When Russia invaded Ukraine last month, a spate of wishful thinking ran through the West that China, a great power with friends on both sides, might step in to mediate a cease-fire.

China's government struck a pose of neutrality, called for a peaceful resolution and said it supported the principle of "territorial integrity." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made a public plea to China's Xi Jinping to intervene.

But Xi has been missing in action — and in practice, his policies have been far less neutral than advertised.

China hasn't condemned the invasion and initially didn't even call it a war. It still hasn't acknowledged which country's tanks crossed the other's borders.

Xi has talked by telephone with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but he hasn't talked with Zelensky.

"China supports Russia in resolving the issue through negotiation," China's official summary of the Xi-Putin call said.

Last week, China's foreign minister called Russia his country's "most important strategic partner" and said their relationship was "ironclad."

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry has endorsed Russian propaganda claims that the U.S. military is running bioweapons laboratories in Ukraine. The charge is false; the U.S. has funded programs to destroy old bioweapons, not produce new ones.

There's a contradiction at the heart of China's foreign policy. China wants to be seen as a neutral power. But the way it calculates its interests — giving top priority to reducing the global influence of the United States — makes neutrality on issues involving Russia, its biggest ally, almost impossible.

Less than three weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Xi welcomed Putin at a summit meeting in Beijing and declared that their partnership had "no limits."

"China's policy is based on Xi Jinping's view of China's interests, and he sees the United States as implacably hostile," Bonnie Glaser, a China scholar at the German Marshall Fund, told me. "He sees Russia as his only ally against the United States and the other democracies.... I don't think China can in any way be neutral."

"At a strategic and diplomatic level, they've clearly leaned toward Russia," agreed Evan Feigenbaum, a former State Department official now at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "It's a deliberate choice."

The war in Ukraine may have "unsettled" China's leaders, but it doesn't appear to have shaken the Xi-Putin partnership, CIA Director William Burns told Congress last week.

China "has invested a lot in the relationship," Burns said. "I don't expect that to change anytime soon."

Still, two big factors limit how far China is willing to lean in Russia's direction.

Economics is the first: China's prosperity depends on global trade, not trade with Russia, so it wants to avoid running afoul of the massive sanctions the U.S. and its allies have put in place against Moscow.

Last week, Russian officials reported that China had turned down an emergency request for aircraft parts, apparently to maintain Chinese access to Western suppliers like Boeing and Airbus.

But on a less visible level, Chinese banks are working with Russian banks to use China's UnionPay to replace Visa and Mastercard, shut down by sanctions.

The pattern, Feigenbaum said, is an attempt to "straddle" the sanctions: complying where necessary, but still looking for opportunities to make deals with Russia.

A second limit involves China's desire to maintain a good relationship with Europe, where most countries have been quick to support Ukraine.

"There's a potential for China's relationship with the European Union to get much worse," Feigenbaum said. "China may want to avoid that."

One limit that hasn't seemed to affect China's policies, though, is Beijing's long-standing adherence to principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. "They have essentially jettisoned those principles," Feigenbaum said.

For all those reasons, the idea that China might serve as a neutral mediator to help end the war never had much of a chance.

In any case, it probably wasn't very workable. China's diplomats have little experience mediating international disputes, least of all in Europe.

And while officials from Ukraine and Russia have met three times, their positions have been too far apart to produce even a temporary cease-fire.

Several international leaders have offered their services as mediators — France's Emmanuel Macron, Israel's Naftali Bennett, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan — without success. Putin appears intent on pursuing his military offensive as far as he can before entering serious negotiations.

But China was never neutral to begin with.

And that reflects what may be the most important fact about the new world disorder that Putin's invasion has unleashed:

China's Xi has made a choice. He believes the coming decades will be dominated by confrontations between the United States and China, with Russia as China's sole important ally.

For anyone pondering the parallels between this new period and the Cold War, there's an eerie echo of the Sino-Soviet alliance that once sought to dominate Eurasia — only this time, with China as the senior partner.

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## **29. Is it time to call Putin's War in Ukraine genocide?**

New Yorker, 13 Mar 22, Philip Gourevitch

"We have to call this what it is," Volodymyr Zelensky said, late last month, a few days after Vladimir Putin had ordered the invasion and conquest of Ukraine. "Russia's criminal actions against Ukraine show signs of genocide." President Zelensky, who lost family members during the Holocaust, and who also happens to have a law degree, sounded suitably cautious about invoking genocide, and he called for the International Criminal Court in The Hague to send war-crimes investigators as a first step. But such investigations take years, and rarely result in convictions. (Since the I.C.C. was established in 1998, it has indicted only Africans; and Russia, like the United States, refuses its jurisdiction.) The only court that Zelensky can make his case in for now is the court of global public opinion, where his instincts, drawing on deep wells of courage and conviction, have been unerring. And by the end of the invasion's second week with Putin's indiscriminate bombardment of civilian targets intensifying, and the death toll mounting rapidly; with more than two and a half million Ukrainians having fled the country, and

millions more under relentless attack in besieged cities and towns; and with no end in sight—Zelensky no longer deferred to outside experts to describe what Ukrainians face in the most absolute terms. “I will appeal directly to the nations of the world if the leaders of the world do not make every effort to stop this war,” he said in a video message on Tuesday. He paused, and looking directly into the camera, added, “This genocide.”

Genocide, the word and the idea, is colloquially understood to describe an effort to exterminate members of a definable identity group through targeted killings. Because the best-known cases involve staggering death tolls—the extirpation of Native Americans and Indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada, of Armenians under the Ottomans, of European Jews in the Holocaust, of Rwandan Tutsis at the hands of Hutu Power in 1994—genocide is often assumed to mean mass slaughter, and to have drastic demographic consequences. But, in international law, genocide has nothing explicitly to do with the enormity of criminal acts. Rather, according to the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it is defined by the enormity of criminal intent:

- Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

By this standard, Putin’s war of obliteration comes readily into focus as genocidal, if not to date, anyway—as comprehensive genocide. His apparent objective is to extinguish Ukraine as an independent nation, and to subsume it and its surviving population into Russia, where he claims it naturally belongs. As he prepared to attack, massing his forces on Ukraine’s borders, and pretending to engage in diplomatic brinkmanship, he seemed to imagine that the threat of overwhelming force might inspire Ukraine’s leaders to capitulate and surrender preemptively to his diktat. In early February, after President Emmanuel Macron, of France, flew to Moscow to try to reason with him, they held a joint press conference in which Putin said, as if addressing Ukraine directly, “Like it or not, take it, my beauty.” The line was immediately recognized as a reference to a luridly menacing song about necrophiliac rape by the punk band Red Mold. The Kremlin and its press organs airbrushed the taunt out of the official transcripts. But Putin had made himself clear: he viewed Ukraine as a corpse, and would have his way with it.

In announcing the start of the war, Putin spoke dismissively of Ukraine as a historical fiction, denying its sovereign existence, and portrayed his invasion, absurdly, as a sort of humanitarian mission to “de-Nazify” the place, to protect its people from humiliation and genocide at the hands of their own popularly elected leaders, and to bring those leaders to trial. Putin’s world-upside-down framing treated questions of genocide and war crimes, as well as of democracy and accountability, as make-believe, and therefore ridiculous; and it gave off a strong whiff of the propaganda tactic known as “accusation in a mirror,” in which a speaker accuses his prospective victims of plotting to do to him what he is plotting to do them. As Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, recently tweeted, “Russia has a track record of accusing the West of the very

violations that Russia itself is perpetrating.” Zelensky put it more succinctly: “If you want to know what Russia is planning, look at what Russia is accusing others of planning.”

Putin evidently anticipated that his military juggernaut would meet little resistance, swiftly take Kyiv, and replace Zelensky’s government with an obliging puppet regime. On the third day of the war, even as his forces began to show their weakness, and Ukraine’s began to show their strength, an essay prematurely hailing Putin’s victory in Kyiv, and the dawn of a new world order, appeared on a Kremlin-controlled news platform. It was promptly taken down, but not before being preserved, and, while it cannot be regarded as direct evidence of Putin’s intent, its rhetoric, which reads in parts as if it were repurposed from the archives of the Third Reich, suggests the attitude among his propagandists:

Vladimir Putin has assumed, without a drop of exaggeration, a historic responsibility by deciding not to leave the solution of the Ukrainian question to future generations. After all, the need to solve it would always remain the main problem for Russia. . . . Now this problem is gone—Ukraine has returned to Russia. . . . Russia has not only challenged the West, it has shown that the era of Western global domination can be considered completely and finally over.

Meanwhile, in reality, the prospect of Russian glory looks as diminished as the exchange rate of the ruble. That increases the risk of genocidal atrocities. Putin has no apparent exit strategy; and the worse the war has gone for him, the worse he has made it for Ukraine, raining hellfire on its civilian infrastructure, in what appears to be a determination to reduce it, as his forces previously did in parts of Chechnya and Syria, to lifeless rubble. By his own account, Putin’s fight is, above all, against humiliation, and that is a fight he’s losing badly. The war is only in its third week, and he has repeatedly signaled that he is prepared to use his nuclear arsenal, a threat so grave from a man so given to the use of annihilating force that it would be a folly to assume that he’s bluffing.

Zelensky has spent his days under attack convincingly presenting himself and Ukraine to the rest of the world as standing the ground for the collective interests and future of sovereign self-determination against despotism. He has been received with an immediate and extraordinary unanimity of solidarity and commitment: arms, intelligence-sharing, aid, and crushing economic sanctions against Russia. But that has not been enough to spare the Ukrainians, and Zelensky has now taken to using his Kyiv bunker as a bully pulpit to try and shame the world into joining his fight by imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Russia, he says, is alone to blame for the war and its horrors, but he insists that the rest of the world—and here, he singles out the NATO powers—shares responsibility.

“If the world stands aloof, it will lose itself. Forever,” Zelensky said, on Tuesday. “Because there are unconditional values. The same for everyone. First of all, this is life. The right to life for everyone.” Then, on Wednesday, after Russia bombed a maternity hospital in Mariupol, he asked, “How much longer will the world be an accomplice ignoring terror? Close the sky right now!” Last week, the mayor and deputy mayor of Kharkiv and Mariupol also described Putin’s campaign as genocide, and Zelensky said that the hospital attack was “the final proof—proof that genocide of Ukrainians is taking place.” He called out Europeans collectively, and said: “You saw. You know.”

It is true that we are all aware of what's happening: the systematic assault on civilians, on hospitals, on refugee-evacuation routes, on holy places and libraries and Holocaust memorials, and the shrugs and denial from the Kremlin, whose only public acknowledgment of the horror has been to make it a crime punishable by fifteen years in prison to speak of what's happening as "war" or "invasion." Many of the NATO countries that Zelensky is seeking to draw into the war have ignored genocides and other mass atrocities in the past, and a few had a hand in them. But none of the countries that Zelensky is appealing to now fails to recognize the enormity of either Putin's actions or his intent, or sees any advantage in aiding or abetting them. Rather, it is Zelensky, in this instance, who is not acknowledging the larger reality: that the world has never before been confronted by a genocidal war waged by a man brandishing nuclear weapons.

On a visit to Poland on Thursday, Vice-President Kamala Harris called for an investigation of "atrocities" by Russian forces, but stopped short of calling them either war crimes or genocide. The Polish President, Andrzej Duda, speaking beside her, did not hesitate. He said that Russia's invasion is "bearing the features of a genocide — it aims at eliminating and destroying a nation." Neither leader responded directly to Zelensky's plea for a no-fly zone, and, on Friday, President Biden effectively rejected the idea, saying, "We will not fight the third World War in Ukraine." There is, after all, more than one way for the world, as Zelensky put it, to lose itself forever.

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### **30. The West must decide how far is too far with Russia**

The Hill, 13 Mar 22, Joshua C. Huminski

Russia's ultimate aims in Ukraine remain unclear. Now two weeks into the invasion, Moscow's initial attempts at a lightning assault appear stymied, and as a consequence, the Kremlin is increasing the intensity and brutality of its campaign. Thus far, however, Russia's so-called "special military operation" has remained limited to Ukraine. There is, however, a risk that this does not remain the case, and should the conflict expand the consequences could be dire for Europe and indeed the world.

The unanimity of response to Russia's war undoubtedly took the Kremlin by surprise, as it did some analysts. To borrow a phrase from retired Rep. Glenn Nye (D-Va.), democracies are often slow to act, but when they get moving nearly everything is on the table. It is that latter part that is of particular concern, as an over-correction could well lead to a significant escalation and an expanded war.

Prior to Russia's invasion, there was an almost institutional unwillingness to discuss what consequences there might have been if President Vladimir Putin decided to invade. To be sure there were hints such as halting Nord Stream 2, additional personal sanctions and possibly disconnecting Russian banks from the SWIFT network, but nothing concrete was publicly presented to Moscow.

Now that Russia has indeed invaded democracies are moving to act with great alacrity—the speed with which the sanctions were applied, and both their size and the size of the targets are unprecedented. This week the United States announced a ban on Russian oil imports and the

United Kingdom and European Union are looking to phase out Russian energy as well. The West has frozen the assets of Russia's central bank, worth some \$630 billion. Certain banks have been cut off from SWIFT. The export of certain technologies and dual-use goods to Russia is now prohibited. Travel is sharply reduced with airspace closed to Russian-flagged aircraft.

These measures are already having a demonstrable effect on Russia's economy. The key interest rate in Russia has doubled, the stock market remains closed, the ruble has plummeted and the Kremlin is working to stop Russians from leaving with more than \$10,000 in hard currency. Yet, the full effects of this economic warfare will remain unclear for some time.

There is a real danger here that as the West continues to pile on sanctions and measures, it will only make the economic rubble bounce. This is all happening while there is very little clarity on what a cessation of hostilities or a political settlement to the war might look like, let alone how Russia might reconnect with the global economy. In less than two weeks, three decades of global economic integration were severed and there is no pathway to reestablishing those connections.

At the same time, the West is expanding its lethal aid to Ukraine. The United Kingdom is considering sending the Starstreak advanced anti-aircraft missile system to Kyiv. This joins next-generation anti-tank weapons such as the NLAW and Javelin, as well as the Stinger anti-aircraft missile. Amongst the commentariat, there are calls for increased aid and expanded measures that risk significant escalation. Some are calling for American aircraft to be transferred to Ukraine. Others are suggesting that NATO MiG-29 fighter jets be reflagged and sent forward to Kyiv – a measure described as untenable at the moment.

There are also increasingly assertive calls for the establishment of a no-fly-zone over Ukraine, the imposition of which would almost certainly see American or NATO pilots engaging Russian pilots over Ukraine, and possibly require strikes inside of Russia to suppress air defenses. Even more alarmingly, there are also some openly calling for the removal of Putin. Backing Russia's president into a corner, leaving no option for de-escalation, or making it an existential conflict for the regime is a sure way to widen the war.

Russia has, thus far, remained unexpectedly restrained in responding – at least publicly – to the West's involvement in the war in Ukraine. We have not seen significant retaliatory measures for the incoming aid, we have not yet seen the expected widespread cyberattacks against NATO or the United States and we have not seen the conflict expanded beyond Ukraine's borders. To be sure, Russia has rattled the nuclear saber, is threatening to nationalize foreign companies and is continuing its campaign of disinformation, all of which is unsurprising (and represents the limited tools Moscow still possesses). That restraint is unlikely to last, and there is a chance that the West in its over-correcting zeal risks crossing an unseen red line. It may already be encroaching on that red line: Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Rybakov, said Moscow "warned the U.S. that pumping weapons from a number of countries it orchestrates isn't just a dangerous move, it's an action that makes those convoys legitimate targets."

This is not to say that the West should suspend its aid to Ukraine, but it must be very cautious and very calculated in how it proceeds. Author Herman Kahn defined escalation as a ladder, the climbing of which presents policymakers with new decisions and new calculus at each rung. But

there is also the risk of an escalation slide, the acceleration of which becomes increasingly hard to slow or stop. To avoid this, the West and Russia must be abundantly clear with one another and communicate at the highest levels. The West must be very cautious in how it proceeds in its aid Kyiv.

Most importantly, the West must articulate a desired end-state and begin to think about creating conditions for that possible outcome. What is a satisfactory outcome for the West? For Ukraine? For Russia? Is Crimea on the table? Is it off-limits? What does Moscow need to do to reconnect with the global economy? What are acceptable terms for the Kremlin? Not the spurious arguments of demilitarization or de-Nazification put forward by the propagandists, but practical and viable terms. War and diplomacy happen simultaneously — they are not binary states, yet that is an assumption that appears present in policy discussions.

Until we articulate those end goals and begin working towards defining the conditions on the ground to facilitate that outcome, we risk blindly walking into an escalation from a limited war to a regional conflict, or something worse. The West needs better statecraft now, more than ever, not performative overcorrection.

*Joshua C. Huminski is director of the Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs at the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress and a George Mason University National Security Institute visiting fellow.*

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### **31. Why doesn't the Arab world break with Putin? Consider Sudan's example**

Salon.com, 13 Mar 22, Mohammad Ali Salih

There is considerable current discussion about whether the decades-long push of NATO's expansion eastward, encouraged by the United States, is to be blamed for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as famous "realist" John Mearsheimer, of the University of Chicago, has argued. That discussion should also include whether the U.S. is to blame for the refusal, or at least the hesitancy, of some Arab countries to condemn the Russian invasion, which reflects widespread Arab resentment of U.S. policy over the last several decades.

As Time magazine reported last week, the Arab League, representing 22 Arab countries, issued a recent statement that "failed to condemn Russia's invasion and offered little support to the Ukrainians." This was largely because, according to Time, the Arabs "generally see in Russia a substantial global power that continues to have relevance in their region ... and is, also, a useful capital to publicly 'flirt' with when relations are strained" with the U.S. and the West.

Recent policies seen in Sudan, a member of the Arab League, offer one example.

Along with fellow Arab League nations Algeria and Iraq, Sudan abstained when the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly condemned the Russian invasion. (Morocco was absent, or might very well have joined them.) Additionally, after a week-long visit to Russia during the invasion, Sudan's second most powerful leader, Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as

"Hemedti," said his country had no problem with Russia opening a naval base on its Red Sea coast.

Dagalo told a news conference upon his return to Khartoum, according to Reuters, that "Russian investments were discussed on the trip," and although he called for a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine problem, before the invasion he had said that "Russia had the right to defend its people."

Dagalo was the leader of the famous Arab Janjaweed militia that, starting in 2003, fought on the side of the Sudanese Islamist military government led by Gen. Omar al-Bashir in the western province of Darfur. That led to what has been described as the worst genocide of the 21st century, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the displacement of millions. Dagalo's forces relied heavily on Russian and Chinese weapons during that conflict.

Although Dagalo's relations with the U.S. improved after a popular revolution in Sudan toppled al-Bashir in 2019, he recently went back to his old Russian friends — and it's more than the "flirt" mentioned by Time.

At the same time, the Sudanese people have their own grudges against the U.S. for not fulfilling its promises to promote democracy in their country after the toppling of al-Bashir.

For decades, Sudan's relations with Russia have been in direct response to its relations with the U.S., an openly cynical policy that sought to play the two global powers against each other.

Al-Bashir, whose rule started in 1989, collided with the U.S. from the beginning by declaring "al-Mashru' al-hadari al-Islami" (or the "Islamic Civilization Project"), intended to spread Islam in neighboring Christian countries; by fighting Christian and pagan citizens in the southern part of the country; and by leading a radical pan-Islamic group that invited known Muslim terrorists, including Osama bin Laden, to visit or reside in Sudan.

In response, the U.S. in 1993 designated Sudan as a sponsor of terrorism, imposed complete trade and financial sanctions in 1997 and launched a cruise missile attack on Sudan in 1998, as part of the response to the terrorist bombing of U.S. embassies in East Africa that same year.

Beyond the "flirt," Sudan allied with Russia not only by buying arms for its wars in Darfur and in the southern part of the country, but by enjoying Russian support at the UN against attempts to punish Sudan or its leaders for apparent or likely war crimes.

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In 2017, al-Bashir visited Russia, met President Vladimir Putin, signed agreements for more military help and economic cooperation, recognized the Russian annexation of Crimea and agreed to give the Russian Navy access to Sudanese ports.

But after the 2019 revolution that toppled al-Bashir, relations between Sudan and the U.S. changed overnight. Steps were taken to remove Sudan from the terrorism list, exchange

ambassadors, recognize Israel and clear Sudan's arrears with the World Bank, allowing for massive infusions of aid.

Most important, statements by top U.S. officials, some of whom visited Sudan, promised help for Sudan to run free and fair elections, which were meant to lead to a stable civilian government.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, on the second anniversary of the revolution: "Sudanese from all walks of life — especially Sudan's women and youth — showed great courage in taking to the streets. Some paid with their lives. Their bravery and sacrifice will forever remain an inspiration to all those seeking democracy. ...The United States will continue to stand with the Sudanese people as they strive for freedom, peace and justice."

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., tweeted: "As Sudan transitions toward a civilian & democratic government after the removal of long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir, it's critical to send a signal of support from the U.S. for the new government & to the Sudanese people fighting for their fundamental rights & freedoms."

Later, he and Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., traveled to Sudan and conveyed similar messages to both the military and the civilians. Coons introduced the Sudan Democracy Act to sanction those who undermine democracy, and announced that he had nominated several Sudanese civilian organizations for the Nobel Peace Prize.

But Blinken, the two senators and other top officials knew, or at least should have known, that the Sudanese military leaders who supported the popular uprising against al-Bashir and then joined the transitional government that was supposed to run free elections next year were not going to relinquish power easily.

First of all, the Sudanese military over the years has acquired private companies and established many of their own — about 300 companies altogether, which control about 70 percent of the government's annual budget.

Second, both Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, and his deputy, Gen. Dagalo, are said to be on a list of those under investigation by the International Criminal Court for possible war crimes in Darfur. (Seven current or former Sudanese officers have already been indicted.)

Third and most important, the leading U.S.-allied governments in the region have strongly supported the Sudanese military, including Egypt, Israel and the Gulf states.

Blinken, Coons, Van Hollen and other top U.S. officials were said to have been surprised — but shouldn't have been — when, last October, the military faction of the shared transitional government, led by Burhan and Dagalo, launched a coup of their own, arresting their leading civilian allies and returning to power Islamist leaders from the al-Bashir regime.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed and thousands more injured during the last three years of demonstrations against the military. No end seems in sight.

When the U.S., the UN, the World Bank and the international community condemned the coup and suspended all promised economic and financial help to Sudan (amid repeated calls to end the violence against civilians), Dagalo and the military regime were ready to play the Russian card once again.

What should be done with Sudan now? The experience, if not the wisdom, of this 80-year-old journalist who was born and raised in Sudan suggests that Secretary Blinken, the two senators and other top U.S. officials who had promised to guarantee democracy for the Sudanese people should travel there again, with the goal of negotiating a compromise between the military leaders and the unarmed, mostly young pro-democracy demonstrators.

Attempting to punish the military regime by freezing badly-needed financial and economic aid will mostly hurt ordinary people in Sudan, as happened during the 30-year rule of the al-Bashir regime. The World Bank, always following the ups and downs of U.S. policy, should also restore its frozen aid. Finally, the U.S. should hold the current military leaders accountable for their repeated promises to run free and fair elections next year and then hand power to an elected civilian government.

There is no sense in the U.S. punishing the Sudanese people for its own refusal to follow through on its promise to help establish democracy in their country. It's also no secret that the U.S. record of support for democracy in Arab countries is nil and deeply shameful.

In 2013, the U.S. supported a military coup in Egypt, Sudan's neighbor, that toppled Egypt's first-ever elected president — negating years of earlier statements by top U.S. officials about supporting democracy in Egypt. Today, the U.S. sends an annual average of about \$2 billion in military and civilian aid to Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sissi's military regime in Cairo.

The cynical Sudanese generals, Burhan and Dagalo, have made no secret of their belief that the U.S. should treat them as it has treated their next-door neighbor — that's the price of their friendship.

Finally, the U.S. has no one to blame but itself for Sudan's reluctance, along with that of other Arab countries, to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The major factors include the decades-long U.S. support of Israel's expansionist policies; the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, which disordered the entire region; and the aforementioned poor record of the U.S. in supporting Arab democracy.

As a result, we face the ironic fact that there is no democratic Arab country available today to point out an obvious contradiction: The U.S. is eager to support democracy in Ukraine, but far less so in the Arab world.

*Mohammad Ali Salih has been a Washington correspondent for Arabic-language publications in the Middle East since 1980.*

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principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis.” Back in 2008, Foreign Affairs and PBS highlighted another theory by the same academic: “John Mearsheimer, political science professor at the University of Chicago, says a nuclear-armed Iran would bring stability to the region, but Dov Zakheim, former Pentagon official now with the Center for Naval Analyses, says it would trigger an arms race.” And, back in 2007, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt wrote a scathing attack on “the Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy.”

### **How is this all linked?**

The argument is that NATO is responsible for pushing expansion in the early 2000s provoked Russia to attack Ukraine and that Israel is somehow harmful to US foreign policy because of the confrontation with Iran. Also, the argument Iran can bring stability to the Middle East is linked back to the idea that Russia was being innocently provoked. It showcases how Iran hopes to achieve in Iraq what Russia is doing in Ukraine.

Iran is counting on the US being afraid of “war.” It wants to turn Iraq into a “near abroad” and also swallow up Syria, Lebanon and Yemen; Russia wants to return Ukraine to its “near abroad” and counts on US isolationists, the far-left, far-right and “realists” in the West to agree with Russia’s “security needs” — Iran wants to ride that Russian train as far as it can as well.

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### **46. Ukraine crisis and Pakistan**

DAWN, 13 Mar 22, Riaz Mohammad Khan

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a point of inflection in world affairs, similar to the US outreach to China in the early 1970s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The situation is unfolding. There are many imponderables including how it will impact Russia itself. Its consequential character is obvious but the direction is not clear. Pakistan should be concerned about what the development portends for the future.

Russia has ostensibly acted to secure its periphery. It has done so like a great power which accords primacy to its perceived interests rather than show sensitivity to the principles of interstate relations set out in the UN Charter. The invasion of Ukraine has been preceded by deep differences between Moscow and the West led by Washington with barely concealed ambition to bring into the fold of its political and security system not just the erstwhile Warsaw Pact countries but also Ukraine and Georgia which had once been Soviet territories. President Putin had repeatedly urged that Ukraine must not be part of NATO.

The quasi-ideological underpinning of this ambition was the belief in the emergence of a US-led unipolar world which did not countenance any sphere of influence, security or economic, by a rival power. For almost three decades, the US has enjoyed unprecedented economic and military preponderance globally. This propelled the expansion of NATO to the doorsteps of Russia, taking advantage of the desire of the East Europeans themselves even though in contravention of the reported verbal assurance given to Moscow at the time of the reunification of Germany. The US challenged Russia in the Middle East, and organized the Quad enlisting Japan and India as

partners in a wider Indo-Pacific strategy. The economic rise of China and signs of a resurgent Russia are viewed as a threat. Nonetheless, uni-polarism was inherently destabilizing in a world moving towards multipolarity. On the other hand, the Russian invasion displays utter disregard for UN Charter principles and international law. Russia faced no imminent threat to justify its action which is a fatal blow to aspirations for world peace based on principles and diplomacy and discourse among states. President Putin should have exercised a number of other less egregious options short of armed aggression against Ukraine.

### **How has Pakistan navigated this early phase of the crisis and what challenges lie ahead?**

The United States and Europe have reacted with most stringent economic sanctions, including the scuttling of the mega Nord Stream Gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, and steps to buttress the security of the eastern flank of NATO and support to Ukraine. Even if the security dimension remains confined to Central Europe and Ukraine, the global economic map will change with new walls blocking the erstwhile free flow of dollar-based finances and trade. This portends a new world order in which so far the United States appears to have a strong position. Europe has pulled together behind the United States as never before.

Beyond the European theatre which will now demand greater attention on the part of the United States, the US capacity for proactive security initiatives elsewhere particularly in Asia-Pacific will diminish. This will increase comfort space for China.

There are some diplomatic initiatives to arrest the conflict although their prospects remain clouded or unclear. Israel is trying mediation. Turkey offered a venue for talks between the Russian and the Ukrainian foreign ministers which reportedly discussed the resulting humanitarian crisis. In substance, Russia demands nothing short of a total surrender, while Ukrainians who are putting up remarkable resistance ask for a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal. There is a faint hope that Moscow may be content with Ukrainian neutrality and firm assurances that NATO will not further expand. Perhaps China, given the congruence of its interests with Russia especially in Central Asia, together with some EU countries can play a role. For any solution, however, Moscow will have to abandon its desire to absorb the entire or parts of Ukraine and replace the elected Ukrainian government and Washington will have to suppress its impulse to retain unipolar primacy.

### **Opportunities?**

Pakistan's decision to maintain the prime minister's visit was sound, given the fact that for years Pakistan had been trying to inject trust and facility in our relations with Moscow. Similarly, our decision to abstain was a logical choice following the Chinese and the Indian vote in the Security Council. Pakistan has been fairly pragmatic in its decisions when a situation involved major powers. In January 1980, as a lead country to negotiate a resolution in the Security Council on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, we successfully resisted naming the Soviet Union and asked for the withdrawal of "foreign troops". Our official criticism of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the American interventions in Syria and Libya was circumspect.

Principles are important, but nations weigh their core interests when taking decisions in fraught and critical situations. The démarche by EU ambassadors was understandable, but they overreached in making public their communication with the Foreign Office. There was no similar action in New Delhi. How could they entertain greater expectations from Islamabad given their opposition to Pakistan's interests in FATF or the Nuclear Suppliers Group or their near indifference to the plight of Kashmiris and the Hindutva-discriminated Indian Muslims? Regardless of this indiscretion which only deserved a riposte by the Foreign Office, we should maintain a clear emphasis in our statements in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and avoidance of violence targeting civilians, while calling for recourse to diplomacy and to a peaceful resolution. But dragging this policy on to public platforms for domestic political advantage is inadvisable.

Are there any opportunities for Pakistan? Arguably, Pakistan's geopolitical relevance to both Russia and China will be enhanced, especially for possible trade and communications corridors. Afghanistan remains an obstacle. Also, unlike the countries endowed by Providence with oil, we will need capacities to leverage our location to build national strength. Mere aspiration is not enough. So far our domestic politics has shown inexcusable apathy towards this imperative as reflected in the sad predicament of our economy and education. Lastly, Pakistan is safe today because nuclear deterrence is an integral part of its security: a lesson reinforced by the Ukrainian crisis.

*The writer is a former foreign secretary and an author.*

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#### **47. Iran is attacking US facilities in Kurdish region in message to America**

Jerusalem Post, 13 Mar 22, Seth J. Frantzman

A large attack was carried out on Erbil, Iraq, overnight between Saturday and Sunday, with the Kurdistan Regional Government counter-terrorism units reporting that the 12 missiles were launched at 1:30 a.m.

"The attacks resulted in no casualties, and the missiles were launched from outside of Kurdistan and Iraq," the units said. This large attack was likely carried out from Iran.

The missiles struck near a large new US consulate currently being built in Erbil. The consulate is not in the center of the city and it is clear that coordinates for the consulate would have to be put into precision strikes of ballistic-style missiles. This is a tactic Iran has deployed before.

What we know, in the wake of the attack, is that Kurdistan regional authorities said there were no civilian casualties while Masrour Barzani, the Prime Minister of the autonomous Kurdish region, condemned the attack.

#### **A clear Iranian attack on the US in Iraq**

The Kurdistan Region is an autonomous area and since 2019 the US has increasingly positioned more forces in the region after Iran attacked US facilities in other parts of Iraq. After the US

The reporting also noted that “They said Russia and China are both seeking to bolster their influence in the Middle East and Africa, with Moscow being the more ‘acute threat’ right now.”

2. Politico was among media outlets also reporting on the same SASC testimony when noting that General McKenzie said the U.S. plans to approve the sale of F-15 fighter jets to Egypt. One quote reportedly included “In the case of Egypt, I think we have good news in that we’re going to provide them with F-15s, which was a long, hard slog,” and “They felt it was too long, it took too long.”
3. Arab News reported yesterday that the Gulf Cooperation Council is sponsoring unprecedented and comprehensive peace talks between warring factions in Yemen, including the Iran-backed Houthis, that could begin in Riyadh before the end of this month. Reuters added that “They said Houthi officials would be ‘guests’ of GCC Secretary General Nayef Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf at the body’s Riyadh headquarters and would have his security guarantees if the group accepted the invitation for the talks, which are planned from March 29-April 7.”
4. Reuters reported late yesterday that NATO is set to tell its military commanders on Wednesday to draw up plans for new ways to deter Russia following Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, including more troops and missile defenses in eastern Europe, officials and diplomats said. They noted that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Tuesday, “We need to reset our military posture for this new reality” and “Ministers will start an important discussion on concrete measures to reinforce our security for the longer term, in all domains.”

## U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. Generals say Afghanistan, Somalia pullouts hurt terror fight**

Associated Press, 15 Mar 22, Lolita C. Baldor

The complete U.S. military withdrawals from Afghanistan and Somalia last year have made it more difficult for the United States to counter terror groups that aspire to attack America and its allies, senior commanders told Congress on Tuesday.

#### **2. U.S. plans to sell F-15 fighters to Egypt amid human rights dispute**

Politico, 15 Mar 22, Connor O’Brien

The commander of military forces in the Middle East said Tuesday that the U.S. plans to approve the sale of F-15 fighter jets to Egypt, a move that will likely spark another brawl on Capitol Hill over whether to continue weapons transfers to the country despite its human rights record.

#### **3. GCC offers to host peace talks between Yemeni factions, including Houthis, in Riyadh**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Saeed Al-Batati

The Gulf Cooperation Council is sponsoring unprecedented and comprehensive peace talks between warring factions in Yemen, including the Iran-backed Houthis, that could begin in Riyadh before the end of this month.

#### **4. NATO to begin planning for more troops on eastern flank after Russia's Ukraine invasion**

Reuters, 15 Mar 22, Robin Emmott

NATO is set to tell its military commanders on Wednesday to draw up plans for new ways to deter Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, including more troops and missile defences in eastern Europe, officials and diplomats said.

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#### NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (15 Mar):** Today marks 11 years since Syrians courageously and peacefully took to the streets to demand political reform and a government that upholds human rights. On this day, France, Germany, Italy, the U.K., and U.S. reiterate their call for peace in Syria.

**Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III; @SecDef (15 Mar):** Just landed in Brussels. While here, I'll meet with my fellow Defense Ministers to discuss Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and other topics related to regional security. As @POTUS and I have said before, our commitment to defend @NATO territory is ironclad. w @USAmbNATO

**@OSE\_Yemen; @OSE\_Yemen (15 Mar):** Grundberg to #UNSC: there is need for constructive & solution-oriented political dialogue. The consultations held in Amman are a reminder that this is possible. We need to pursue solutions that will not only end the war in #Yemen but build foundations for a sustainable peace.

**[MFA Spokesman, IEA] Abdul Qahar Balkhi @QaharBalkhi (15 Mar):** Today Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi and Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwah visited the Afghan Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, and met with Afghan diplomats, citizens and students.

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#### ISIS

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#### **5. CENTCOM commander: ISIS attacks will 'ramp up' in summer as Taliban struggles to keep them at bay**

Fox News, 15 Mar 22, Ronn Blitzer

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command, said Tuesday that the Taliban is failing in their efforts to shut down ISIS in Afghanistan and that it appears likely that ISIS terror attacks will increase as the summer months approach.

#### **6. A life in limbo for the wives and children of ISIS fighters**

NPR, 15 Mar 22, Jason Beaubien

The camp for displaced persons sits in a dusty limbo in northern Iraq, in between security checkpoints that separate Iraq's Kurdistan region from the rest of the country. Most of the residents of the Hassan Sham camp are the wives and children of ISIS fighters. And they sit in limbo, too.

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## IRAN

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### **7. US general warns about Iran's ability to go ballistic**

VOA News, 15 Mar 22, Jeff Seldin

With much of the world's attention focused on stalled efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal and keep Tehran's nuclear weapons ambitions in check, a top U.S. commander is warning of an ever-growing threat from Iran's ballistic missile arsenal.

### **8. Russia raises hopes for a return to the stalled Iran nuclear talks**

Washington Post, 15 Mar 22, Liz Sly

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Tuesday he has received “written guarantees” from the United States that Western sanctions on Russia related to Ukraine won’t affect Russia’s role in the Iran nuclear deal, potentially paving the way for a resumption of stalled talks to revive the agreement.

### **9. Iran close to releasing two British citizens imprisoned for years**

NBC News, 15 Mar 22, Dan De Luce and Dareh Gregorian

Two British citizens imprisoned in Iran for several years could be on their way to the U.K. soon, possibly within hours, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the discussions between London and Tehran.

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## IRAQ

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### **10. Iraq MPs to vote for president on March 26**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

The Iraqi parliament on Tuesday scheduled a March 26 session for deputies to hold a delayed vote on the country’s president.

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## SYRIA

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### **11. Russia drafting thousands in Syria for Ukraine war: monitor**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Russia has drawn up lists of 40,000 fighters from Syrian army and allied militias to be put on standby for deployment in Ukraine, a war monitor said Tuesday.

### **12. Syria enclave marks uprising with message for Ukraine**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Thousands of protesters in war-torn Syria's rebel enclave of Idlib on Tuesday marked 11 years since the start of an anti-government uprising, buoyed by the global outcry over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### **13. Impunity for war crimes in Syria casts a grim shadow over Ukraine**

New York Times, 15 Mar 22, Ben Hubbard

The Syrian police stormed her house and dragged her husband away. Her eldest son died in a rain of Syrian government shells on her hometown. So like millions of other Syrians, Hanadi Hafisi fled the country with plans to return when the war ended.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **14. US envoy appeals for international support for Afghan women**

Voice of America, 15 Mar 22, Breshna Omarkhel

The U.S. special envoy for Afghan women, Rina Amiri, says women's rights in Afghanistan "suffered a tremendous setback" after the Taliban seized power in August, but that supporting Afghan women is "one area where there is solidarity" in the United States and international community.

### **15. More Afghans going hungry, fewer jobs available -World Bank**

Reuters, 15 Mar 22

The number of people in Afghanistan who cannot afford food and other essentials has doubled since the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021 as unemployment rises and wages fall, a World Bank survey showed on Tuesday.

### **16. Taliban house-to-house searches terrorize US allies left behind**

Washington Examiner, 15 Mar 22, Beth Bailey

The Taliban's systematic house-to-house searches, which commenced in Kabul in early March, now occur in cities and towns throughout Afghanistan.

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## PAKISTAN

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Wall Street Journal, 15 Mar 22, Jess Bravin

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### **42. Pashtun Jirga in Bannu calls for elections, Jirga in Afghanistan**

TOLOnews, 15 Mar 22

A jirga gathering of Pashtuns in Bannu city in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan that was held from 11 to 14 of March, called for Loya Jirga and general elections in Afghanistan to elect a representative government.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **43. Pakistan raises questions over Indian missile that 'accidentally' fell in its territory**

Anadolu Agency, 15 Mar 22, Islamuddin Sajid

Pakistan on Tuesday raised multiple questions about a missile launched from India that landed in its territory, urging New Delhi to do a joint investigation rather than acting unilaterally.

### **44. Pakistan to host upcoming Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit**

Anadolu Agency, 15 Mar 22, Ali Abo Rezeg

The upcoming summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will be held in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, on March 22-23, the pan-Islamic group said on Tuesday.

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## YEMEN

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### **45. Don't expect Houthis to stick to tanker swap deal, UAE tells UN**

The National, 15 Mar 22

UAE diplomat Mohamed Abushahab on Tuesday said Yemen's Houthi rebels may renege on a recently struck deal with the UN to salvage a leaky oil platform that threatens to spill its load into the sea.

### **46. Aid to Yemen prevented starvation but more is needed, says UN humanitarian chief**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Ephrem Kossaify

Nearly \$14 billion of international aid donated to Yemen in the past seven years has made an "enormous difference" to the people of the country, according to the UN's humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths.

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## EGYPT

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### **47. Egypt's El Sisi fixes price of unsubsidized bread as wheat costs rise**

The National, 15 Mar 22, Hamza Hendawi

Egypt's president on Tuesday ordered his government to fix the price of unsubsidized bread consumed by an estimated 40 million Egyptians. Abdel Fattah El Sisi's media office said he ordered the Supply Minister to ensure bakeries have sufficient wheat flour to "streamline" the price of the free bread not covered by state subsidies and allow the ministry's inspectors to enforce the price.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **48. The impact of Ukraine war on the Middle East**

Daily Sabah, 15 Mar 22, Muhittin Ataman

With the Ukraine war, which is considered one of the main milestones in recent world history, some of the main principles of international politics and the discourses that accompany it have changed. The previous milestone was the 9/11 terrorist attacks against U.S. hegemony. The 9/11 attacks closed the "end of history" political discourse and the period of "ultimate victory" won by the liberal West.

### **49. Middle East's travel, tourism revenues could grow to \$246bn in 2022: WTTC**

Daily News (Egypt), 15 Mar 22, Nehal Samir

New research from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) revealed that the Middle East's travel and tourism sector's revenues could reach \$246bn this year, just 8.9% behind pre-pandemic levels.

### **50. Lebanon's last chance as Ukraine fallout looms**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Bahaa Hariri

Russia's decision to invade Ukraine will have ramifications that reverberate around the world for years to come. In the West, the immediate concern remains the invasion's impact on the oil and gas markets. Yet, in countries like Lebanon, with just six weeks to two months of wheat reserves, the war's impact on agricultural supply chains could well be the straw that finally breaks the camel's back.

### **51. Countering aggressors isn't the antithesis of humanitarian missions**

Al Arabiya, 15 Mar 22, Baraa Shiban

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is in its third week with no signs of it letting up. Worldwide, people are watching the news and the unfolding humanitarian crisis. The Middle East is no stranger to conflicts. That is why millions of people in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen can easily relate to the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

### **52. Russia-Ukraine: Putin's war means Mohammed bin Salman has Biden over a barrel**

Middle East Eye, 15 Mar 22, David Hearst

Three short weeks ago, US President Joe Biden was in no hurry to talk to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler and the next king of a major US regional ally.

ESCUDIÉ, MICHEL C. ("SCUD")  
Headquarters U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)  
Communication Integration (CCI) directorate  
Red Gate Group, Contractor

COMM: (b)(6)

DSN: (b)(6)

SVOI (b)(6)

Unclassified (NIPR) email (b)(6)

Classified secret (SIPR) email (b)(6)



## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 16, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Associated Press drew from testimony provided to the SASC yesterday by General McKenzie and Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of U.S. Africa Command, when reporting that “The complete U.S. military withdrawals from Afghanistan and Somalia last year have made it more difficult for the United States to counter terror groups that aspire to attack America and its allies, senior commanders told Congress on Tuesday.” The reporting also noted that “They said Russia and China are both seeking to bolster their influence in the Middle East and Africa, with Moscow being the more ‘acute threat’ right now.”
- 2) Politico was among media outlets also reporting on the same SASC testimony when noting that General McKenzie said the U.S. plans to approve the sale of F-15 fighter jets to Egypt. One quote reportedly included “In the case of Egypt, I think we have good news in that we’re going to provide them with F-15s, which was a long, hard slog,” and “They felt it was too long, it took too long.”
- 3) Arab News reported yesterday that the Gulf Cooperation Council is sponsoring unprecedented and comprehensive peace talks between warring factions in Yemen, including the Iran-backed Houthis, that could begin in Riyadh before the end of this month. Reuters added that “They said Houthi officials would be ‘guests’ of GCC Secretary General Nayef Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf at the body’s Riyadh headquarters and would have his security guarantees if the group accepted the invitation for the talks, which are planned from March 29-April 7.”
- 4) Reuters reported late yesterday that NATO is set to tell its military commanders on Wednesday to draw up plans for new ways to deter Russia following Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, including more troops and missile defenses in eastern Europe, officials and diplomats said. They noted that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Tuesday, “We need to reset our military posture for this new reality” and “Ministers will start an important discussion on concrete measures to reinforce our security for the longer term, in all domains.”

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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TOP NEWS

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### **1. Generals say Afghanistan, Somalia pullouts hurt terror fight**

Associated Press, 15 Mar 22, Lolita C. Baldor

The complete U.S. military withdrawals from Afghanistan and Somalia last year have made it more difficult for the United States to counter terror groups that aspire to attack America and its allies, senior commanders told Congress on Tuesday.

### **2. U.S. plans to sell F-15 fighters to Egypt amid human rights dispute**

Politico, 15 Mar 22, Connor O'Brien

The commander of military forces in the Middle East said Tuesday that the U.S. plans to approve the sale of F-15 fighter jets to Egypt, a move that will likely spark another brawl on Capitol Hill over whether to continue weapons transfers to the country despite its human rights record.

### **3. GCC offers to host peace talks between Yemeni factions, including Houthis, in Riyadh**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Saeed Al-Batati

The Gulf Cooperation Council is sponsoring unprecedented and comprehensive peace talks between warring factions in Yemen, including the Iran-backed Houthis, that could begin in Riyadh before the end of this month.

### **4. NATO to begin planning for more troops on eastern flank after Russia's Ukraine invasion**

Reuters, 15 Mar 22, Robin Emmott

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (15 Mar):** Today marks 11 years since Syrians courageously and peacefully took to the streets to demand political reform and a government that upholds human rights. On this day, France, Germany, Italy, the U.K., and U.S. reiterate their call for peace in Syria.

**Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III; @SecDef (15 Mar):** Just landed in Brussels. While here, I'll meet with my fellow Defense Ministers to discuss Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and other topics related to regional security. As @POTUS and I have said before, our commitment to defend @NATO territory is ironclad. w @USAmbNATO

**@OSE\_Yemen; @OSE\_Yemen (15 Mar):** Grundberg to #UNSC: there is need for constructive & solution-oriented political dialogue. The consultations held in Amman are a reminder that this is possible. We need to pursue solutions that will not only end the war in #Yemen but build foundations for a sustainable peace.

[MFA Spokesman, IEA] **Abdul Qahar Balkhi @QaharBalkhi (15 Mar):** Today Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi and Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwah visited the Afghan Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, and met with Afghan diplomats, citizens and students.

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## ISIS

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### **5. CENTCOM commander: ISIS attacks will 'ramp up' in summer as Taliban struggles to keep them at bay**

Fox News, 15 Mar 22, Ronn Blitzer

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command, said Tuesday that the Taliban is failing in their efforts to shut down ISIS in Afghanistan and that it appears likely that ISIS terror attacks will increase as the summer months approach.

### **6. A life in limbo for the wives and children of ISIS fighters**

NPR, 15 Mar 22, Jason Beaubien

The camp for displaced persons sits in a dusty limbo in northern Iraq, in between security checkpoints that separate Iraq's Kurdistan region from the rest of the country. Most of the residents of the Hassan Sham camp are the wives and children of ISIS fighters. And they sit in limbo, too.

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## IRAN

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### **7. US general warns about Iran's ability to go ballistic**

VOA News, 15 Mar 22, Jeff Seldin

With much of the world's attention focused on stalled efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal and keep Tehran's nuclear weapons ambitions in check, a top U.S. commander is warning of an ever-growing threat from Iran's ballistic missile arsenal.

### **8. Russia raises hopes for a return to the stalled Iran nuclear talks**

Washington Post, 15 Mar 22, Liz Sly

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Tuesday he has received "written guarantees" from the United States that Western sanctions on Russia related to Ukraine won't affect Russia's role in the Iran nuclear deal, potentially paving the way for a resumption of stalled talks to revive the agreement.

### **9. Iran close to releasing two British citizens imprisoned for years**

NBC News, 15 Mar 22, Dan De Luce and Dareh Gregorian

Two British citizens imprisoned in Iran for several years could be on their way to the U.K. soon, possibly within hours, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the discussions between London and Tehran.

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## IRAQ

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### **10. Iraq MPs to vote for president on March 26**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

The Iraqi parliament on Tuesday scheduled a March 26 session for deputies to hold a delayed vote on the country's president.

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## SYRIA

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### **11. Russia drafting thousands in Syria for Ukraine war: monitor**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Russia has drawn up lists of 40,000 fighters from Syrian army and allied militias to be put on standby for deployment in Ukraine, a war monitor said Tuesday.

### **12. Syria enclave marks uprising with message for Ukraine**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Thousands of protesters in war-torn Syria's rebel enclave of Idlib on Tuesday marked 11 years since the start of an anti-government uprising, buoyed by the global outcry over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### **13. Impunity for war crimes in Syria casts a grim shadow over Ukraine**

New York Times, 15 Mar 22, Ben Hubbard

The Syrian police stormed her house and dragged her husband away. Her eldest son died in a rain of Syrian government shells on her hometown. So like millions of other Syrians, Hanadi Hafisi fled the country with plans to return when the war ended.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **14. US envoy appeals for international support for Afghan women**

Voice of America, 15 Mar 22, Breshna Omarkhel

The U.S. special envoy for Afghan women, Rina Amiri, says women's rights in Afghanistan "suffered a tremendous setback" after the Taliban seized power in August, but that supporting Afghan women is "one area where there is solidarity" in the United States and international community.

### **15. More Afghans going hungry, fewer jobs available -World Bank**

Reuters, 15 Mar 22

The number of people in Afghanistan who cannot afford food and other essentials has doubled since the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021 as unemployment rises and wages fall, a World Bank survey showed on Tuesday.

## **16. Taliban house-to-house searches terrorize US allies left behind**

Washington Examiner, 15 Mar 22, Beth Bailey

The Taliban's systematic house-to-house searches, which commenced in Kabul in early March, now occur in cities and towns throughout Afghanistan.

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The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) arrested four leading members of the ruling Baath Party, while on their way to Damascus. They were arrested at the crossing point of the town of Tabqa in the western countryside of Raqqa, a government source from the northeastern al-Hasakeh governorate said.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **42. Pashtun Jirga in Bannu calls for elections, Jirga in Afghanistan**

TOLONews, 15 Mar 22

A jirga gathering of Pashtuns in Bannu city in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan that was held from 11 to 14 of March, called for Loya Jirga and general elections in Afghanistan to elect a representative government.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **43. Pakistan raises questions over Indian missile that 'accidentally' fell in its territory**

Anadolu Agency, 15 Mar 22, Islamuddin Sajid

Pakistan on Tuesday raised multiple questions about a missile launched from India that landed in its territory, urging New Delhi to do a joint investigation rather than acting unilaterally.

#### **44. Pakistan to host upcoming Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit**

Anadolu Agency, 15 Mar 22, Ali Abo Rezeg

The upcoming summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will be held in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, on March 22-23, the pan-Islamic group said on Tuesday.

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#### YEMEN

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#### **45. Don't expect Houthis to stick to tanker swap deal, UAE tells UN**

The National, 15 Mar 22

UAE diplomat Mohamed Abushahab on Tuesday said Yemen's Houthi rebels may renege on a recently struck deal with the UN to salvage a leaky oil platform that threatens to spill its load into the sea.

#### **46. Aid to Yemen prevented starvation but more is needed, says UN humanitarian chief**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Ephrem Kossaify

Nearly \$14 billion of international aid donated to Yemen in the past seven years has made an "enormous difference" to the people of the country, according to the UN's humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths.

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#### EGYPT

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#### **47. Egypt's El Sisi fixes price of unsubsidized bread as wheat costs rise**

The National, 15 Mar 22, Hamza Hendawi

Egypt's president on Tuesday ordered his government to fix the price of unsubsidized bread consumed by an estimated 40 million Egyptians. Abdel Fattah El Sisi's media office said he ordered the Supply Minister to ensure bakeries have sufficient wheat flour to "streamline" the price of the free bread not covered by state subsidies and allow the ministry's inspectors to enforce the price.

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#### ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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#### **48. The impact of Ukraine war on the Middle East**

Daily Sabah, 15 Mar 22, Muhittin Ataman

With the Ukraine war, which is considered one of the main milestones in recent world history, some of the main principles of international politics and the discourses that accompany it have changed. The previous milestone was the 9/11 terrorist attacks against U.S. hegemony. The 9/11 attacks closed the "end of history" political discourse and the period of "ultimate victory" won by the liberal West.

#### **49. Middle East's travel, tourism revenues could grow to \$246bn in 2022: WTTC**

Daily News (Egypt), 15 Mar 22, Nehal Samir

New research from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) revealed that the Middle East's travel and tourism sector's revenues could reach \$246bn this year, just 8.9% behind pre-pandemic levels.

#### **50. Lebanon's last chance as Ukraine fallout looms**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Bahaa Hariri

Russia's decision to invade Ukraine will have ramifications that reverberate around the world for years to come. In the West, the immediate concern remains the invasion's impact on the oil and gas markets. Yet, in countries like Lebanon, with just six weeks to two months of wheat reserves, the war's impact on agricultural supply chains could well be the straw that finally breaks the camel's back.

#### **51. Countering aggressors isn't the antithesis of humanitarian missions**

Al Arabiya, 15 Mar 22, Baraa Shiban

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is in its third week with no signs of it letting up. Worldwide, people are watching the news and the unfolding humanitarian crisis. The Middle East is no stranger to conflicts. That is why millions of people in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen can easily relate to the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

#### **52. Russia-Ukraine: Putin's war means Mohammed bin Salman has Biden over a barrel**

Middle East Eye, 15 Mar 22, David Hearst

Three short weeks ago, US President Joe Biden was in no hurry to talk to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler and the next king of a major US regional ally.

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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#### **1. Generals say Afghanistan, Somalia pullouts hurt terror fight**

Associated Press, 15 Mar 22, Lolita C. Baldor

The complete U.S. military withdrawals from Afghanistan and Somalia last year have made it more difficult for the United States to counter terror groups that aspire to attack America and its allies, senior commanders told Congress on Tuesday.

And they said Russia and China are both seeking to bolster their influence in the Middle East and Africa, with Moscow being the more "acute threat" right now.

Gen. Stephen Townsend, head of U.S. Africa Command, said sending teams of U.S. forces into Somalia on a periodic basis is not efficient or effective and puts American troops at greater risk.

Iraqi politics were thrown further into turmoil following the October 2021 general elections, which were marred by a record-low turnout, post-election threats and violence, and a delay of several months until final results were confirmed.

Intense negotiations among political groups have since failed to form a majority parliamentary coalition to appoint a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

The largest political bloc led by firebrand Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, had backed Zebari for the presidency.

Tensions rose Sunday with Iranian missile strikes on Erbil, capital of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

Tehran said the attack targeted Israeli sites, but Kurdish authorities denied any such presence.

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## SYRIA

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### **11. Russia drafting thousands in Syria for Ukraine war: monitor**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Russia has drawn up lists of 40,000 fighters from Syrian army and allied militias to be put on standby for deployment in Ukraine, a war monitor said Tuesday.

The Kremlin said last week that volunteers, including from Syria, were welcome to fight alongside the Russian army in Ukraine.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and activists said Russian officers, in coordination with the Syrian military and allied militia, had set up registration offices in regime-held areas.

“More than 40,000 Syrians have registered to fight alongside Russia in Ukraine so far,” said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the UK-based monitor.

Moscow is recruiting Syrians who acquired combat experience during Syria’s 11-year-old civil war to bolster the invasion of Ukraine it launched on February 24.

Russian officers deployed as part of the force Moscow sent to Syria in 2015 to support Damascus had approved 22,000 of them, Abdel Rahman said.

Those fighters are either combatants drawn from the army or pro-regime militias who have experience in street warfare and received Russian training.

In a country where soldiers earn between \$15 and \$35 per month, Russia has promised them a salary of \$1,100 to fight in Ukraine, the Observatory reported.

They are also entitled to \$7,700 in compensation for injuries and their families to \$16,500 if they are killed in combat.

Another 18,000 men had registered with Syria's ruling Baath party and would be screened by the Wagner Group, a Russian private military contractor with links to the Kremlin, the monitor said.

Misinformation about Syrian recruits in Ukraine has been spreading online.

Last week, pictures were shared of a Syrian soldier they said had died in Ukraine, but it later appeared he had been killed in his homeland in 2015.

Lack of jobs

The Observatory said it had no confirmed reports yet of any Syrian recruits leaving for Ukraine.

Abdel Rahman said Russia had drawn Syrian army recruits from the 25th Special Mission Forces Division, once better known as the "Tiger Forces", and from the Russian-run 5th Division.

Fighters from the Palestinian Liwaa al-Quds group and the Baath party's military branch had also enlisted.

A Syrian government representative denied the recruitment drive.

"Until now no names have been written down, no soldiers registered in any centers nor has anyone travelled to Russia to fight in Ukraine," Omar Rahmoun of the National Reconciliation Committee told AFP.

Syrian mercenaries have already fought on opposing sides of foreign conflicts, in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh.

More than a decade of war has pushed 90 percent of the population into poverty, a factor Syrians for Truth and Justice said was a key factor in the recruitment.

A Syrian soldier told the activist group this month that he enlisted to fight in Ukraine because he could not find a job after his military service.

"The situation is extremely dire. There is no electricity, heating, or household gas," he said, adding he had registered at an air force intelligence office near Damascus.

'A few hundred dollars'

Regime-allied forces opened recruitment centers in the eastern towns of Al-Mayadeen and Deir Ezzor, according to Omar Abu Layla, who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet.

"Wagner started the whole thing in Deir Ezzor; only dozens have registered so far," he said.

"In a country that lacks basic necessities, some have no choice but to fight... for a few hundred dollars."

Turkey-backed rebels in northern Syria are also gearing up to send fighters on the opposing side.

An AFP reporter in northern Syria said the factions preparing for Ukraine include the Sultan Murad, Sulaiman Shah and Hamza divisions, all of which had previously sent hundreds of fighters to fight in Libya and Azerbaijan.

While money is the main driver for Syrian mercenaries on both sides of the conflict, rights groups said Ankara's proxies often exploited fighters and withheld wages.

One fighter told AFP he was promised \$3,000 to join the Ukraine battlefield.

"We are tired of the hunger... I will go and never come back. From Ukraine, I plan to go to Europe," another said.

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## **12. Syria enclave marks uprising with message for Ukraine**

Agence France-Presse, 15 Mar 22

Thousands of protesters in war-torn Syria's rebel enclave of Idlib on Tuesday marked 11 years since the start of an anti-government uprising, buoyed by the global outcry over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Gathered on the main square in the northwestern city of Idlib, more than 5,000 people took part in one of the largest rallies the beleaguered region has seen in months.

Many of the demonstrators hoped the war launched by the Syrian government's main backer Russia in Ukraine would rekindle interest in their cause.

"What is happening in Ukraine today is similar to the situation here; the enemy is the same and the goal is the same," protester Radwan Atrash told AFP.

Thousands of demonstrators marked the date in other cities across rebel-held northern Syria.

President Bashar al-Assad's grip on power held by a thread after a nationwide uprising that erupted on March 15, 2011 escalated into a fully-fledged civil war.

But a decision by Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to throw his military might behind the Syrian government changed the course of the conflict and saved Assad's hold on power.

The war left half a million people dead, mostly in attacks by the government and its allies, including both Russian and Iranian forces, as well as a myriad of militia groups.

'Shock and horror'

Around four million people, at least half of them displaced, now live in a region of northwestern Syria that is the last enclave fighting Assad's rule despite years of deadly Russian-backed offensives.

A few Ukrainian flags were visible at the Idlib protest, as were banners expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people and demanding action against Putin.

A medic among the protesters at the city's main roundabout had some advice for his counterparts in Ukraine.

"Fortify your hospitals with cement blocks; the enemy Putin does not distinguish between civilians, wounded people and fighters," said Ali Hamoush, who works at an Idlib hospital.

Russia has repeatedly targeted medical facilities in Syria, according to witnesses, medics and human rights groups.

A pediatric hospital was hit by an apparent Russian strike in the besieged Ukrainian city of Mariupol last week, fueling accusations of war crimes against Putin.

As the conflict drags on, rights groups have pleaded for the international community not to forget Syria.

"While we look with shock and horror at what is unfolding in Ukraine, we are reminded of the intense and worsening suffering that the Syrian population has endured," Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, said this week.

"One of the greatest human tragedies of our time has gotten worse over the last year in the shadow of crises elsewhere."

'Brutal and destructive'

Syria's economy has been battered by a decade of conflict and grueling sanctions.

"The coincidence of this year's anniversary with the appalling Russian aggression against Ukraine... highlights Russia's brutal and destructive behavior in both conflicts," Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States said in a joint statement.

Last week, the UN commission for inquiry on Syria called for "a review of the implementation and impacts of sanctions currently imposed on Syria" in light of deteriorating living conditions.

But the five nations said they do "not support efforts to normalize relations with the Assad regime".

Assad is among the few heads of state to openly support Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow is currently recruiting thousands of fighters in Syria, from the regular army and from militia groups, to be put on standby for possible deployment in Ukraine.

The stiff resistance faced by invading Russian troops and Putin's growing pariah status appeared to galvanize the Idlib crowd.

"My message to the Ukrainian people is 'Don't give up'. Eleven years have passed, but we are undaunted and, God willing, victory is ours," said protester Salwa Abdelrahman, 49.

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### **13. Impunity for war crimes in Syria casts a grim shadow over Ukraine**

New York Times, 15 Mar 22, Ben Hubbard

The Syrian police stormed her house and dragged her husband away. Her eldest son died in a rain of Syrian government shells on her hometown. So like millions of other Syrians, Hanadi Hafisi fled the country with plans to return when the war ended.

A decade later, she's still a refugee in Turkey, where her work at a center that treats war injuries exposes her to a constant display of the human destruction wrought by President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his Russian backers: paralysis, missing hands and legs, and deep trauma that leaves her patients asking why such disasters consumed their lives.

"I don't know what to tell them when they ask me whether they will reach justice," said Ms. Hafisi, 46. "Seriously, what to tell them? That Bashar will be held accountable? That he will face trial? Of course not."

As the world takes in the grim realities of Russia's invasion of Ukraine — the once-vibrant neighborhoods bombed out, the civilians killed by shells while trying to flee, the speculation about whether Russia will use chemical weapons — many Syrians have watched with a horrifying sense of déjà vu and a deep foreboding about what lies ahead.

The Syrian war began 11 years ago this month with an anti-Assad uprising that spiraled into a multisided conflict among the government, armed rebels, jihadists and others. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, millions have fled their homes, and Mr. al-Assad has remained in power, in large part because of the extensive support he received from the man now driving the invasion of Ukraine, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

The legacy of Syria's war, and Russia's role in it, looms large over Ukraine, offering potential lessons to Mr. Putin, analysts said: that "red lines" laid down by the West can be crossed without long-term consequences; that diplomacy purportedly aimed at stopping violence can be used to distract from it; and that autocrats can do terrible things and face international sanctions — and still stay in power.

Much of the brutality Mr. al-Assad deployed to quash his foes was documented in real time and spurred outrage that left many thinking he could never get away with it.

He dispatched soldiers and armed thugs to stop protests by locking up activists and firing live ammunition into crowds. As the opposition took up arms, his troops shelled, bombed and imposed starvation sieges on towns and neighborhoods that supported the rebels.

Those actions killed large numbers of civilians and sent many more fleeing for their lives. More than half of Syria's prewar population was displaced during the war, and 5.7 million refugees remain outside the country.

In August 2013, Mr. al-Assad's forces shocked the world by deploying chemical weapons on rebel-held towns near the capital, Damascus, killing more than 1,400 people, U.S. officials said.

Many Syrians expected that such a blatant violation of international law would prompt Western military intervention, especially since President Barack Obama had called the use of chemical weapons a "red line."

"I was sure we had witnessed something very few people had experienced before, like those who witnessed Chernobyl or Hiroshima," recalled Ibrahim Alfawal, 29, who survived the chemical attack and said it had felt like "judgment day."

But he was shocked when the United States did not intervene. Mr. al-Assad's forces eventually took control of the towns that had been gassed, seeming to pay no price for his use of forbidden arms.

That seemed to show that Mr. al-Assad could count on impunity, Mr. Alfawal said, and attacks by Syrian forces on civilian infrastructure — including schools, hospitals, neighborhoods and bakeries where families had lined up to buy bread — only escalated.

In 2015, Mr. Putin sent Russian forces to help Mr. al-Assad's beleaguered army, and soon Russian officers were advising Syrian forces and Russian jets were dropping bombs on Syrian cities — enjoying the same impunity that Mr. al-Assad seemed to have.

In Ukraine, Russia has used disinformation campaigns similar to those it pioneered in Syria, where it falsely branded opposition activists as members of Al Qaeda and accused the rebels of launching the chemical attacks as "false flag" operations to blame the Syrian government.

"They are taking the same concept they used in Syria, to lie and to stick to it," Mr. Alfawal said of Russia's approach to Ukraine.

The chemical attacks in Syria continued. In addition to two that killed large numbers of people in the village of Khan Sheikhoun in 2017 and east of Damascus in 2018 there have been at least 350 other attacks with chemical substances, according to Tobias Schneider, a researcher at the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin.

Most of those used chlorine, which is not classified as a chemical weapon but can be used as such to terrify civilians and encourage them to flee.

While no evidence has surfaced that Russian forces used chemical weapons in Syria, researchers believe that Mr. Putin enabled Mr. al-Assad to do so.

"It is absolutely certain that the Russian government at least knows and likely facilitated the use of chemical weapons by the Syrians, mostly chlorine attacks," Mr. Schneider said.

There are no indications that chemical weapons have been used in Ukraine, but watching the war there, many Syrians see signs that Mr. Putin is employing parts of the Syria playbook.

The Russians “are willing to devour the green and the dry,” said Radwan Alhomsy, a Syrian activist in southern Turkey, using an Arabic idiom meaning to destroy everything. “They don’t care about the international community or anything else. We saw that in Syria. Burning schools is not new to us. It’s land they want to take, and they will take it.”

European analysts point out the differences between the wars in Syria and Ukraine that could lead to different Western responses. Unlike Mr. Putin, Mr. al-Assad fought to regain control of his own country, not take over one of his neighbors. Unlike Syria, Russia is a nuclear-armed power, complicating the issue of military intervention.

And while the United States and its European allies largely let Mr. al-Assad get away with using chemical weapons in the Middle East, Mr. Putin’s doing so on the European continent would most likely cause greater alarm and elicit a stiffer response.

“If Putin thinks that he’ll be treated like al-Assad, he is wrong because he is not al-Assad and this is not Syria,” said Patricia Lewis, director of the international security program at Chatham House.

Still, Mr. Putin could take some solace from Mr. al-Assad’s survival: how the West went on mistakenly believing that Mr. al-Assad’s fall was unavoidable, and how he has clung to power despite sanctions that have strangled his economy and impoverished his people.

Emile Hokayem, a Middle East analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, warned of two strategies used in Syria that the Russians could employ in Ukraine.

One was Russia’s engagement in international diplomacy aimed at ending the violence as a way of distracting the West from the war on the ground. Another was the deliberate creation of a refugee crisis to bog down Europe and sap its resources.

“Creating a humanitarian catastrophe is part of the war strategy, not a secondary effect, because this is how you shift the burden on to the other side,” he said.

Many Syrian refugees are watching the Ukraine war from impoverished camps across the Middle East or from European cities where they are struggling to start new lives.

While some feel bitter about the warmth shown to fleeing Ukrainians, the Syrians also recall their own war, and hope the Ukrainians will fare better than they did.

“We were left alone to face our destiny,” said Mansour Abu al-Kheir, who survived two chemical attacks east of Damascus before fleeing as a refugee to southern Turkey. “I hope this won’t happen to the Ukrainians.”

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There were only a few countries that were not overtly hostile to the United States and could make use of the technology and designs Mr. Toebbe had to sell. Only a country able to build a nuclear reactor and ready to invest billions in a nuclear submarine fleet would be willing to funnel him the hundreds of thousands of dollars in cryptocurrency that he was seeking.

Brazil began work on developing nuclear submarines in 1978, originally motivated by its rivalry with Argentina. In 2008, under the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil reinvested in an effort to create a nuclear submarine, to better patrol and protect its exclusive economic zone in the Atlantic Ocean, a source of fossil fuels and other resources.

The country aims to launch its first nuclear-powered submarine in 2029, part of a \$7.2 billion submarine program. Brazil is building four more traditional submarines with the help of France, but it has been attempting to develop a fifth submarine powered by a nuclear reactor on its own — a project it has struggled with.

As a result, Mr. Toebbe's expertise, on how to make nuclear reactors even quieter and harder to detect, as well as other design elements of Virginia-class submarines, would have been of enormous value to Brazil.

While the Brazilian embassy declined to comment, a senior Brazilian official said the country had cooperated with American investigators because of the two nations' partnership and friendly relations between Brazil's intelligence service and the C.I.A.

Had Brazil gotten caught seeking to purchase American secrets, the relations between the two countries, including intelligence sharing, could have been thrown in jeopardy.

Instead, Brazilian officials worked with the F.B.I. after Mr. Toebbe was initially hesitant to deposit the classified information at a prearranged secret location, called a dead drop.

"I am concerned that using a dead drop location your friend prepares makes me very vulnerable," Mr. Toebbe wrote, according to court records. "For now, I must consider the possibility that you are not the person I hope you are."

To trick Mr. Toebbe into believing he was speaking with a Brazilian official, the undercover agent told him to look for a signal placed in a window in a Brazilian government building in Washington over Memorial Day weekend last year. Such an operation could only have been carried out with the cooperation of Brazilian officials in Washington.

After seeing the sign, Mr. Toebbe agreed to drop a sample of the nuclear secrets he stole from the Navy hidden in a peanut butter sandwich in West Virginia, setting off a chain of events culminating in the October arrest of the couple.

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## **27. Biden to announce \$1 billion in new military aid to Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 15 Mar 22, Gordon Lubold, Vivian Salama and Nancy A. Youssef

President Biden is expected to announce more than \$1 billion in new military assistance to the Ukraine government as early as Wednesday, according to U.S. officials, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to make a plea to Congress for more aid to defend his country against Russia's invasion.

The \$1.01 billion is expected to include more of the same kinds of military equipment the U.S. says the Ukrainians need the most: antiarmor and anti-air systems, including portable air defenses such as Javelins and Stingers. The money would come from the roughly \$13.6 billion allotted for Ukraine in the omnibus budget bill Mr. Biden signed Tuesday.

While the White House is considering sending more troops to Europe to add to the roughly 15,000 deployed there since the Russia-Ukraine crisis began, Mr. Biden isn't expected to deploy more troops now, U.S. officials said.

"We're moving urgently to further augment the support to the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their country," President Biden said Tuesday, without providing additional details. "And I'll have much more to say about this tomorrow about exactly what we're doing in Ukraine."

Senators and members of the House of Representatives of both parties have called for the administration to send as much military support to Ukraine as possible, and in his virtual address to Congress Wednesday, Mr. Zelensky is expected to appeal to that support.

On Tuesday, Mr. Zelensky made a plea before Canada's parliament for a no-fly zone, asking legislators to stop Russia in its bid to "annihilate" Ukraine.

"It's dire straits but it also allowed us to see who our real friends are over the last 20 days," Mr. Zelensky said.

But Pentagon officials and others say some forms of support wouldn't be helpful to the Ukrainians and would risk the U.S. slipping into direct conflict with Russia inside Ukraine. Those officials oppose establishing a no-fly zone, determining it wouldn't stop the Russian cruise missiles being lobbed from inside Russia and could require U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization jets to shoot down Russian planes. The Pentagon has also declined to support a separate proposal to provide Polish jet fighters to Ukraine via the U.S., arguing that the Ukrainians aren't using the jet fighters they already have. The Pentagon has also referred to the logistical challenges to getting the planes into Ukraine.

The new support comes after U.S. officials said over the weekend that after the invasion, Moscow had reached out to Beijing for economic military assistance. China has been reluctant to distance itself from Russia, and Moscow and Beijing have denied that Russia had asked China for military assistance.

The U.S. is still in the process of sending the most recent tranche of support, about \$350 million in arms, to Ukraine. Since 2014, the U.S. had provided \$2.5 billion in military aid before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, defense officials said.

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The U.S. Treasury Department last week announced new sanctions against three Russian-based entities that aided ongoing development of North Korea's military capabilities and two individuals tied to those companies. The sanctions block access to any U.S. assets held by them.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **29. The best peace plan for Ukraine is sending military support**

Washington Post, 15 Mar 22, David Ignatius

With the war for Ukraine in its third bloody week, the world faces two urgent questions: How do we help the brave Ukrainian people continue their fight for freedom? And how do we bring this war to an end before Ukraine is destroyed?

The two questions may seem sharply at odds, but the Biden administration rightly believes they are related. By stepping up military assistance to Ukraine — and making President Vladimir Putin pay an ever-steeper price for his invasion — the United States and its allies will boost the chances of a peace agreement that is not a capitulation to Russia's flagrant aggression.

Military support for Ukraine is the best peace plan, in other words. Already, Ukraine's valiant defense has led Putin to soften his initial war demands. A "peace process" is underway, involving would-be mediators from Israel, Germany, France and other nations. Let's hope this can produce a cease-fire before too long. But any real settlement will require Putin to change course — not just to save Ukraine, but to save Russia.

Diplomats have been working overtime this past week to craft a formula for a neutral Ukraine on the model of Austria, whose security would be guaranteed by Germany, France, Russia, the United States and perhaps other nations. This formula would reflect a major concession by Putin, but it could also diminish the heroic status of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Many Ukrainians would argue that their people didn't fight and die to achieve neutrality.

The decision about war and peace should belong to Zelensky and his nation. But as diplomacy moves forward, several things seem certain. First, there's sure to be more fighting on the way to a truce. Second, the Ukrainians (and their NATO partners, too) will need top-flight diplomats to negotiate with cunning Russian negotiators in a process that could resemble the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the Balkan war.

Putin needs peace more than anyone because he has failed to achieve his war aims: Ukraine did not crumble; it proved to be the real, unified nation that Putin claimed didn't exist. Europe has not retreated before Russian demands; instead, it's more united than at any time since 1945. The United States is not leaderless and dysfunctional; Biden has mumbled his way to bipartisan support.

Putin's reckless gamble has failed, and the longer he continues the war — and razes the cities of Ukraine — the deeper and longer-lasting this failure will become.

Biden's visit to Europe next week should be a platform for the dual campaign ahead: He should reaffirm U.S. and NATO commitments to provide Ukraine with the weapons to resist Russia's unlawful, unprovoked attack. And he should support the peace efforts that have accelerated over the past week.

Putin's war should end in utter defeat. But in the nuclear age, such decisive outcomes may not be possible. President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided in January 1943 to demand "unconditional surrender" by Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. It was perhaps the most consequential decision of the war — and one that shaped the rest of the 20th century. The destruction of the German and Japanese war machines enabled the miraculous reconstruction of those nations as prosperous democracies.

The West yearns for a similar democratic reconstruction of Russia. But it's unobtainable through force of arms, for a simple reason: Putin has signaled his willingness to use nuclear weapons if attacked by the United States and its NATO partners. Biden has said (and perhaps over-said) from the beginning that he will avoid direct military conflict with Russia. That's why no-fly zones and MiG transfers are unwise.

But the United States doesn't need to fight World War III to destroy Russian power. Putin is destroying himself. The longer the war goes on, the less will remain of Russia's military and economic might. Putin's regime is self-liquidating, if the United States and its allies can help Ukraine stay in the fight. Ukraine doesn't need to win; like Gen. George Washington in the Revolutionary War, it just needs to survive.

The Biden administration shouldn't take extreme risks in the weeks ahead — simply do more of what's working: Transfer more antitank and anti-aircraft missiles through the four NATO countries that border Ukraine. Provide bigger, more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, not just shoulder-fired Stingers. Send more of the Turkish-made drones that have been so deadly. Deliver anti-ship missiles to blunt Russian dominance of the Black Sea coast. Send more fuel and ammunition. As long as Russia chooses to keep fighting, make the war as painful as possible.

This war has been horrific for Ukraine, but it's been very costly for Russia, too. One U.S. estimate is that in the first three weeks, Russia may have suffered 5,000 dead. That would be more than the U.S. military lost in all the years of fighting in Iraq, and more than double the U.S. death toll in 20 years of combat in Afghanistan. And Russia's losses are just beginning.

We're at a potential tipping point now, where each side sees some advantage in a negotiated peace. Paradoxically, that's the time when the United States should redouble its support for Ukraine, until the last guns of the Russian invaders go silent.

*David Ignatius joined The Post in 1986 as editor of its Sunday Outlook section. In 1990 he became foreign editor, and in 1993, assistant managing editor for business news. He began writing his column in 1998 and continued even during a three-year stint as executive editor of the International Herald Tribune in Paris.*

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### **30. Russia's war will remake the world**

Financial Times (UK), 15 Mar 22, Martin Wolf

A new world is being born. The hope for peaceful relations is fading. Instead, we have Russia's war on Ukraine, threats of nuclear Armageddon, a mobilised west, an alliance of autocracies, unprecedented economic sanctions and a huge energy and food shock. No one knows what will happen. But we do know this looks to be a disaster.

It is natural to seek someone to blame. For many, the culprit is Nato's expansion into central and eastern Europe. A leading voice is John Mearsheimer, the distinguished "realist" scholar, who blames the US decision to open up the possibility of Nato membership to Ukraine in 2008. I agree and disagree.

The mistake was the ambiguity. The offer should only have been made when Ukraine would join as a full member. But I supported the expansion of Nato into the former Russian satellites because good fences make good neighbours. Russia knows that if it invades a Nato member, there will be war. That was not the case with Ukraine. This is why this assault seemed an easy option for the despot in the Kremlin.

As to why Vladimir Putin did it, one answer is that he runs a failed regime. Only empire can justify his rule. Russia's commodity-dependent economy has fallen far behind Poland's. It is a rentiers' paradise. Today, those rentiers are Putin's thugs and the Boris Yeltsin-era "oligarchs". Ukraine has failed economically, too. But it is democratic. For Putin, that aspiration is intolerable. (See charts.)

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, many hoped for a world guided by co-operation and mutually beneficial exchange. But great power conflict was always waiting to break through. The US was inebriated by its "unipolar moment". China grew more powerful and authoritarian under Xi Jinping. Putin chewed on his resentments, finally invading a country he thinks he owns. We hear echoes of the first world war. Then, it was Austria, the weaker partner, not Germany, that began the conflict. Today, it is Russia, the weaker partner in its alliance with China.

China's promised support risks turning the dangers created by Russia's war into a catastrophe. It would transform the world into two blocs, with costly economic and security consequences. Yet a mobilised west is still far stronger. The impact of western sanctions demonstrates this. A unified west dwarfs Russia on all measures, except military personnel and nuclear warheads. Even with China added, the west is significantly more powerful, except in numbers. Nevertheless, a long-term clash between the west and an authoritarian bloc of Russia and China must be prevented if at all possible. It would be hugely dangerous.

Today, then, we see a transforming world. Consider the challenges ahead.

Most obviously, there must be an end to the war in Ukraine, which is an assault simultaneously on a peaceful country, on a democracy and on the world order. China should seek to help extricate Russia from its quagmire. It is not hard to understand why it backs Putin. Among other things, its leaders surely share his contempt for democracies. Yet these are huge mistakes. As

history has often shown, free societies are powerful, once mobilised, because they enjoy the support of their people.

It is also essential to manage the coming economic crisis. The combination of war, supply shocks and high inflation is destabilising, as the world learnt in the 1970s. Financial instability now seems very likely, too. Monetary authorities cannot ignore high inflation, however. So governments will have to employ targeted fiscal support for the vulnerable.

Moreover, the west must reinforce its defences, on all fronts – military, energy, cyber and economic. It is inevitable, alas, that in a conflict with huge ramifications the requirements of security come first. This is not the world any sane person desires. But it is the one in which we now live. It is vital that the EU becomes a true security power. It comfortably possesses the economic and demographic scale to balance Russia. Post-Brexit UK must participate as fully as possible. The US needs such European assistance, since it will also be dealing with Xi's worrying China.

Despite these pressing needs, we should try not to abandon everything achieved in the past three decades. We are not at war with ordinary Russians and Chinese people who simply hope for a better future. On the contrary, in the long term they may prove our allies. Sanctions need to be targeted, so far as possible. The future of trade and other peaceful exchanges will depend, however, on how – and, no less, after how long – this crisis ends.

Not least, we need to remember the wider concerns all humans share – the global environment, managing pandemics, economic development and peace itself. We cannot survive without co-operation. If Putin's madness proves anything it is that. The world of "might is right" is not a world we can safely live in. As his nuclear threats show.

After the battle of Austerlitz in 1805, William Pitt the Younger said, presciently: "Roll up the map [of Europe]; it will not be needed these 10 years." Russia's war on Ukraine has similarly transformed the map of our world. A prolonged bout of stagflation seems certain, with large potential effects on financial markets. In the long term, the emergence of two blocs with deep splits between them is likely, as is an accelerating reversal of globalisation and sacrifice of business interests to geopolitics. Even nuclear war is, alas, conceivable.

Pray for a miracle in Moscow. Without it, the road ahead will be long and hard.

*Martin Wolf is chief economics commentator at the Financial Times, London. He was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 2000 "for services to financial journalism".*

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### **31. Putin's war killed Syria diplomacy** Foreign Policy, 15 Mar 22, Charles Lister

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting collapse of U.S. and European diplomatic relations with Moscow mean Syria diplomacy is now all but dead. Small signs that diplomacy may have been poised for renewed investment in early 2022 now feel like a distant memory.

The international community thus finds itself in a distinctly new strategic environment, where long-standing multilateral institutions and mechanisms traditionally relied on to mediate and de-escalate are more or less impotent. The United Nations Security Council had little value before the invasion of Ukraine, but it is now worthless.

To make matters worse, Russia's war on Ukraine looks set to trigger a humanitarian crisis in Syria that will far surpass anything witnessed over the past 11 years. While the world focuses on the escalating suffering in Ukraine, Syria's collapse into even deeper misery risks being ignored, catalyzing another wave of destabilizing effects across the Middle East, Europe, and beyond.

To adapt to this new environment, the international community must consider a comprehensive change in approach toward Syria, prioritizing the freezing of existing conflict lines and a more strategic use of aid, stabilization, and targeted rebuilding in areas free of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's rule. This "freeze and build" strategy—which is laid out in more detail in a new policy paper—would be a bold departure from the norms and principles guiding the current international response to Syria's crisis. But unprecedented times require substantial adaptations.

Assad's regime currently controls approximately two-thirds of Syria, but that sizable region remains highly unstable, riven by criminality, warlordism, localized protest, and latent insurgency, all of which is fueled and sustained by acute economic collapse. The remaining third of Syria is controlled variously by Syrian opposition and Islamist forces in the northwest and by the Syrian Democratic Forces in the northeast.

Although low-level clashes continue across lines of control in the north, de facto cease-fires have remained in place for at least two years. The United States and its allies, Turkey included, have a clear interest not just in sustaining that freeze but in more openly guaranteeing that Syria use existing troop deployments in the northwest (Turkey) and northeast (United States and allies).

Beyond its fatal impact on Syria's political process, Russia's invasion of Ukraine looks likely to pose a fatal threat to the United Nations' mechanism that allows cross-border aid delivery to nearly 4 million civilians in northwestern Syria. That arrangement is up for a vote at the U.N. Security Council in July, and Russia looks almost certain to veto it. That would almost instantly result in a 75 to 80 percent deficit in food needed to feed 2.4 million civilians who are entirely dependent on food aid. That risks triggering major hostilities and a massive refugee exodus.

Beyond cross-border aid, Syria also now faces a famine because of a crushing blow to its wheat supply, which is considered the most vital food product to feed the population. As a result of successive droughts, Syria's domestic wheat crop was expected to be less than a quarter of its average in 2022, but indispensable supplies from Russia are now almost certainly impossible. Even the World Food Program's efforts to supply wheat to Syria have now been made virtually obsolete, as their primary source was Ukraine, which has ended all exports.

Having committed virtually every possible war crime and crime against humanity, Assad has survived—with substantial Russian help. But he stands atop the ruins of a state. His regime and its brutal security apparatus serve as a potent deterrent to any meaningful refugee return. With the conflict in Ukraine set to exacerbate Syria's already destructive economic and humanitarian

challenges, and with Russia both distracted by Ukraine and considered an international pariah, Assad looks set to become acutely vulnerable.

The time for reactive, short-term policy, where problems are treated with bandages, must now be replaced by something constructive that seeks to stabilize areas of Syria and enhance the international community's collective diplomatic leverage.

For starters, the United States and its allies should maintain existing troop deployments to counter the Islamic State, keep punitive sanctions on Assad's regime, sustain and amplify accountability efforts through multilateral mechanisms and universal jurisdiction in Europe, and diplomatically deter efforts by governments in the region—such as those of the United Arab Emirates and Jordan—to normalize Assad and let him back into the international community's good graces.

By embracing a policy of strategic patience, the United States and its allies should also seek to create new realities in northwestern and northeastern Syria that would exist in parallel with—and stand in stark contrast to—the life offered by Assad's regime.

By consolidating the control of territory by non-Assad entities across northern Syria and investing aid, stabilization, and targeted reconstruction funds into local communities, Washington and like-minded allies have an opportunity to foster a greater sense of stability and recovery in strategically vital regions of Syria.

To put it in blunt terms: The international community must do away with a strategy of supplying tents, blankets, and food baskets and shift to one that constructs semipermanent housing for displaced peoples and provides investment opportunities for small businesses and agriculture as well as sustainable resources like solar power. This aid would be delivered by a coalition of allied government aid agencies, with a central role assumed by the U.S. Agency for International Development in northeastern Syria and likely by Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency in the northwest.

In seeking to establish such a reality, a “freeze and build” policy would serve to strengthen collective international resolve and increase collective international leverage aimed at pursuing an eventual diplomatic settlement, whenever conditions to do so become more amenable.

Making a “freeze and build” policy work will require bold decisions and determined diplomacy, particularly with Turkey. Assuming the U.N. cross-border mechanism is on its way out, any strategic aid and stabilization effort would require close coordination with Turkey. Despite long-standing challenges to bilateral ties with Ankara, Ukraine has offered a clear but potentially slim window in which to work swiftly and determinedly to exploit the current strains in Turkey's relationship with Russia. This would attempt to bring it closer to the United States' Syria policy orbit.

The West also has an opportunity to take advantage of the large and well-resourced Syrian exiled business community in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States, much of which has long wanted to invest substantial sums of money into areas not controlled by Assad. To make such a

commercial assistance effort possible, the United States and Europe will need to offer sanctions waivers covering all of northern Syria – another bold move but something diplomats have long discussed and debated.

Today, the international community faces two choices when it comes to Syria policy. One option would be comparatively easy: to sustain the status quo. At best, this approach equates to “kicking the can down the road,” but at worst, it would be a policy that guarantees a gradual degradation in leverage and a probable death knell for any meaningful future resolution. Alternatively, the world can acknowledge that Syria’s diplomatic process is currently paralyzed and that to maintain and possibly enhance the international community’s collective leverage for whenever it comes back to life, the West needs to freeze conflict lines and get strategic about aid.

Although Russia’s invasion of Ukraine may provide a catalyst for this policy shift, in truth, it represents a strategic adaptation that has long been necessary. Providing Band-Aids to the many symptoms of Syria’s crisis has never been a sustainable solution, least of all today.

*Charles Lister is a senior fellow and director of the Syria and Counterterrorism and Extremism programs at the Middle East Institute.*

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### **32. How is Pakistan’s military equipment affected by the Russian invasion?**

Defense News, 15 Mar 22, Usman Ansari

Despite having acquired key defense equipment from Ukraine since the 1990s, Russia’s invasion of the country will not cause support issues for Pakistan, as this weaponry was already being phased out, an industry source has told Defense News.

The largest Pakistan-Ukrainian defense deal was for 320 T-80UD/Ob’yekt 478BEh tanks, built by the Kharkov Machine Building Design Bureau, or KMDB. The tanks were ordered in 1996 and delivered during the 1997-1999 time frame, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Ukraine’s Malyshev Plant also supplied the 1,200-horsepower 6TD-2 power pack for Pakistan’s Al-Khalid series of tanks, derived from Malyshev’s 1,000-horsepower 6TD powering the T-80UD. Malyshev, like the Kharkov Machine Building Design Bureau, is in Kharkiv, a city under heavy Russian attack.

The International Institute of Strategic Studies lists more than 600 Al-Khalid and Al-Khalid I tanks in service manufactured by Pakistan’s state-owned armored fighting vehicles manufacturer, Heavy Industries Taxila, or HIT. Therefore, one-third to half of Pakistan’s entire tank fleet would potentially be rendered unsupportable if the two factories in Kharkiv are destroyed.

However, an industry source with knowledge of HIT’s ongoing programs, told Defense News Pakistan was already replacing Ukrainian equipment before Russia’s full-scale invasion, which began Feb. 24.

That's more acute after dozens of executions there a few days ago.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said going cap in hand from dictator to dictator is no substitute for an energy strategy.

But for the government, handling the fallout of the conflict in Ukraine means what are described as "hard-headed" decisions, even if it's "distasteful".

With huge diplomatic and economic forces at play, there are no straightforward options.

Disentangling Russia's economy from the West's may seem a diplomatic no-brainer, but the cost and complications of doing so simply can't be ignored.

*Laura Kuenssberg is the political editor of BBC News. Before that she was Newsnight's chief correspondent and a regular presenter of the programme after a spell as ITV News business editor.*

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### **34. OPEC and Russia: Will history repeat itself?**

The Hill, 15 Mar 22, Robin M. Mills

OPEC's recent meeting took just 10 minutes to decide there was no shortage of oil and no need to change its prescribed course. Markets thought differently, opening the following Monday and promptly soaring to \$139 per barrel for Brent crude, within touching distance of 2008's all-time nominal record of \$147. The oil exporters' organization is in danger of repeating past mistakes.

The OPEC+ group has laid out a policy of steady production increases, adding 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) each month up to May 2022, then slightly more each month thereafter with a reset of baselines to higher levels for Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq. The UAE ambassador in Washington suggested on March 9 his country favored higher production levels, helping send prices lower, while his energy minister followed up by tweet that this would only happen within the OPEC framework.

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, OPEC+ was struggling to deliver. Nearly all of the non-OPEC members, other than Russia and Kazakhstan, and significant OPEC members Angola and Nigeria were falling well short of their targets. By January, Argus estimated the group was 800,000 bpd below its collective target (excluding the three exempt members, Iran, Libya and Venezuela). Very few people took seriously the forecasts of OPEC and the International Energy Agency that the oil market would be in surplus early in 2022.

Even for those members with some spare capacity, it was clear that Russia was close to its maximum without a substantial revival of drilling, and that Iraq and Kuwait would hit their limits around the third quarter. That would concentrate all available spare capacity in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. If regular monthly increases continued, national targets would reach the baselines by September 2022, at which point the UAE would have about 0.5 million to 0.7 million bpd of

spare capacity, and Saudi Arabia about 1 million bpd. Under a revived Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran could return some 1 million to 1.3 million bpd over a few months.

Saudi Arabia plans to add another 1 million bpd of capacity and the UAE another 0.8 million to 1 million bpd from current levels, but over several years. Iraq's 7 million bpd target by 2027, adding about 2 million bpd, is much more doubtful to achieve.

On March 2, OPEC+ was reluctant to change course, despite Brent crude trading around \$113 per barrel during its meeting, Russian crude at double-digit discounts to that, the steepest backwardation on record at almost \$16 per barrel for the six-month spread, and already initial signs of reluctance to lift Russian cargoes. Shell, BP and Equinor had all announced they would quit the country.

Explanations fall into three groups (and are not mutually exclusive). The first perceived motivation is that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are upset with a perceived lack of U.S. support over drone and missile attacks from the Houthi forces in Yemen and/or from Iran, the snub of President Joe Biden to Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, as well as the attempts to negotiate a return to the disliked JCPOA with Tehran.

The second is that the Gulf producers are hedging their political support, reminding the U.S. of their importance and that they have the option to tilt a little more toward Russia or China. They do not want to annoy Russia, an important power broker in parts of the Middle East, and where they have substantial investments.

The third factor is that the Gulf states do not want to lose continuing cooperation with Russia in the OPEC+ framework, a long-sought outcome that Moscow never delivered on before 2016. This was essential in managing the shale-driven bust post-2014 and the COVID-created collapse of April 2020.

But whatever the motives, we have also to look at the effects. OPEC+ may be relatively sanguine on competing supply, given the slowness of U.S. shale companies to speed up investment, as well as the equipment and labor bottlenecks. But demand destruction and a steep global recession is all but inevitable if oil prices escalate much further and European and Asian natural gas prices remain around current levels.

And such high oil prices plus the geopolitical imperative to diminish reliance on Russian crude will give a tremendous impetus to electric vehicles. Plug-in cars already had a 26 percent European market share in November 2021. This risks an eventual repeat of the 1980s demand and price slump — but with decarbonization goals ensuring that this time it will be permanent.

Of course, OPEC+ faces an almost irreconcilable challenge. Only four member nations have a short-term economic interest in higher production allocations, and two of those are about to run out of headroom. Just agreeing the modest quota realignment in July 2021 took a UAE walk-out and hints of leaving the organization entirely.

Energy Intelligence suggested that Russian oil exports were down by about 2.5 million bpd already; even at maximum output, OPEC could barely cover that now. Of course, it will seem

easier to wait until April, and look for harder evidence of disruptions and shortages. That would avoid confrontation with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak and his boss. It was always going to be uncomfortable inviting into Vienna a country which felt itself a superpower not just in petroleum but in political and military capacity.

Yet, one of the central pillars of the OPEC+ edifice is Russia — and specifically, a Russia that is a large and growing oil exporter, which poses a serious market challenge to the core OPEC members. If Russia is going to become a larger and snowier version of Venezuela, that pillar collapses. Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City and Baghdad have a once-in-a-generation chance to seize, with their giant, low-cost and low-carbon reserves, a much greater share of a market about to contract sharply.

*Robin M. Mills is non-resident fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, CEO of Qamar Energy, as well as author of “The Myth of the Oil Crisis.”*

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **35. Ukraine crisis will affect Middle East due to high inflation: Arab League**

Daily News (Egypt), 15 Mar 22, Sami Hegazi

Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul-Gheit participated in the opening of the eighth session of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development that was organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at its headquarters in Beirut in cooperation with the Arab League (AL) and a number of partners.

According to a statement issued by the AL, Aboul-Gheit praised the efforts of the ESCWA and its keenness to strengthen cooperation with the AL to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

In his speech, Aboul-Gheit pointed to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, which has placed additional burdens on Arab countries and caused the loss of many of the gains they made before the pandemic.

In particular, he pointed to the alarming rise in the numbers of poverty and hunger in the Arab world and the risks to the security and stability of societies.

Furthermore, Aboul-Gheit warned of the deterioration of Arab food security figures due to the effects of the pandemic, water scarcity, and climate change.

In this regard, he added that the war in Ukraine will also have repercussions on the Arab region due to the conflict prompting a spike in the global prices of grain, commodities, and energy materials.

The secretary-general pointed out that the Ministerial Council at the AL is aware of the seriousness of these situations and issued at its last meeting a decision to prepare an integrated strategic study on Arab food security.

This study will be presented in the next Arab Summit in Algeria, or within the files of the fifth Development Summit, which is scheduled for early next year in Mauritania.

On recovery policies, Aboul-Gheit stressed the importance of capacity building of institutions, promoting sustainable economic choices, increasing investment in human capital, as well as smart changes to expenditures.

He also touched on the latest developments of the AL's efforts in the field of sustainable development, referring to the Arab initiative to eradicate hunger and the launch of the Arab Network for Science and Technology for Sustainable Development.

It should be noted that the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development addressed, for the second consecutive year, the issue of recovery from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and also reviewed the efforts of Arab countries in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

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IRAN

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### **36. Iran has 3,000 ballistic missiles, many that can reach Israel - US general**

Jerusalem Post, 15 Mar 22

Iran has more than 3,000 ballistic missiles, many of which can reach the State of Israel, commander of the United States Central Command Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said on Tuesday.

McKenzie, who is retiring from the military soon, was in Israel last week and held talks with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, Defense Minister Benny Gantz and IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi.

"At a military level my concern is first of all that they do not have a nuclear weapon but I am also very concerned about the remarkable growth and efficiency of their ballistic missile program," McKenzie told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"They have over 3,000 missiles of various types, some of which can reach Tel Aviv," McKenzie said in response to a query by the senate committee. "None of them can reach Europe yet."

In McKenzie's written statement, he called Iran's missile force the greatest threat to the region's security, and that Iran has developed an arsenal of nuclear-warhead capable ballistic missiles and

after a meeting between Mr El Sisi and his top aides, including Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli and the ministers of supply, defense and interior, as well as the chief of intelligence.

The statement said the president ordered that the government build up six months' supply of all essential foodstuffs.

On Sunday, Supply Minister Ali Moselhy said the government aimed to procure more than six million tons of local wheat during the harvest season, which starts in mid-April.

Government fixing of the prices of food items automatically criminalizes selling them at a higher price. Already, hoarders of essential foodstuffs face a fine or jail term. However, enforcing fixed prices has in the past proved difficult given the magnitude of retail markets and insufficient government manpower.

The price of free-market, flat loaf bread varies according to size. It currently sells for up to 1.5 pounds (\$1), up from only 1 pound before the Ukraine war broke out. A smaller loaf now sells for 0.75 Egyptian pounds (\$50 cents), up from 0.50 Egyptian pounds.

The bread available to the 60 million Egyptians covered by subsidized food cards sells for 0.25 pounds. An adult is entitled to five loaves a day.

Egypt's state grains buyer said this week that a previously contracted 63,000 tons of Russian wheat, and a similar amount of Ukrainian and Romanian wheat, was due to arrive in the country in days.

It received 63,000 tons of French wheat on March 8, and a similar amount of Romanian wheat on March 5, the state General Authority for Supply Commodities said.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **48. The impact of Ukraine war on the Middle East**

Daily Sabah, 15 Mar 22, Muhittin Ataman

With the Ukraine war, which is considered one of the main milestones in recent world history, some of the main principles of international politics and the discourses that accompany it have changed. The previous milestone was the 9/11 terrorist attacks against U.S. hegemony. The 9/11 attacks closed the “end of history” political discourse and the period of “ultimate victory” won by the liberal West. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the period of “the global war on terror” that began with the 9/11 terrorist attacks is now over. The “global rivalry between global powers” is on the rise, and the U.S., Russia and China are the main players in the new period.

Since the global rivalry has led global powers to follow realpolitik in their foreign policies, many regional powers such as Brazil, India, Germany and Turkey have been trying to increase their autonomy in order to protect their national interests against these global powers. Most global powers tend to violate basic principles of international law, rules and norms. Not only Russia and

China but also Western global powers often violate the very basic principles of the international system they themselves established. Regional powers and small states do not trust the big powerful players; now the Ukraine war has shown the world why mid-sized powers should not trust the big powers either.

The Ukraine war has turned out to be more than a regional problem, it is a global one. Marking the beginning of a new period, the conflict has significant global implications. The Middle East region is not exempt from these implications. However, unlike most of Europe, Middle Eastern countries have been following a relatively neutral policy towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While continental European countries that were questioning the effectiveness and meaning of the NATO alliance have gathered around the U.S and consolidated the Western front, Middle Eastern countries have not changed their balanced position towards the crisis.

#### Turkey's 'strategic neutrality'

Turkey has been following a policy of “strategic neutrality” during the Ukraine war. Turkey has repeatedly explained that even though it considers the Russian military intervention illegitimate and a violation of international rules, it urges resolving the crisis through diplomatic means. Following an active and flexible policy, Ankara offered to mediate between the warring sides and managed to bring the foreign ministers of the two countries together in Antalya.

Through diplomatic negotiations, Turkey has been trying to prevent the spillover effect of the war. The U.S. and other Western countries have realized that Turkey has not sided with Russia and that it is still a NATO ally. That is, Turkey’s place in the global rivalry is evident and its place is with the West. Turkey is not seeking a new alliance. If Western countries reconstruct trust between the West and Turkey and recognize the country’s strategic autonomy, Turkey could play a more effective role in its region, resisting Russian and Iranian expansionism in the Middle East.

#### Sanctions and nuclear deal

On the other hand, Iran has found itself in a very interesting position. Iran was about to sign a nuclear deal with the U.S, but the Ukraine war has dramatically changed the ground for a new agreement. While the U.S. was ready to sign the deal, Russia has blocked it. Moscow has mobilized all of its capacity in all platforms to undermine the functioning of the system as a response to the sanctions against it. In addition, if the U.S. reaches an agreement with Iran, it will probably withdraw from the Middle East, since Washington wants to downgrade its presence in the region to concentrate on its trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic relations. This new regional setting may create further problems for the U.S. and especially for its regional allies such as Israel and the Gulf states.

#### Power vacuum in Syria

It is expected that if Russia gets stuck in Ukraine, Moscow will gear down in the Middle East, an important detail for the Syrian crisis in particular. In the Syrian case, Iran will try to fill the power vacuum and will continue to compete with other actors such as Turkey. If this scenario

unfolds, the U.S. and other Western countries, besides Israel, may evaluate the situation and reorient themselves accordingly. With Russia concentrating on the Ukrainian front, Iran will attract more pressure in the region. Therefore, it is not happy about the normalization processes in the region. Iran has been wary about the future of the region and reads the normalization process as a development that will damage its regional perspective.

Israel is yet another Middle Eastern power that follows a relatively neutral policy towards the Ukrainian war since it has good relations with both sides. Similar to other regional states, Israel follows a middle ground policy. It has different policy preferences in the region. For instance, the U.S. has been prioritizing the struggle against international terrorism in the Syrian crisis while Israel has been trying to prevent Iranian expansionism.

#### Arab world's approach

Finally, almost all Arab countries have also been following a relatively neutral policy towards the Ukrainian war. They have not followed in the footsteps of the Western countries. There are several reasons for their neutral policy. First of all, they have lost their trust in Western countries, particularly the U.S., after the Arab insurgencies and revolutions. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have consolidated their mistrust towards the West. They do not consider Western countries reliable partners anymore.

Second, Western countries often question the regional policies of Arab states. Even traditionally unquestioned Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia are frequently criticized by Western countries for their policies towards regional crises such as Yemen. Third, Russia and China have emerged as better alternatives and more reliable partners since these two global actors do not question their policies. The bilateral relationship between the Arab states and Moscow and Beijing is purely based on interests without any political conditions.

*Muhittin Ataman serves as SETA's Director of Foreign Policy Studies and conducts academic research on Turkish foreign policy, the Middle East politics and the Gulf politics. Ataman is also the Editor-in-Chief of Insight Turkey, a journal published by SETA Foundation.*

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#### **49. Middle East's travel, tourism revenues could grow to \$246bn in 2022: WTTC**

Daily News (Egypt), 15 Mar 22, Nehal Samir

New research from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) revealed that the Middle East's travel and tourism sector's revenues could reach \$246bn this year, just 8.9% behind pre-pandemic levels.

In 2019, before the pandemic struck and began to devastate economies around the world, the travel and tourism sector in the region was booming, generating \$270bn in revenues.

However, when COVID-19 brought international travel to an almost complete standstill in 2021, its contribution plummeted by 51.1%, suffering a brutal loss of more than \$138bn.

The latest research from the WTTC shows that as the region continues to recover from the pandemic, with major markets reopening borders and easing restrictions to travel, the sector's contribution to employment could almost reach pre-pandemic levels this year.

Furthermore, the research reveals that if countries continue to roll out the inoculation programme at pace this year and restrictions to international travel are eased around the world, 6.8m people could be employed in the sector by the end of 2022, just 40,000 behind pre-pandemic levels.

“The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant losses to the Middle East's travel and tourism sector, but we now have reason for real optimism,” said WTTC President and CEO Julia Simpson.

“Since the start of the pandemic, governments across the Middle East have shown real commitment to travel and tourism. Saudi Arabia in particular has shown strong leadership throughout the crisis and is making a major investment in the sector.”

“2022 is poised for a strong recovery if governments across the region continue to open up their borders and remove restrictions to travel, which will have a massive positive effect on the economy, society, and jobs,” she added.

To get as close to pre-pandemic levels as possible this year, the WTTC says governments around the world must continue focusing on vaccine rollout and allowing fully vaccinated travellers to move freely.

The global tourism body also urges governments in the Middle East and around the world to ditch the patchwork of restrictions and enable international travel using digital solutions that allow travellers to prove their status in a fast, simple, and secure way.

Concerning Egypt, Said El-Batouty — a UNWTO Economic Adviser, Member of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, and Board Member of the German Travel Association told Daily News Egypt in February that a good reason to be optimistic is that Egypt is one of the first tourist destinations in which recovery has started.

He said that the final figures for 2021 are not available, but he would expect that the number of tourists who visited Egypt during 2021 amounted to about 4.5 million tourists, and it is expected that the number will increase during 2022 to reach about 7 million tourists — assuming the coronavirus does not develop further — and if this happens, Egypt will achieve about \$7.2bn in tourism revenues.

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## **50. Lebanon's last chance as Ukraine fallout looms**

Arab News, 15 Mar 22, Bahaa Hariri

Russia's decision to invade Ukraine will have ramifications that reverberate around the world for years to come. In the West, the immediate concern remains the invasion's impact on the oil and gas markets. Yet, in countries like Lebanon, with just six weeks to two months of wheat reserves,

the war's impact on agricultural supply chains could well be the straw that finally breaks the camel's back.

With an economy struggling due to the impacts of decades of corruption, a financial crisis and COVID-19, the upcoming parliamentary elections have never been so important. My fellow Lebanese face a bleak future, with no jobs for workers, no fuel at the gas stations and food at record prices. Children are already going hungry up and down the country and, should the crisis in Ukraine continue, food prices will only skyrocket further. Given Lebanon imports more than 60 percent of its wheat from Ukraine, the situation has the potential to escalate at a frightening pace.

The elections in May remain the last chance Lebanon has to vote for a government that is willing to implement concrete policies to ease the pain of our people. Inaction or maintaining the status quo is not an option. As long as the people of Lebanon allow sectarian politics to continue, the country will be subject to manipulation, political interference and attempts to cause more chaos from the outside as well as from the political elites within.

Unfortunately, the political establishment in Lebanon has closed ranks, determined to maintain its tenuous grip on power, and there is worrying speculation that the elections could be delayed. Unhelpfully, whereas the US and EU had been applying pressure on Lebanon to hold these elections, another side effect of the crisis in Ukraine is that their attention could be elsewhere.

We should not underestimate the political elites' desire to maintain their tenuous grip on power by avoiding electoral accountability. After all, nothing better highlights the political establishment's desire for self-preservation than its reaction to the Port of Beirut explosion. Nobody – not a single government official or Cabinet member – has been held to account for a completely avoidable tragedy that cost Lebanon 219 souls and billions of dollars. Any attempt at due process has been continually blocked by those motivated solely by maintaining the current status quo. That such actions mean forcing the victims' families into a never-ending campaign for justice is of little concern to such people.

My father, Rafik Hariri, was a passionate advocate for Lebanon and the Lebanese people. He rose to prominence in the aftermath of the civil war with the sole agenda to rebuild Lebanon and put our nation on the path to prosperity. He fought for a Lebanon free from the sectarian constraints that led to the civil war and wanted to build a country that worked for everyone, not just the elites. In the end, he paid the ultimate price, yet his vision for a better, more prosperous Lebanon shines a light on a potential path to prosperity and a return to the kind of Lebanon my father died trying to build.

To honor his legacy, I have been an early supporter of Sawa Li Lubnan, a new political party that is fighting to end the sectarian stranglehold on Lebanese politics and is willing to implement the much-needed reforms to our judiciary, politics and economy. I hope my fellow countrymen and women see in Sawa a chance at a fresh start.

The clock is ticking as the reverberations of what Russia started in Ukraine approach Lebanon. I hope that the Lebanese people wake up to this stark reality. There is no good reason to back the

old sectarian parties, which have done nothing in recent years to improve the dire situation facing Lebanon. If the people do not act now and back parties like Sawa Li Lubnan, there may not be a Lebanon left.

I just pray they act before the crisis in Ukraine reaches our shores.

*Bahaa Hariri is the eldest son of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.*

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## **51. Countering aggressors isn't the antithesis of humanitarian missions**

Al Arabiya, 15 Mar 22, Baraa Shiban

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is in its third week with no signs of it letting up. Worldwide, people are watching the news and the unfolding humanitarian crisis. The Middle East is no stranger to conflicts. That is why millions of people in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen can easily relate to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The significant difference is how INGOs, media outlets, and commentators have reacted to the conflict in Ukraine compared to conflicts in the Middle East.

There seems to be a consensus amongst INGOs in their media campaigns when addressing the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. You cannot resolve the humanitarian problem without Russia stopping and reversing its military operation. The European Union and the United States came together to prevent the collapse of the Ukrainian state as such a scenario would be devastating to the whole of Europe and will open a humanitarian catastrophe beyond repair.

I am someone who lived through the horrors of war and watched as the Houthi militias stormed into the Yemeni capital by force. Many stories can be told about wars, from refugees trying to cross the border to families trapped behind frontlines to the sound of shelling through the night. Nothing is more devastating than seeing the collapse of your nation-state.

One's country is the safety net that keeps the cohesion social fabric and ensures the safety of all of its citizens. Nothing can replace the everyday peace and quiet that Europeans and many other nations have experienced for decades resulting from the law and order that runs smoothly through the state structure.

I escaped from Sana'a to the city of Aden in the South of Yemen after the Houthis started hunting down journalists, activists, and human rights workers. The rise of militias makes your own country very alien. It is not a story that is unique to me. My encounters with activists from Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq tell me a very similar story. Our region cannot overcome the many humanitarian crises with those militias in charge.

After I safely arrived in the United Kingdom, I was eager to share - with INGOs, policymakers, and the media - my experience. Unfortunately, I faced a considerable advocacy machine run by INGOs working in Yemen. Their view focused only on addressing the humanitarian crisis, not its causes—a very different approach than what we see happening with Ukraine. I wanted to see more work and calls directed towards reinstating the role of the Yemeni state.

After all, the humanitarian crisis is a consequence of the collapse of the state. Not investing in reinstating the country's institutions will drive more people towards poverty and hunger.

INGOs have spent billions of dollars in countries like Yemen without tangible results. INGOs cannot replace the state, no matter how much money they pour into humanitarian programs. Militias cannot run a form, which is not just my conclusion.

In 2021, the former UN chief to Yemen Lise Grande testified to the US Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee. She said: "Ansar Allah Houthis now fully controls the instruments of the state in northern Yemen and has constructed its parallel state-within-a-state." Her explanation detailed how the Houthis contributed to the collapse of the Yemeni state. Unfortunately, she delivered this testimony after she had left her post. It is not the party of the advocacy message that INGOs including the UN have told the international community.

Indeed, INGOs cannot resolve the conflicts in the Middle East. They are limited in their capacity and ability to provide sustainable solutions. However, they have the power to run advocacy campaigns and reach out to the international community. They play an essential role in setting the narrative and suggesting policy recommendations. They owe it to the people of the Middle East to tell their whole story and address the causes of these conflicts, like what we see happening in Ukraine. Countering the part of militias is not contradictory to the humanitarian mission. Countering Russian aggression is not in conflict with the humanitarian mission.

How can you resolve the economic collapse in Lebanon without addressing the dominance of Hezbollah over the economic and political life? How can you prevent Iraq from slipping into another conflict without addressing the role of the armed militias? How can you alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people without stopping the Houthis military conquests?

The Middle East is living through protracted conflicts, and each row has its circumstances, but the role of militias is a common dominator. Seeing what is happening in Yemen, people in Lebanon and Iraq know in which direction their countries are heading. Non-state actors are pushing those countries to the brink of collapse. The myth that states can coexist with armed militias is a theory that is proving its fatality and cannot address the humanitarian crisis or tackle its causes.

*Baraa Shiban is a Yemeni political consultant and a caseworker with the human right group Reprieve. He has served as a member of the Yemeni National Dialogue 2013-2014 and participated in the Yemeni uprising 2011.*

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**52. Russia-Ukraine: Putin's war means Mohammed bin Salman has Biden over a barrel**  
Middle East Eye, 15 Mar 22, David Hearst

Three short weeks ago, US President Joe Biden was in no hurry to talk to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler and the next king of a major US regional ally.

In keeping with his policy of treating the presumed murderer of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi as a pariah, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) could go hang. But after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked a frenzied rush to keep the price of oil from reaching \$300 a barrel, it is the crown prince's turn to be in no hurry to pick up the phone.

How the wheel of fortune has turned for the crown prince.

When Boris Johnson arrives in Riyadh this week cap in hand - he and MBS are said to be in touch by WhatsApp Messenger - the Saudi crown prince can afford to keep his British guest waiting. Bin Salman has set Biden a high price for playing ball with the price of oil.

The Wall Street Journal reported that he wants more US support for the war in Yemen, help with the Saudi nuclear programme, and legal immunity in the US against court actions by the likes of Saad al-Jabri, a former Saudi intelligence officer who alleged that the crown prince also tried to kill him.

Two of those demands are possible. The third is not.

In search of legitimacy

Above all, the crown prince seeks legitimacy. He has killed, tortured, imprisoned and stolen his way to the top, by ruthlessly eliminating any rival prince who has as great a claim as he to the throne.

What Biden seeks from him is oil production that will keep the price of a barrel within limits.

The crown prince's price is far-reaching and strategic, Biden's is temporary and tactical.

It is not clear whether either will deliver.

MBS puzzled his latest interviewer, Graeme Wood of The Atlantic, by refusing to pardon prisoners whose crime was to oppose a policy that no longer existed - such as the boycott against Qatar.

The crown prince's reply was that if he extended forgiveness to good people who deserved it, he would have to extend it equally to bad people who did not. Why would one rule out the other, Wood mused.

"Then I realized that MBS was not saying that the failure of his plan to remake the kingdom might lead to catastrophe. He was saying that he'd guarantee it would. Many secular Arab leaders before him have made the same dark implication: support everything I do, or I will let slip the dogs of jihad. This was not an argument. It was a threat," Wood wrote.

Words are never enough for a ruler as brutal as Mohammed bin Salman. Within days of the interview being published, 81 inmates had been executed in a single day, 41 of them Shia Muslims from the eastern Qatif region.

If bin Salman's "Take me as I am" message is clear, it is not so obvious whether Washington's relations with the Gulf state will revert to default.

The default itself could have changed.

The real change

The kingdom's faith in the nation that provides its security has been shaken by Biden's arrival, the US pullout from Kabul, and the feeling that the US military motor is still stuck in reverse. Yemen is another sticking point, after Biden used his first foreign policy speech to say that ending the war was a key goal.

In office, Biden is stuck between the declarative and his fear of enacting real change.

Biden has the levers in place to ground Saudi jets. The Royal Saudi Air Force is dependent on US and British support for its air fleet of F15 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, and Tornado aircraft. If either Washington or London withdrew their technicians or halted the flow of spare parts, Saudi jets would be grounded.

Biden published the CIA report on Khashoggi's murder, but refused to back a UN investigation into the affair. He said he would end support for offensive operations in Yemen, and yet the Saudi-led war is by definition offensive.

Nor has he called for an immediate end to the Saudi blockade of Yemen.

For all his dislike of the man, Biden has done as much to keep Mohammed bin Salman in place as his predecessor Donald Trump. The war he launched on Yemen will have taken 377,000 lives by the end of the year, according to the UN. Nevertheless, American flip flop between Trump and Biden has shaken Saudi and Emirati faith in their reliance on Washington.

Biden's presidency has triggered changes in the foreign policy of each Gulf state.

Saudi Arabia put a stop to its doomed blockade of Qatar, and the UAE is investing in Turkey.

Both countries have been making overtures to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Saudi Arabia signed a military cooperation agreement with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, one of the five siloviki - hard men - who are conducting the war in Ukraine, at a trade fare in Moscow last August.

And it will not have gone unnoticed that the kingdom has now invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit the kingdom, a visit that could take place in May.

Mixed messages

The United Arab Emirates backed a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly demanding an immediate Russian withdrawal, and abstained from a vote on a similar text at the Security Council.

UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said that taking sides "would only lead to more violence".

The UAE also made a U-turn on their policy on issuing visas to Ukrainians, which they had initially restricted.

It is in neither Gulf state's interest to lower the price of oil, as record revenues flow into cash-strapped state budgets. The blunt truth is that Putin's war is good news for both. Who said that oil had reached its peak?

Winners and losers

Money flowing - once again - into the coffers of the two Gulf states that have, above all others, seeded and funded dictators, interventions and coups is not good news for the Arab world. As has happened many times in the past, the wealth these despots get will only cement and embolden their rule.

They will feel freer to throw their weight around the Arab world to keep like-minded despots like Abdel Fattah el Sisi and Kais Saied of Tunisia in power. Whatever now happens in Ukraine, Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, are winners.

MBS's interview with The Atlantic showed he had learned nothing from his past mistakes. He is still reckless and oblivious of the consequences of his actions. There is only one will at the centre of his universe. His.

And whatever else happens, the Arab people will be the losers.

Even before Putin's invasion, they lived in states which are much weaker than they were when the Arab Spring broke out in 2011. Many are perilously close to bankruptcy.

Already facing food inflation not seen since the Arab Spring, Egypt will be hard put to replace Ukrainian supplies of wheat. The price of wheat has increased by 44 percent and of sunflower oil by 32 percent overnight. Egypt has four months' wheat supply left.

Foreign investors are fleeing the Egyptian debt market. The economist Mamdouh al-Wali describes Egypt as being "under siege both politically and economically" as investors flee emerging markets. "The severity of the decline in foreign purchases of Egyptian government debt instruments has increased in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in a bid to stay away from unstable emerging markets."

Al-Wali continued: "Banking assessments indicate that around \$3bn left [Egypt] in the week that followed the invasion. Whether the war in Ukraine continues or ends, the departure of foreign investment in Egyptian government debt instruments is only likely to increase with the rise of US interest rates. Five such increases are expected during the current year."

Lebanon has no more than 45-60 days of basic food. With unemployment soaring, Jordan is struggling to emerge from its Covid-19 slump amid simmering social discontent in the east of the country. Public shows of discontent against the king are no rarity.

At least in the old days of Gulf oil wealth, some of it was shared. Saudi King Abdullah spent tens of billions of dollars buttressing fellow Arab states. This happens no more.

A third explosion

At no time in the past has the gap between rich and poor been more grotesque: between former royal couples like Princess Haya and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who spent \$3m on strawberries in one summer, or bin Salman who spent \$450m on a fake da Vinci, and record levels of poverty and unemployment in the region.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an authoritative study by the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia expected poverty rates in the Arab region to decrease by one percent over the next two years. It is still 27 percent.

"Unemployment rates, however, will remain among the highest worldwide, especially those of women and youth, although they are expected to decrease from 11.8 percent in 2021 to 10.7 percent in 2023," said Ahmed Moumni, lead author of the survey.

If ever the tension between the rulers and the ruled could be regarded as pre-revolutionary, it is now.

As usual the rich European Union is looking the other way. It's looking east, not south. Is it prepared though for a third explosion that will be triggered by the unprecedented price hike of basic commodities that will define this century, after Kabul and Ukraine? I doubt it.

And yet Europe's policy of going cap in hand to dictators will surely come back to haunt it.

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## **CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS**

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 20, 2022

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### **COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

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1. Both Reuters and Al Arabiya reported yesterday that Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed the crisis in Ukraine with Bektum Rostam, a special envoy for Ukraine's president, in Riyadh. They cited their state news agency and noted Prince Faisal reaffirmed the Kingdom's support to efforts that contribute to de-escalating the conflict, protecting civilians, and reaching a political solution. Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani met with Rostam in Doha last week.
2. Reuters reported late yesterday that the U.S. has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter. U.S. officials said it also came up briefly during Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to Turkey earlier this month and "The idea, which analysts said was sure to be shot down by Turkey, was part of a wider discussion between Sherman and Turkish officials about how the United States and its allies can do more to support Ukraine and on how to improve bilateral ties."
3. Reuters also reported overnight that "The Saudi-led coalition said early on Sunday that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group launched missile and drone strikes on energy and water desalination facilities in the kingdom that caused some material damage but no deaths." They noted "It said the attacks were aimed at a water desalination plant in Al-Shaqeeq, an Aramco distribution station in Jizan, a power station in Dhahran al Janub, a gas facility in Khamis Mushait and an Aramco liquefied natural gas plant in Yanbu" and "Saudi air defenses intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile and nine drones."

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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1. **Saudi FM meets with special envoy for Ukraine's president in Riyadh**

Al Arabiya, 20 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed the crisis in Ukraine with Bektum Rostam, a special envoy for Ukraine's president, in Riyadh, state news agency (SPA) reported on Saturday.

## **2. U.S. suggested Turkey transfer Russian-made missile system to Ukraine**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Humeyra Pamuk

The United States has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

## **3. Houthis launch attacks on Saudi energy, desalination facilities-coalition**

Reuters, 20 Mar 22, Moataz Mohamed, Yasmin Hussein and Omar Fahmy

The Saudi-led coalition said early on Sunday that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group launched missile and drone strikes on energy and water desalination facilities in the kingdom that caused some material damage but no deaths.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (19 Mar):** As Qatar prepares to host the FIFA Men's World Cup in 2022, the United States and Qatar are committed to expanding cooperation to ensure a safe and successful tournament.

**Prime Minister of Israel; @IsraeliPM (19 Mar):** Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to visit India in early April, at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister @narendramodi. PM Bennett: "I am delighted to pay my first official visit to India at the invitation of my friend @PMOIndia Modi."

**U.S. State Dept - Near Eastern Affairs; @StateDept\_NEA (19 Mar):** @Refugees Special Envoy Jolie & #USEnvoyYemen Lenderking met to share impressions from their separate trips to #Yemen. They expressed frustration that donors raised just 30% of funding needed for Yemen's humanitarian response & fear it'll have devastating impacts on the people. The two Special Envoys agreed to work together to ease the humanitarian crisis & help end the #Yemen conflict. Diplomatic & humanitarian efforts must go hand in hand.

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## IRAN

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## **4. Detainee in Iran with triple nationality who was released as part of deal with UK is sent back to jail**

CNN, 19 Mar 22

One of the three detained British-Iranians who were released as part of a deal signed by the UK has been returned to jail in Tehran, his lawyer told CNN Friday. Morad Tahbaz, who is also a US citizen, spent 48 hours "under house arrest" with an ankle bracelet before being taken back to prison, according to his lawyer Hojjat Kermani.

### **5. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 mln bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran's oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

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## IRAQ

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### **6. Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon's home in ruins after Iran strike**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Rashid Yahya and Qassim Abdul-Zahra

Once a lavish mansion, the sprawling home of an Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon was laid to waste in a barrage of missiles that struck near a U.S. consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil earlier this week.

### **7. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 million bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran's oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

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## SYRIA

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### **8. Syria's Assad makes surprise visit to the U.A.E. as Arab ties warm**

Wall Street Journal, 19 Mar 22, Stephen Kalin and Nazih Osseiran

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Emirati leaders Friday on a surprise visit to the United Arab Emirates, his first trip to an Arab country since launching a brutal crackdown on opponents that plunged the country into civil war 11 years ago.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **9. Desperate Afghans plea 'don't forget about us' as country starves under Taliban control**

Mirror (UK), 19 Mar 22, Laura Connor

Desperate Afghans tonight begged: "Don't forget about us."

Residents says they have felt "completely ignored" by the outside world since Russia invaded Ukraine. Millions are at risk of starvation while lawless Taliban soldiers are said to be murdering former interpreters and their families.

### **10. Afghanistan world's unhappiest country, even before Taliban**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Kathy Gannon

Afghanistan is the unhappiest country in the world — even before the Taliban swept to power last August. That's according to a so-called World Happiness report released ahead of the U.N.-designated International Day of Happiness on Sunday.

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## YEMEN

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### **11. Starvation fears for Yemen as Ukraine Russia war impacts wheat and fuel supplies**

Mirror (UK), 19 Mar 22, Milo Boyd

Wars in Ukraine and Yemen could create the "perfect storm" when it comes to global wheat and fuel supplies being damaged. Charities have warned of a "potential catastrophe" if the Russian invasion of Ukraine - a huge exporter of wheat - continues.

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## EGYPT

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### **12. Egyptian council holds first ever meeting with human rights, civil society leaders**

Al Monitor, 19 Mar 22

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), an Egyptian state-owned institution whose members are appointed by the president, held the first meeting of a series of talks March 11 with human rights civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation in the country and examine the organizations' demands for the coming period.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **13. Lebanese PM sees judicial "shortcomings", denies interference**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Laila Bassam and Tom Perry

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Saturday denied interfering in the judiciary but said there were "shortcomings" in its work, after a series of rulings against banks that have led them to declare a strike next week.

### **14. Germany, seeking to pare Russia energy, courts Qatar and UAE for deals**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Saturday that he will explore liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply on a trip to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and aims to secure a hydrogen deal, making Germany less dependent on Russia.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **15. 4 U.S. Marines killed in Osprey crash in Norway**

New York Times, 19 Mar 22, Aina J. Khan

Four U.S. Marines were killed in Norway during a NATO training exercise, Norwegian police said on Saturday. The Marines had been taking part in a long-planned exercise called Cold

Response on Friday when their MV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft crashed south of Bodo, in the northern county of Nordland, the Royal Norwegian Air Force said in a statement.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **16. Russia uses hypersonic missiles in strike on Ukraine arms depot**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Igor Konashenkov

Russia said on Saturday it had used hypersonic Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles to destroy a large weapons depot in Ukraine's western Ivano-Frankivsk region. Russia's Interfax news agency said it was the first time Russia had deployed the hypersonic Kinzhal system since it sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

### **17. Russians push deeper into Mariupol as locals plead for help**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Cara Anna

Russian forces pushed deeper into Ukraine's besieged and battered port city of Mariupol on Saturday, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and local authorities pleaded for more Western help.

### **18. Stalled Russian offensive increases pressure on Belarus to join invasion**

Financial Times (UK), 19 Mar 22, James Shotter

Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader of Belarus, has allowed Russia to use his country's territory to invade Ukraine, and changed its constitution so it could host Russian nuclear missiles.

### **19. Africa remains mostly quiet in Russia-Ukraine conflict**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni recently remarked that Russia's war on Ukraine should be seen in the context of Moscow being the "center of gravity" for Eastern Europe. His son, Lt. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, was more forceful, declaring that most Africans "support Russia's stand in Ukraine" and "Putin is absolutely right!"

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **20. Overshadowed by Ukraine, Afghanistan starves in silence**

McGill Journal of Political Studies, 19 Mar 22, Rory Daly

At the end of last year, Afghanistan still loomed large in the media. CNN reported on the new Taliban government's restrictions on women's rights, and the New York Times was writing about the struggles of Afghan refugees. Direst of all, economic sanctions placed on Afghanistan by the United States looked likely to trigger mass starvation in the Middle Eastern country.

### **21. How did Europe get hooked on Russian energy?**

Bloomberg Opinion, 19 Mar 22, Paul J. Davies

Paul J. Davies: You're a professor of political economy at the University of Cambridge and author of "Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century," which analyzes how the interplay of energy, finance and international politics have contributed to the crises we face today. Let's start with Ukraine directly. How much of Russia's invasion is due to Putin's seeking security for Russian gas exports through Ukraine's pipelines?

## **22. Memorializing the military achievements of women**

The Hill, 19 Mar 22, Jeremy Butler

Throughout my 20 years of service in the Navy, I've had the privilege of working alongside many brave, resilient, and inspirational women. These servicewomen — more than 345,000 of them who have deployed since 9/11 have been central to the past and continued success of U.S. operations, fighting tirelessly to protect all Americans.

## **23. Putin made a profound miscalculation on Ukraine**

New York Times, 19 Mar 22, Yaroslav Hrytsak

Ukraine is once again at the center of a potentially global conflict. World War I, as the historian Dominic Lieven put it, "turned on the fate of Ukraine." World War II, according to the legendary journalist Edgar Snow, was "first of all a Ukrainian war." Now the threat of a third world war hinges on what could happen in Ukraine.

## **24. How AI could help new Air Force pilots avoid costly mistakes**

Task and Purpose, 19 Mar 22, Kelsey D. Atherton

On March 2, the US Navy pulled an F-35C from the ocean. The \$94.4 million jet came in hard for a landing on January 24, then skidded across the deck, injuring sailors before it plummeted off and into the sea. The pilot ejected and survived, but the incident raises an ominous question over aircraft operations: What can the military do to ensure pilots land safely as many times as they take off, and help all aviators avoid the mistakes of their peers?

# REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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## MIDDLE EAST

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## **25. Japan, Turkey FMs coordinate Middle East and Ukraine policies**

Arab News, 19 Mar 22

Japan and Turkey foreign ministers on March 19 agreed to cooperate and coordinate on the Middle East and Ukrainian issues and deepen bilateral friendly relations toward the year 2024, the 100th anniversary of establishing their diplomatic ties.

## **26. Lebanon asks US to continue border demarcation mediation**

Asharq al-Awsat, 19 Mar 22

### **38. Egypt, Uganda to explore opportunities for cooperation in military, other fields**

Ahram Online, 19 Mar 22

Uganda is keen to open new horizons for military cooperation with Egypt, said Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Kainerugaba made the statement during a meeting with Egypt's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Osama Askar in Egypt, Armed Forces Spokesman Gharib Abdel-Hafez said in a statement on Saturday.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **39. Civilisation and its discontents — The price of human dignity**

Jordan Times, 19 Mar 22, El Hassan bin Talal

Almost as far back as the historical records tell, wars have been waged in the name of "Civilisation". Conquests endeavoured under the double aegis of colonialism and imperialism have been justified with references to "Civilisation", but what of the term? I am reminded on this occasion of a lecture delivered in 1940 by the English philosopher, historian and archaeologist Robin George Collingwood. Collingwood spoke of three elements of Civilisation, economic, social, and legal, which when combined, as Brett Bowden writes, give rise to "socio-political Civilisation, or a group or a collective's capacity to organise and govern itself under a system of laws".

### **40. The world's role in Zelensky's conflict**

Jerusalem Post, 19 Mar 22, Vas Shenoy

A comedian kick-starts his career with a parody. The story runs thus: A schoolteacher accidentally gets himself elected as the president of his country when his students post his rant against the government online and crowd-fund for his election. The show is so successful that four years later, the comedian really lands up in the top office.

### **41. Palestine tops Chilean president's agenda in first statements after taking office**

Middle East Monitor, 19 Mar 22, Eman Abusidu

Last Friday, thirty-six-year-old Gabriel Boric, the youngest Chilean president ever to have been elected, officially became the president of Chile after winning Chile's presidential elections last December. His victory represents a major revival for Chile's progressive left and a new era for Chile and neighbouring countries. Boric began his inaugural speech by mentioning late president, Salvador Allende: "

### **42. This is not the time to brand Vladimir Putin an 'evil madman'**

Al Jazeera, 19 Mar 22, Farhan Mujahid Chak

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth week, we routinely hear words like “evil,” “unhinged” and “unstable” being used to describe Vladimir Putin. Such labelling is not uncommon in realpolitik. It is a tactic in the ever-present rivalries of international politics to demonise, caricature and demoralise political opponents, while simultaneously reassuring those on your own ideological flank. After all, who wants to be on the side of a lunatic?

#### **43. Hunger killing more worldwide while COVID-19 pandemic occupies center stage**

Arab News, 19 Mar 22, Jumana Khamis

For two years, the havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the headlines. Since February 24, debate over the impact of the Ukraine war on global food supplies has taken center stage. Meanwhile, another pandemic continues to take a heavy toll, only much less conspicuously.

#### **44. India needs no history lessons from US on its decisions in Russia-Ukraine war**

Bloomberg Quint (India), 19 Mar 22, Dr. Tara Kartha

A recent press briefing by White House spokesperson Jen Psaki went viral for all the wrong reasons in India. In answer to a question about a Russian offer to India for discounted crude oil and the US reaction to it, she said while such a move was not against sanctions, India needed to think about “where you want to stand when the history books are written in this moment in time”.

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 20, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) Both Reuters and Al Arabiya reported yesterday that Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed the crisis in Ukraine with Bektum Rostam, a special envoy for Ukraine's president, in Riyadh. They cited their state news agency and noted Prince Faisal reaffirmed the Kingdom's support to efforts that contribute to de-escalating the conflict, protecting civilians, and reaching a political solution. Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani met with Rostam in Doha last week.
- 2) Reuters reported late yesterday that the U.S. has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter. U.S. officials said it also came up briefly during Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to Turkey earlier this month and "The idea, which analysts said was sure to be shot down by Turkey, was part of a wider discussion between Sherman and Turkish officials about how the United States and its allies can do more to support Ukraine and on how to improve bilateral ties."
- 3) Reuters also reported overnight that "The Saudi-led coalition said early on Sunday that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group launched missile and drone strikes on energy and water desalination facilities in the kingdom that caused some material damage but no deaths." They noted "It said the attacks were aimed at a water desalination plant in Al-Shaqeeq, an Aramco distribution station in Jizan, a power station in Dhahran al Janub, a gas facility in Khamis Mushait and an Aramco liquefied natural gas plant in Yanbu" and "Saudi air defenses intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile and nine drones."

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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##### **1. Saudi FM meets with special envoy for Ukraine's president in Riyadh**

Al Arabiya, 20 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed the crisis in Ukraine with Bektum Rostam, a special envoy for Ukraine's president, in Riyadh, state news agency (SPA) reported on Saturday.

## **2. U.S. suggested Turkey transfer Russian-made missile system to Ukraine**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Humeyra Pamuk

The United States has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

## **3. Houthis launch attacks on Saudi energy, desalination facilities-coalition**

Reuters, 20 Mar 22, Moataz Mohamed, Yasmin Hussein and Omar Fahmy

The Saudi-led coalition said early on Sunday that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group launched missile and drone strikes on energy and water desalination facilities in the kingdom that caused some material damage but no deaths.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Ned Price; @StateDeptSpox (19 Mar):** As Qatar prepares to host the FIFA Men's World Cup in 2022, the United States and Qatar are committed to expanding cooperation to ensure a safe and successful tournament.

**Prime Minister of Israel; @IsraeliPM (19 Mar):** Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to visit India in early April, at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister @narendramodi. PM Bennett: "I am delighted to pay my first official visit to India at the invitation of my friend @PMOIndia Modi."

**U.S. State Dept - Near Eastern Affairs; @StateDept\_NEA (19 Mar):** @Refugees Special Envoy Jolie & #USEnvoyYemen Lenderking met to share impressions from their separate trips to #Yemen. They expressed frustration that donors raised just 30% of funding needed for Yemen's humanitarian response & fear it'll have devastating impacts on the people. The two Special Envoys agreed to work together to ease the humanitarian crisis & help end the #Yemen conflict. Diplomatic & humanitarian efforts must go hand in hand.

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## IRAN

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## **4. Detainee in Iran with triple nationality who was released as part of deal with UK is sent back to jail**

CNN, 19 Mar 22

One of the three detained British-Iranians who were released as part of a deal signed by the UK has been returned to jail in Tehran, his lawyer told CNN Friday. Morad Tahbaz, who is also a US citizen, spent 48 hours "under house arrest" with an ankle bracelet before being taken back to prison, according to his lawyer Hojjat Kermani.

## **5. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 mln bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran's oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

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## IRAQ

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### **6. Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon's home in ruins after Iran strike**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Rashid Yahya and Qassim Abdul-Zahra

Once a lavish mansion, the sprawling home of an Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon was laid to waste in a barrage of missiles that struck near a U.S. consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil earlier this week.

### **7. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 million bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran's oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

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## SYRIA

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### **8. Syria's Assad makes surprise visit to the U.A.E. as Arab ties warm**

Wall Street Journal, 19 Mar 22, Stephen Kalin and Nazih Osseiran

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Emirati leaders Friday on a surprise visit to the United Arab Emirates, his first trip to an Arab country since launching a brutal crackdown on opponents that plunged the country into civil war 11 years ago.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **9. Desperate Afghans plea 'don't forget about us' as country starves under Taliban control**

Mirror (UK), 19 Mar 22, Laura Connor

Desperate Afghans tonight begged: "Don't forget about us."

Residents says they have felt "completely ignored" by the outside world since Russia invaded Ukraine. Millions are at risk of starvation while lawless Taliban soldiers are said to be murdering former interpreters and their families.

### **10. Afghanistan world's unhappiest country, even before Taliban**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Kathy Gannon

Afghanistan is the unhappiest country in the world — even before the Taliban swept to power last August. That's according to a so-called World Happiness report released ahead of the U.N.-designated International Day of Happiness on Sunday.

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## YEMEN

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### **11. Starvation fears for Yemen as Ukraine Russia war impacts wheat and fuel supplies**

Mirror (UK), 19 Mar 22, Milo Boyd

Wars in Ukraine and Yemen could create the "perfect storm" when it comes to global wheat and fuel supplies being damaged. Charities have warned of a "potential catastrophe" if the Russian invasion of Ukraine - a huge exporter of wheat - continues.

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## EGYPT

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### **12. Egyptian council holds first ever meeting with human rights, civil society leaders**

Al Monitor, 19 Mar 22

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), an Egyptian state-owned institution whose members are appointed by the president, held the first meeting of a series of talks March 11 with human rights civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation in the country and examine the organizations' demands for the coming period.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **13. Lebanese PM sees judicial "shortcomings", denies interference**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Laila Bassam and Tom Perry

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Saturday denied interfering in the judiciary but said there were "shortcomings" in its work, after a series of rulings against banks that have led them to declare a strike next week.

### **14. Germany, seeking to pare Russia energy, courts Qatar and UAE for deals**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Saturday that he will explore liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply on a trip to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and aims to secure a hydrogen deal, making Germany less dependent on Russia.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **15. 4 U.S. Marines killed in Osprey crash in Norway**

New York Times, 19 Mar 22, Aina J. Khan

Four U.S. Marines were killed in Norway during a NATO training exercise, Norwegian police said on Saturday. The Marines had been taking part in a long-planned exercise called Cold Response on Friday when their MV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft crashed south of Bodo, in the northern county of Nordland, the Royal Norwegian Air Force said in a statement.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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## **16. Russia uses hypersonic missiles in strike on Ukraine arms depot**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Igor Konashenkov

Russia said on Saturday it had used hypersonic Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles to destroy a large weapons depot in Ukraine's western Ivano-Frankivsk region. Russia's Interfax news agency said it was the first time Russia had deployed the hypersonic Kinzhal system since it sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

## **17. Russians push deeper into Mariupol as locals plead for help**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Cara Anna

Russian forces pushed deeper into Ukraine's besieged and battered port city of Mariupol on Saturday, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and local authorities pleaded for more Western help.

## **18. Stalled Russian offensive increases pressure on Belarus to join invasion**

Financial Times (UK), 19 Mar 22, James Shotter

Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader of Belarus, has allowed Russia to use his country's territory to invade Ukraine, and changed its constitution so it could host Russian nuclear missiles.

## **19. Africa remains mostly quiet in Russia-Ukraine conflict**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni recently remarked that Russia's war on Ukraine should be seen in the context of Moscow being the "center of gravity" for Eastern Europe. His son, Lt. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, was more forceful, declaring that most Africans "support Russia's stand in Ukraine" and "Putin is absolutely right!"

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **20. Overshadowed by Ukraine, Afghanistan starves in silence**

McGill Journal of Political Studies, 19 Mar 22, Rory Daly

At the end of last year, Afghanistan still loomed large in the media. CNN reported on the new Taliban government's restrictions on women's rights, and the New York Times was writing about the struggles of Afghan refugees. Direst of all, economic sanctions placed on Afghanistan by the United States looked likely to trigger mass starvation in the Middle Eastern country.

## **21. How did Europe get hooked on Russian energy?**

Bloomberg Opinion, 19 Mar 22, Paul J. Davies

Paul J. Davies: You're a professor of political economy at the University of Cambridge and author of "Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century," which analyzes how the interplay of energy, finance and international politics have contributed to the crises we face today. Let's start

with Ukraine directly. How much of Russia's invasion is due to Putin's seeking security for Russian gas exports through Ukraine's pipelines?

## **22. Memorializing the military achievements of women**

The Hill, 19 Mar 22, Jeremy Butler

Throughout my 20 years of service in the Navy, I've had the privilege of working alongside many brave, resilient, and inspirational women. These servicewomen—more than 345,000 of them—who have deployed since 9/11 have been central to the past and continued success of U.S. operations, fighting tirelessly to protect all Americans.

## **23. Putin made a profound miscalculation on Ukraine**

New York Times, 19 Mar 22, Yaroslav Hrytsak

Ukraine is once again at the center of a potentially global conflict. World War I, as the historian Dominic Lieven put it, "turned on the fate of Ukraine." World War II, according to the legendary journalist Edgar Snow, was "first of all a Ukrainian war." Now the threat of a third world war hinges on what could happen in Ukraine.

## **24. How AI could help new Air Force pilots avoid costly mistakes**

Task and Purpose, 19 Mar 22, Kelsey D. Atherton

On March 2, the US Navy pulled an F-35C from the ocean. The \$94.4 million jet came in hard for a landing on January 24, then skidded across the deck, injuring sailors before it plummeted off and into the sea. The pilot ejected and survived, but the incident raises an ominous question over aircraft operations: What can the military do to ensure pilots land safely as many times as they take off, and help all aviators avoid the mistakes of their peers?

# REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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## MIDDLE EAST

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## **25. Japan, Turkey FMs coordinate Middle East and Ukraine policies**

Arab News, 19 Mar 22

Japan and Turkey foreign ministers on March 19 agreed to cooperate and coordinate on the Middle East and Ukrainian issues and deepen bilateral friendly relations toward the year 2024, the 100th anniversary of establishing their diplomatic ties.

## **26. Lebanon asks US to continue border demarcation mediation**

Asharq al-Awsat, 19 Mar 22

Lebanon called on the United States to continue its mediation efforts to complete the maritime border demarcation negotiations with Israel in the light of observations made by the Lebanese Technical Committee on the proposal of US mediator Amos Hochstein.

### **38. Egypt, Uganda to explore opportunities for cooperation in military, other fields**

Ahram Online, 19 Mar 22

Uganda is keen to open new horizons for military cooperation with Egypt, said Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Kainerugaba made the statement during a meeting with Egypt's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Osama Askar in Egypt, Armed Forces Spokesman Gharib Abdel-Hafez said in a statement on Saturday.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **39. Civilisation and its discontents — The price of human dignity**

Jordan Times, 19 Mar 22, El Hassan bin Talal

Almost as far back as the historical records tell, wars have been waged in the name of "Civilisation". Conquests endeavoured under the double aegis of colonialism and imperialism have been justified with references to "Civilisation", but what of the term? I am reminded on this occasion of a lecture delivered in 1940 by the English philosopher, historian and archaeologist Robin George Collingwood. Collingwood spoke of three elements of Civilisation, economic, social, and legal, which when combined, as Brett Bowden writes, give rise to "socio-political Civilisation, or a group or a collective's capacity to organise and govern itself under a system of laws".

### **40. The world's role in Zelensky's conflict**

Jerusalem Post, 19 Mar 22, Vas Shenoy

A comedian kick-starts his career with a parody. The story runs thus: A schoolteacher accidentally gets himself elected as the president of his country when his students post his rant against the government online and crowd-fund for his election. The show is so successful that four years later, the comedian really lands up in the top office.

### **41. Palestine tops Chilean president's agenda in first statements after taking office**

Middle East Monitor, 19 Mar 22, Eman Abusidu

Last Friday, thirty-six-year-old Gabriel Boric, the youngest Chilean president ever to have been elected, officially became the president of Chile after winning Chile's presidential elections last December. His victory represents a major revival for Chile's progressive left and a new era for Chile and neighbouring countries. Boric began his inaugural speech by mentioning late president, Salvador Allende: "

### **42. This is not the time to brand Vladimir Putin an 'evil madman'**

Al Jazeera, 19 Mar 22, Farhan Mujahid Chak

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth week, we routinely hear words like "evil," "unhinged" and "unstable" being used to describe Vladimir Putin. Such labelling is not

uncommon in realpolitik. It is a tactic in the ever-present rivalries of international politics – to demonise, caricature and demoralise political opponents, while simultaneously reassuring those on your own ideological flank. After all, who wants to be on the side of a lunatic?

#### **43. Hunger killing more worldwide while COVID-19 pandemic occupies center stage**

Arab News, 19 Mar 22, Jumana Khamis

For two years, the havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the headlines. Since February 24, debate over the impact of the Ukraine war on global food supplies has taken center stage. Meanwhile, another pandemic continues to take a heavy toll, only much less conspicuously.

#### **44. India needs no history lessons from US on its decisions in Russia-Ukraine war**

Bloomberg Quint (India), 19 Mar 22, Dr. Tara Kartha

A recent press briefing by White House spokesperson Jen Psaki went viral for all the wrong reasons in India. In answer to a question about a Russian offer to India for discounted crude oil and the US reaction to it, she said while such a move was not against sanctions, India needed to think about “where you want to stand when the history books are written in this moment in time”.

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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#### **1. Saudi FM meets with special envoy for Ukraine’s president in Riyadh**

Al Arabiya, 20 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed the crisis in Ukraine with Bektum Rostam, a special envoy for Ukraine’s president, in Riyadh, state news agency (SPA) reported on Saturday.

Prince Faisal reaffirmed the Kingdom’s support to efforts that contribute to de-escalating the conflict, protecting civilians and reaching a political solution.

Russia launched a multi-pronged attack on Ukraine on February 24, which President Vladimir Putin claims is a “special military operation.”

But the conflict has escalated to become the largest military invasion in Europe since World War II.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said on Thursday that more than 3.1 million people had fled Ukraine since the invasion.

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## **2. U.S. suggested Turkey transfer Russian-made missile system to Ukraine**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Humeyra Pamuk

The United States has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

U.S. officials have floated the suggestion over the past month with their Turkish counterparts but no specific or formal request was made, the sources told Reuters. They said it also came up briefly during Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to Turkey earlier this month.

The Biden administration has been asking allies who have been using Russian made equipment and systems including S-300s and S-400s to consider transferring them to Ukraine as it tries to fend off a Russian invasion that began on Feb. 24.

The idea, which analysts said was sure to be shot down by Turkey, was part of a wider discussion between Sherman and Turkish officials about how the United States and its allies can do more to support Ukraine and on how to improve bilateral ties.

The Turkish authorities have not commented on any U.S. suggestion or proposal relating to the transfer to Ukraine of Ankara's S-400 systems, which have been a point of long-standing contention between the two NATO allies.

Turkish foreign ministry officials were not immediately available for comment.

Turkish sources and analysts said any such suggestion would be a non-starter for Turkey, citing issues ranging from technical hurdles related to installing and operating the S-400s in Ukraine, to political concerns such as the blowback Ankara would likely face from Moscow.

Washington has repeatedly asked Ankara to get rid of the Russian-built surface-to-air missile batteries since the first delivery arrived in July 2019. The United States has imposed sanctions on a Turkey's defence industry and removed NATO member Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet programme as a result.

Ankara has said it was forced to opt for the S-400s because allies did not provide weapons on satisfactory terms.

U.S. officials are keen to seize this moment to draw Turkey back into Washington's orbit. Efforts to find "creative" ways to improve the strained relationship have accelerated in recent weeks, even though no specific proposal has so far gained traction, U.S. and Turkish sources have said.

"I think everyone knows that the S-400 has been a long standing issue and perhaps this is a moment when we can figure out a new way to solve this problem," Sherman told Turkish broadcaster Haberturk in an interview on March 5.

It was not clear what exactly she meant and the State Department has not answered questions about her comments. The White House did not respond to a request for comment about the suggestion made during her visit to Turkey.

The effort is also part of a wider bid by the Biden administration to respond to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's plea to help protect Ukraine's skies. Russian or Soviet-made air defense systems such as S-300s that other NATO allies have and S-400s are sought after.

One source familiar with U.S. thinking said Washington's floating of the possibility came as a result of the renewed effort to improve ties at a time when Ankara has been spooked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Turkish President Erdogan had not received a specific heads up from Russian President Vladimir Putin on his plans of a full-scale attack on Ukraine, another source familiar with the discussions said.

Turkey shares a maritime border with Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea and has good ties with both. It has said the invasion is unacceptable and voiced support for Ukraine, but has also opposed sanctions on Moscow while offering to mediate.

Ankara has carefully formulated its rhetoric not to offend Moscow, analysts say, with which it has close energy, defence and tourism ties. But Ankara has also sold military drones to Kyiv and signed a deal to co-produce more, angering the Kremlin. Turkey also opposes Russian policies in Syria and Libya, as well as its 2014 annexation of Crimea.

"Turkey has managed to walk on the razor's edge and a transfer of a Russian S-400 would certainly lead to severe Russian ire," said Aaron Stein, director of research at the Philadelphia-based Foreign Policy Research Institute. "And for Erdogan, the S-400 has become a symbol of Turkish sovereignty, so trading it away wouldn't be all roses and flowers."

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### **3. Houthis launch attacks on Saudi energy, desalination facilities-coalition**

Reuters, 20 Mar 22, Moataz Mohamed, Yasmin Hussein and Omar Fahmy

The Saudi-led coalition said early on Sunday that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group launched missile and drone strikes on energy and water desalination facilities in the kingdom that caused some material damage but no deaths.

It said the attacks were aimed at a water desalination plant in Al-Shaqeeq, an Aramco distribution station in Jizan, a power station in Dhahran al Janub, a gas facility in Khamis Mushait and an Aramco liquefied natural gas plant in Yanbu.

Initial investigations showed the group fired Iranian-made cruise missiles at the desalination plant and state oil firm Aramco's Jizan distribution centre, the coalition said.

It said Saudi air defences intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile and nine drones.

The Houthi military spokesman said the group would within hours announce a wide military operation on Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh leads a coalition that has been battling the Houthis for seven years in a conflict widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"These barbaric attacks are a dangerous escalation," coalition spokesman Brigadier General Turki al-Malki said, adding this constituted a Houthi rejection of planned Yemeni consultations in Riyadh later this month.

The Houthis have said they would only participate in discussions held in a neutral country and the priority should be lifting a coalition blockade on areas held by the group.

The movement ousted Yemen's Saudi-backed government from the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014, prompting the alliance to intervene months later. The Houthis say they are fighting a corrupt system and foreign aggression.

The war has killed tens of thousands of people and pushed millions to the verge of famine.

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## IRAN

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### **4. Detainee in Iran with triple nationality who was released as part of deal with UK is sent back to jail**

CNN, 19 Mar 22

One of the three detained British-Iranians who were released as part of a deal signed by the UK has been returned to jail in Tehran, his lawyer told CNN Friday. Morad Tahbaz, who is also a US citizen, spent 48 hours "under house arrest" with an ankle bracelet before being taken back to prison, according to his lawyer Hojjat Kermani.

Fellow British-Iranian nationals Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori were released Wednesday and flew back to their homes in England.

Tahbaz, an environmentalist who was first detained in January 2018, was released from Evin prison "on furlough to his house in Tehran," UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said in a statement on Wednesday.

Tahbaz's lawyer told CNN that "security guards surrounded Morad's home for 48 hours before taking him back to prison."

On Friday, a UK Foreign Office spokesperson said "the Iranians have told the UK government that Morad has been taken to Evin to fit an ankle tag that should have been fitted before his release. We hope to see him returned to his home in the coming hours. Morad Tahbaz is a tri-national and we are working closely with the United States to secure Morad's permanent release."

A spokesperson for the US State Department also told CNN that “Iran made a commitment to the UK to furlough Morad Tahbaz. As the UK government has said, the UK has been told that Morad has been returned to Evin prison solely to be fitted with an ankle tag, after which he will be allowed to go home.”

The spokesperson added that the US is not “a party to this arrangement, but would join the UK in considering anything short of Morad’s immediate furlough a violation of Iran’s commitment.”

As of Saturday morning, CNN cannot confirm whether Tahbaz has been rereleased from prison and back under house arrest.

The US is “urgently consulting” with the UK on appropriate responses and said it continues “to work night and day to secure the release of our wrongfully detained citizens, including U.S.-UK citizen Morad Tahbaz.”

The State Dept. spokesperson added, “simply put, Iran is unjustly detaining innocent Americans and others and should release them immediately.”

Following the release of Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Ashoori earlier this week, Truss announced the UK had settled a decades-old £400 million (\$524 million) debt owed to Iran, which Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian denied was linked to the prison release on Wednesday.

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## **5. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 mln bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran’s oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

“In parliament, lawmakers decided to raise the ceiling of exports of oil and condensates from 1.2 million barrels (per day) to 1.4 million barrels. The Oil Ministry will do everything in its power to realise the level set in the budget,” Owji told state television.

Iran, facing U.S. sanctions on its crude oil exports, does not divulge exact figures on its oil sales.

Owji said his ministry planned to raise production capacity of crude and condensates to 5.7 million bpd from about 3.7-4 million bpd, without giving a timeframe.

In late 2020, Iran unveiled an ambitious plan to increase production capacity to more than 6.5 million bpd by 2040. But analysts believe that is unrealistic.

Consultancy FGE said last year it saw Iranian output surpassing 4 million bpd by 2025, plateauing at around 5 million bpd before starting to fall in 2037.

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IRAQ

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**6. Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon's home in ruins after Iran strike**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Rashid Yahya and Qassim Abdul-Zahra

Once a lavish mansion, the sprawling home of an Iraqi Kurdish oil tycoon was laid to waste in a barrage of missiles that struck near a U.S. consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil earlier this week.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard said it launched the attack last Sunday, firing off 12 cruise missiles at what it described as a "strategic center" of the Israeli spy agency Mossad — in retaliation for an Israeli strike in Syria that killed two of the Iranian paramilitary force's members the previous week.

Baz Karim Barzinji, CEO of the Iraqi Kurdish oil company KAR group, denies any links to Mossad. The missiles gutted his beautiful home but he says he is grateful his family was unharmed.

The consulate was undamaged and no injuries were reported in the attack. The United States said it did not believe it was the target. But the barrage marked a significant escalation between the U.S. and Iran. Hostility between the longtime foes has often played out in Iraq, whose government is allied with both countries.

Barzinji pointed to a large crater where once his home office stood as he took The Associated Press on a tour of the ruins on Friday. The tycoon, his wife and two teenage children were visiting a nearby farm when the attack took place, he said.

Once plush sitting rooms, where government officials rubbed shoulders with diplomats and other figures of influence, are now strewn with glass, pieces of concrete and piles of debris. The windows and the roof are gone, remnants of the mansion walls barely stand, and floors are covered with rubble.

"This is my family house, all the photos and our belongings" were here, he said. "It was horrifying."

His daughter, Ban Karim, recounts how she huddled in the garden with the family dogs as the thundering missiles whizzed overhead. "We do not know if they can see us, we do not know if they are drones, we do not know anything about ballistics, what is going to happen right now," she said, speaking in English.

Observers speculate the timing of the attack was significant as the world's focus is on Russia's war in Ukraine.

Iraq's northern semi-autonomous Kurdish region maintains discreet links to Israel through the selling of its oil. Barzinji's KAR group built and operates the export pipeline to Ceyhan in Turkey through a joint venture with Russia's Rosneft.

"It is clearly nonsense, what the Iranians are talking about. This can be anything but an Israeli base," Hiwa Osman, an Iraqi Kurdish political analyst, said of Barzanji's villa.

An Iraqi intelligence official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the attack, also rejected claims the house was an Israeli spy center, adding it was a place where diplomats often held social gatherings.

The attack was Iran's first assault on Iraqi soil since the January 2020 missile strike on Ain al-Assad air base housing U.S. forces, which was in retaliation for the U.S. drone strikes that killed a top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, outside the Baghdad airport.

"This is a message (by Iran) to their base, their people. They needed to boost their morale because they have been humiliated for a long time," said Hamdi Malik, an associate fellow with the Washington Institute who specializes in Shiite militias.

Malik believes Sunday's attack was carefully plotted to minimize casualties and cause no direct harm to U.S. interests — but also sent a message to the Americans amid stalled nuclear talks between Iran and world powers in Vienna: next time could be bigger, and more dangerous,

The attack also served to remind Baghdad, where talks on forming a government are languishing and where Moqtada al-Sadr, the winner of Iraq's 2021 parliamentary election, is threatened to exclude Iran-backed parties by forming an alliance with the Kurds and Sunnis.

Iran's "message to Iraqi partners is that no matter who wins the election .... Iraq is our backyard and we can do what we want, whenever we want," Malik said.

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## **7. Iran oil minister says aiming for 1.4 million bpd crude exports**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in televised remarks on Saturday that he will try to raise Iran's oil and condensates exports to 1.4 million barrels per day as set out in an annual state budget.

"In parliament, lawmakers decided to raise the ceiling of exports of oil and condensates from 1.2 million barrels (per day) to 1.4 million barrels. The Oil Ministry will do everything in its power to realise the level set in the budget," Owji told state television.

Iran, facing U.S. sanctions on its crude oil exports, does not divulge exact figures on its oil sales.

Owji said his ministry planned to raise production capacity of crude and condensates to 5.7 million bpd from about 3.7-4 million bpd, without giving a timeframe.

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YEMEN

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**11. Starvation fears for Yemen as Ukraine Russia war impacts wheat and fuel supplies**

Mirror (UK), 19 Mar 22, Milo Boyd

Wars in Ukraine and Yemen could create the "perfect storm" when it comes to global wheat and fuel supplies being damaged.

Charities have warned of a "potential catastrophe" if the Russian invasion of Ukraine - a huge exporter of wheat - continues.

Since Vladimir Putin's forces moved in and put the Ukrainian economy on war footing, global wheat future prices rocketed to their highest levels since the financial crash in 2008.

As much as the spike will lead to unwelcome food price rises for those struggling to make ends meet in the UK, the impact on millions of starving people in war-torn Yemen will be catastrophic.

The Middle Eastern country generally gets 30% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, along with a significant amount of oil and gas.

The impact has been food prices in Yemen increasing by 150% since the war began last month.

More than 17 million people require food aid in Yemen, while that number could rise to 19 million in the second half of the year, UN bodies have said.

To make matters worse the Ukraine conflict has turned attention away from war-struck Yemen, which has seen the Saudi Arabian backed government extensively bomb the Houthi rebel forces.

This week donor countries pledged less than a third of the £3.2 billion in humanitarian relief for Yemen requested by the UN.

Among the 36 countries who did make pledges, the United States offered £443m, Britain pledged £87m and the European Union member states a total of £308m.

The failure to reach the £3.2bn target marked the sixth year that Yemen's humanitarian response plan has not been fully funded.

"You have a perfect storm gathering on the horizon," said Philippe Duamelle, Yemen representative for Unicef.

"We need more, not less. But we have reached a level where we need to start scaling down. This is insane. This is just insane."

In a press release on Thursday, following the conference, Rama Hansraj, Save the Children's country director in Yemen, said: "Leading up to the pledging conference this month, hospitals in Yemen were forced to a near halt due to a lack of fuel, putting children's lives at risk.

"Now, the country is bracing for the potential catastrophic impact the war in Ukraine is expected to have on its wheat supply."

The UN estimates that the war in Yemen caused an estimated 130,000 deaths from indirect causes which include lack of food, health services, and infrastructure.

Save the Children estimated that 85,000 Yemeni children died due to starvation between 2015 and 2018.

In May 2020, Unicef described Yemen as "the largest humanitarian crisis in the world".

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## EGYPT

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### **12. Egyptian council holds first ever meeting with human rights, civil society leaders**

Al Monitor, 19 Mar 22

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), an Egyptian state-owned institution whose members are appointed by the president, held the first meeting of a series of talks March 11 with human rights civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation in the country and examine the organizations' demands for the coming period.

The meeting is the first with civil society organizations, which have long been accused by the current regime of colluding with foreign parties.

According to various sources who spoke to Al-Monitor, the meeting was attended by Gamal Eid, a human rights activist and director of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information; Mohamed Lotfy, executive director of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF); Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights; Mohamed Abdel Salam, executive director of the Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression; Mohamed Zaree, director of the Egypt Program at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies; and Ahmed Abdel Naby, executive director of the Regional Center for Rights and Liberties.

All the participants of this first-of-its-kind meeting between the NCHR and civil society organizations — with the exception of the ECRF — are being investigated in Case No. 173 of 2011, whereby travel bans and confiscation orders were issued against the organizations' directors.

The case is also known as the "foreign funding" case, in which dozens of Egyptian human rights activists have been implicated and accused on charges of receiving suspicious funds. Defendants face travel bans and confiscation of funds and property.

During the meeting, the NCHR, represented by its chairperson Moushira Khattab and all its members, stated it is keen “to open channels of dialogue and communication with all civil society organizations and groups through a national platform, given their important role in upholding human rights.”

The statement continued, “The council, in its capacity of an independent national institution, is also keen on forging transparent, professional and objective ties with all civil society groups in general and human rights institutions in particular on a national ground.”

Lotfy, the ECRF executive director, told Al-Monitor, “The meeting was positive, and the NCHR’s directors and members expressed their desire to embark on a new chapter with civil society groups in Egypt. We also expressed a similar desire, but we have raised several questions, and are waiting on the council to get back to us.”

He said, “Participants mainly demanded the release of human rights defenders belonging to civil society groups. Some of them have been behind bars in pre-trial detention for a long time, exceeding three years. They [the participants] also requested a review of the new NGO law [issued in 2019], which obliges organizations to officialize their situation, and places restrictions on the work of human rights institutions.”

Zaree, director of the Egypt Program at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, who represented the center in the March 11 meeting, told Al-Monitor, “We touched on several impediments in the civil and human rights work in Egypt. We also discussed the national strategy for human rights launched by the Egyptian president months ago.”

Commenting on the national strategy, Zaree said, “Nothing in Egypt has changed yet in terms of human rights since the strategy was launched more than six months ago. This makes us question the Egyptian regime’s intention in bringing about real change.”

He said, “The absence of a true will or desire for change in the human rights landscape will only make any dialogue or meeting just for show.”

During a major conference attended by Egyptian officials and diplomats in September 2021, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced the National Strategy for Human Rights in terms of civil society, which includes dozens of goals related to political, economic and cultural rights, in addition to human rights for women, children, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly, as well as education and capacity-building in this regard.

Mohamed Anwar al-Sadat, head of the NCHR’s Civil and Political Rights Committee, told Al-Monitor, “Human rights organizations and civil society groups play an effective role in promoting all political, civil and economic rights.”

He refused to delve into the details of the meeting, but said the NCHR “plans in the coming period to hold a series of meetings with all civil society actors, trade unions and various political parties from across the social spectrum to place all demands on the table.”

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“I feared the worst, but hoped for a long time for better news,” the Norwegian chief of defense, Gen. Eirik Kristoffersen, said in a statement on Saturday.

The crew members were assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force, which in a statement Saturday morning said that they were listed as “duty status whereabouts unknown” — potentially indicating that the Marines had not yet recovered their remains.

The Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Norway began a search-and-rescue operation after the Osprey failed to return Friday evening. Later on, a crash site was spotted from the air, south of Bodo.

Poor weather conditions made it impossible for rescue services to reach the site from the air, but police and rescue crews eventually made their way into the area by foot and snowmobile. The Royal Norwegian Air Force confirmed early Saturday that police officers had arrived at the crash site.

This year’s Cold Response exercises began in March and brought together about 30,000 troops from more than 27 countries across Europe and North America.

Norway’s prime minister, Jonas Gahr Store, posted a message of condolence on Twitter on Saturday morning.

“It is with great sadness we have received the message that four American soldiers died in a plane crash last night,” he wrote, adding, “Our deepest sympathies go to the soldiers’ families, relatives and fellow soldiers in their unit.”

Crashes during military training exercises are not common, but not unheard-of. In February, four contractors were killed when a helicopter crashed at a U.S. naval facility during a training mission in Hawaii, and in 2020, an Air Force pilot died when his fighter jet crashed during a training flight off the northeast coast of England.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **16. Russia uses hypersonic missiles in strike on Ukraine arms depot**

Reuters, 19 Mar 22, Igor Konashenkov

Russia said on Saturday it had used hypersonic Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles to destroy a large weapons depot in Ukraine’s western Ivano-Frankivsk region. Russia’s Interfax news agency said it was the first time Russia had deployed the hypersonic Kinzhal system since it sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Defence ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told a briefing that the underground depot hit by the Kinzhal system on Friday housed Ukrainian missiles and aircraft ammunition, according to a recording of the briefing shared by Russian news agencies.

Reuters was not able to independently verify Konashenkov's statements.

A spokesperson for Ukraine's air force command confirmed a Russian missile strike on Delyatyn in the Ivano-Frankivsk region on Friday, without giving further details.

Russia prides itself on its advanced weaponry, and President Vladimir Putin said in December that Russia was the global leader in hypersonic missiles, whose speed, manoeuvrability and altitude make them difficult to track and intercept.

The Kinzhal missiles are part of an array of weapons unveiled in 2018.

Konashenkov added on Saturday that Russian forces had also destroyed military radio and reconnaissance centres near the Ukrainian port city of Odessa using the Bastion coastal missile system.

Moscow refers to its actions in Ukraine as a "special operation" to weaken its southern neighbour's military capabilities and root out people it calls dangerous nationalists.

Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance and Western countries have imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia in an effort to force it to withdraw its forces.

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## **17. Russians push deeper into Mariupol as locals plead for help**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22, Cara Anna

Russian forces pushed deeper into Ukraine's besieged and battered port city of Mariupol on Saturday, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and local authorities pleaded for more Western help.

The fall of Mariupol, the scene of some of the war's worst suffering, would mark a major battlefield advance for the Russians, who are largely bogged down outside major cities more than three weeks into the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II.

"Children, elderly people are dying. The city is destroyed and it is wiped off the face of the earth," Mariupol police officer Michail Vershnin said from a rubble-strewn street in a video addressed to Western leaders that was authenticated by The Associated Press.

Russian forces have already cut the city off from the Sea of Azov, and its fall would link Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, to territories controlled by Moscow-backed separatists in the east. It would mark a rare advance in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance that has dashed Russia's hopes for a quick victory and galvanized the West.

Ukrainian and Russian forces battled over the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Vadym Denysenko, adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said Saturday. "One of the largest metallurgical plants in Europe is actually being destroyed," Denysenko said in televised remarks.

Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Ukraine's president, said the nearest forces that could assist Mariupol's defenders were already struggling against "the overwhelming force of the enemy" or at least 100 kilometers (60 miles) away.

"There is currently no military solution to Mariupol," he said late Friday. "That is not only my opinion, that is the opinion of the military."

Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelenskyy has remained defiant, appearing in a video early Saturday shot on the streets of the capital, Kyiv, to denounce a huge Friday rally in Moscow that Russian President Vladimir Putin attended.

Zelenskyy said Russia is trying to starve Ukraine's cities into submission but warned that continuing the invasion would exact a heavy toll on Russia. He also repeated his call for Putin to meet with him to prevent more bloodshed.

"The time has come to restore territorial integrity and justice for Ukraine. Otherwise, Russia's costs will be so high that you will not be able to rise again for several generations," he said.

Putin lavished praise on his country's military during the rally, which took place on the anniversary of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. The event included patriotic songs such as "Made in the U.S.S.R.," with its opening line of "Ukraine and Crimea, Belarus and Moldova, it's all my country."

"We have not had unity like this for a long time," Putin told the cheering crowd.

The rally took place as Russia has faced heavier-than-expected losses on the battlefield and increasingly authoritarian rule at home, where Russian police have detained thousands of antiwar protesters.

Estimates of Russian deaths vary widely, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands. Russia had 64 deaths in five days of fighting during its 2008 war with Georgia. It lost about 15,000 in Afghanistan over 10 years, and more than 11,000 over years of fighting in Chechnya.

The Russian military said Saturday that it used its latest hypersonic missile for the first time in combat. Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Kinzhal missiles destroyed an underground warehouse storing Ukrainian missiles and aviation ammunition in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine.

Russia has said the Kinzhal, carried by MiG-31 fighter jets, has a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and flies at 10 times the speed of sound.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Saturday the U.S. couldn't confirm that the Russians used a hypersonic missile in the attack.

Meanwhile, fighting raged on multiple fronts in Ukraine. U.N. bodies have confirmed more than 847 civilian deaths since the war began, though they concede the actual toll is likely much higher. The U.N. says more than 3.3 million people have fled Ukraine as refugees.

Waiting to board a bus at a triage center near the Moldova-Ukraine border on Saturday, a Ukrainian woman named Irina said she decided to leave home in Mykolaiv this week after a loud explosion shook the walls, waking her young daughter.

“Can you imagine the fear I had, not for me but for my child?” said Irina, who didn’t provide her last name. “So we made decision to arrive here, but I don’t know where we are going, where we’ll stay.”

The northwestern Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Hostomel, Irpin and Moshchun were under fire on Saturday, the Kyiv regional administration reported. It said Slavutich, located 165 kilometers (103 miles) north of the capital, was “completely isolated.”

Police of the Kyiv region said seven people were killed and five were wounded in a mortar attack on Friday in Makariv, a town roughly 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of the capital. They said the attack destroyed homes and damaged other buildings.

Ukrainian and Russian officials agreed to establish 10 humanitarian corridors for bringing aid in and residents out of besieged cities — one from Mariupol and several around Kyiv and in the eastern Luhansk region, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Saturday.

She also announced plans to deliver humanitarian aid to the southern city of Kherson, which Russia seized early in the war.

Ukraine and Russia have held several rounds of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict but remain divided over several issues, with Russia pressing for its neighbor’s demilitarization and Kyiv demanding security guarantees.

In a call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Friday, Putin said Ukraine was trying to “drag the negotiations by making a series of new, unrealistic proposals,” according to the Kremlin.

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, meanwhile, accused Putin of using the talks as a “smokescreen” while his forces regroup. “We don’t see any serious withdrawal of Russian troops or any serious proposals on the table,” she told the Times of London.

The British Department of Defense said in its latest intelligence assessment that the Kremlin “has been surprised by the scale and ferocity of Ukrainian resistance” and “is now pursuing a strategy of attrition” that is likely to involve indiscriminate attacks.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, during a Saturday visit to NATO ally Bulgaria, said the Russian invasion had “stalled on a number of fronts” but the U.S. had not yet seen signs that Putin was deploying additional forces.

Around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked.

At least 130 people survived the Wednesday bombing of a Mariupol theater that was being used as a shelter, but another 1,300 were believed to be still inside, Ludmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner, said Friday.

"We pray that they will all be alive, but so far there is no information about them," Denisova told Ukrainian television.

Satellite images from Maxar Technologies showed a long line of cars leaving Mariupol as people tried to evacuate. Zelenskyy said more than 9,000 people were able to leave Friday along a route that leads 227 kilometers (141 miles) away to the city of Zaporizhzhia — which is also under attack.

The governor of southern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, Oleksandr Starukh, announced a 38-hour curfew after two missile strikes on Zaporizhzhia's suburbs killed nine people Friday.

Russian forces have fired on eight cities and villages in the eastern Donetsk region in the past 24 hours, including Mariupol, Ukraine's national police said Saturday.

The attacks with rockets and heavy artillery killed and wounded dozens of civilians, and damaged at least 37 residential buildings and facilities, including a school, a museum and a shopping center, it said.

In the western city of Lviv, Ukraine's cultural capital, which was hit by Russian missiles on Friday, military veterans were training dozens of civilians on how to handle firearms and grenades.

"It's hard, because I have really weak hands, but I can manage it," said one trainee, 22-year-old Katarina Ishchenko.

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### **18. Stalled Russian offensive increases pressure on Belarus to join invasion**

Financial Times (UK), 19 Mar 22, James Shotter

Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader of Belarus, has allowed Russia to use his country's territory to invade Ukraine, and changed its constitution so it could host Russian nuclear missiles.

But there is one bridge he has so far refused to cross: sending Belarusian troops to join the Russian assault on their common neighbour. "We're not going to get involved," Lukashenko told a gathering of security officials this week. "There's no need for it."

Yet as Russia's invasion stalls in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance, officials in Kyiv have warned that Lukashenko — who survived huge anti-regime protests in 2020 largely thanks to Kremlin support — may not be able to keep his troops on the sidelines forever.

Ukraine recently accused Russia of a “false flag” attack on Belarus to draw it into the war. Last weekend, Oleksiy Danilov, Ukraine’s national security chief, claimed Russia was trying to persuade Belarusian soldiers to enter Ukrainian territory disguised as Russians. “They have a great desire to put Belarusian soldiers in uniforms of the Russian Federation,” he said.

Belarus dismissed the false flag claims as “nonsense”, and opinion polls suggest that Belarusians are strongly opposed to their soldiers taking part in the war. A senior US defence official said there were no indications that Belarus was putting troops into Ukraine, or preparing to do so.

But as the war enters its fourth week, Russia’s need of reinforcements is increasingly clear. US officials have estimated that about 6,000 Russians have died in the conflict so far.

Russia has not given figures since March 2, when it said it had suffered 498 casualties. But in a tacit admission of his military problems, President Vladimir Putin last week gave approval for 16,000 “volunteers” from the Middle East to join the Russian cause.

Analysts say Lukashenko has limited ability to resist Russian pressure to join the fight.

For much of his almost three decades in power, the former collective farm boss sought to maintain some degree of autonomy from Moscow by cultivating ties with the EU.

But that strategy collapsed in 2020, when Lukashenko launched a brutal crackdown on protests against his claim to have won a sixth straight term as president.

The west responded with tough sanctions, which have hit key sectors of the Belarusian economy, and made Lukashenko more dependent than ever on Russian political and economic support.

Katia Glod, a Belarus expert from the Center for European Policy Analysis think-tank, said of the chances of Belarusian troops joining the fighting: “It will all boil down to whether Putin decides he needs them.”

She continued: “Especially with Russian troops in the country, and under the current sanctions. Lukashenko is economically so dependent on Russia that he has no space for manoeuvre.”

Belarus’s military, with just 45,000 personnel, is small compared with that of Russia and Ukraine, and has less combat experience. But given the heavy losses that Russia has suffered, a deployment of Belarusian forces could be useful for the Kremlin, said François Heisbourg, a French defence analyst.

“The Russians need bodies. They’ve already had a few thousand Chechens and now they’re talking about flying in Syrians,” he said. “For the urban combat phase in particular you really need a lot of manpower and that’s exactly what the Russians don’t currently have. So the notion of filling in with Belarusians . . . would actually make a lot of sense.”

Others are sceptical, both about Belarus’s military capabilities, and how motivated its soldiers would be to fight Ukrainians.

“It certainly wouldn’t be decisive,” said Mark Cancian, a former US marine corps colonel now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank in Washington. “The only way it could be . . . really significant would be if they were willing to open another front further to the west.”

Yet this would be a “highly risky” strategy for Belarus, which would have to rely on its own inexperienced troops. “But it would [also] be a problem for the Ukrainians, in the sense that it would be yet another thrust they’d have to defend against,” he added.

Michal Baranowski, senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Warsaw, said it would be “very significant” if Belarusian forces joined the war and were able to close off Ukraine’s western border, as it was the main route for inflows of weapons supplies from Ukraine’s allies.

But he said closing such a long border would be a huge undertaking and was “very unlikely at the moment”.

“The biggest question is not how much public support there is [for Belarusian involvement], but how much room for manoeuvre Lukashenko has versus Putin, and how much he’s entirely a puppet,” he said. “If he is, that would be the scenario where we could see Belarusian forces as part of Russian military.”

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## **19. Africa remains mostly quiet in Russia-Ukraine conflict**

Associated Press, 19 Mar 22

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni recently remarked that Russia’s war on Ukraine should be seen in the context of Moscow being the “center of gravity” for Eastern Europe.

His son, Lt. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, was more forceful, declaring that most Africans “support Russia’s stand in Ukraine” and “Putin is absolutely right!”

Amid a worldwide chorus of condemnation, much of Africa has either pushed back or remained noticeably quiet. Twenty-five of Africa’s 54 nations abstained or did not record a vote in the UN General Assembly resolution earlier this month condemning Russia.

The reason? Many nations on the continent of 1.3 billion people have long-standing ties and support from Moscow, dating back to the Cold War when the Soviet Union supported anti-colonial struggles.

Those relations have tightened in recent years: As US interest in Africa appeared to wane under President Donald Trump’s administration, Russia along with China expanded its influence, enlarging its economic footprint to include everything from agricultural programs to energy plants. In 2019, dignitaries from 43 African nations attended a summit with Russia, which also has become the dominant exporter of weapons into sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The developments have not gone unnoticed. Last month, EU leaders held a long-delayed summit in Brussels to discuss ways to counteract Russia's and China's influence in Africa, while Western military and civilian leaders are eyeing Russia's advancing presence on both the African continent and in the Middle East as long-term threats to security in the West. China also is among the few countries showing support for Moscow.

There have been exceptions to the current of sympathy running through Africa, with Kenya and Ghana criticizing Russia's actions.

But, elsewhere on the continent, countries not only are abstaining from criticism, they appear to be celebrating their alliances with Russia.

As the war in Ukraine escalated, leaders of South Africa's ruling African National Congress party attended an event at the Russian Embassy in Cape Town to mark the 30-year anniversary of the country's diplomatic ties with the Russian Federation.

The ANC has ties to the Kremlin extending back to the Soviet Union's diplomatic and military support of the struggle against apartheid, which Western powers did not provide. Some South Africans point out that Russia was not among the colonizers of Africa.

South Africa's friendship with Russia is "rooted through bonds of brotherhood," said lawmaker Floyd Shivambu, a leader of the country's leftist opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters. Shivambu said Russia's actions in Ukraine are necessary to prevent NATO's expansion.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said his country abstained from the UN censure resolution because it failed to call for "meaningful engagement" with Russia.

"We have seen how, over time, countries have been invaded, wars have been launched over many years, and that has left devastation," Ramaphosa told lawmakers Thursday, criticizing NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe. "And some leaders of certain countries have been killed. On our own continent (Libya's) Muammar Gadhafi was killed."

He said he believes Russia feels "a national existential threat" from NATO.

Also abstaining from the UN vote was neighboring Zimbabwe, which had previously escaped sanctions of its own at the UN — for alleged human rights abuses and election corruption — thanks to vetoes by Russia and China.

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa has praised Russia and China as "dependable pillars," citing the guns they provided and the training they gave fighters in the 1970s war against white minority rule in Rhodesia.

Russia has major investments in Zimbabwe, including a multibillion-dollar joint mining venture in the Great Dyke area, which holds one of the world's largest deposits of platinum. Russia also is involved in gold and diamond mining operations in Zimbabwe.

In Uganda, where Russian officers regularly assist in the maintenance of military equipment, authorities recently announced the signing of a contract with a Russian firm to install tracking devices in vehicles to combat violent crime.

The East African country's UN representative said Uganda abstained from the UN resolution on Russia to protect its neutrality as the next chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, a Cold War-era group of 120 member states that includes almost every African nation.

But President Museveni went further, actually meeting with the Russian ambassador as the war raged in Ukraine. The Ugandan leader, who has held power since 1986, has criticized the West's "aggression against Africa."

Museveni's government in recent months has tangled with the US and other countries that have expressed concern over last year's disputed election and growing allegations of rights abuses.

Museveni also has accused the West of interfering in domestic affairs.

Nicholas Sengoba, a columnist with Uganda's Daily Monitor newspaper, said that many authoritarian African leaders like Museveni are pleased to see Putin "stand up to the big boys in the West."

Following his meeting with the ambassador, Museveni urged Africans in a tweet to find what he called a "center of gravity," which is what he said Russia is for "the Slavic nations of Eastern Europe."

The post was later deleted, but his son Kainerugaba, who commands Uganda's infantry forces, was unambiguous in his remarks on social media.

"The majority of mankind (that are non-white) support Russia's stand in Ukraine," he tweeted on Feb. 28.

"Putin is absolutely right! When the USSR parked nuclear armed missiles in Cuba in 1962 the West was ready to blow up the world over it. Now when NATO does the same they expect Russia to do differently?"

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **20. Overshadowed by Ukraine, Afghanistan starves in silence**

McGill Journal of Political Studies, 19 Mar 22, Rory Daly

At the end of last year, Afghanistan still loomed large in the media. CNN reported on the new Taliban government's restrictions on women's rights, and the New York Times was writing about the struggles of Afghan refugees. Direst of all, economic sanctions placed on Afghanistan by the United States looked likely to trigger mass starvation in the Middle Eastern country.

Then news began to trickle down about the Russian forces amassed on the state's border with Ukraine. When the amount of coverage of the potential crisis in Ukraine seemed like it could grow no larger, Russia declared war. Although Afghanistan's issues were drowned by the coverage of the Russian invasion, they have not been erased. The country still faces an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, one that has been exacerbated by the war between Russia and Ukraine, two of the world's major food-producing nations.

The precarious food situation in Afghanistan is partially the result of droughts and societal turmoil. When the Taliban overthrew the ruling government in August of 2021, the country's food situation was already poor. The severe lack of rainfall had been affecting two-thirds of the country's provinces, and according to the United Nations (UN), wheat production was significantly impacted. Despite the critical situation, the Taliban did not have the capacity to interact with international markets. Forced into inaction, farmers lost potential revenue as non-edible cash crops could not be sold.

Famine in the country is rooted in diplomatic turmoil. The failure of the Taliban to engage with international markets has been the result of a coordinated series of sanctions and asset freezes by foreign states. And in this will to sanction, the United States has been at the forefront. Their view of the Taliban government as illegitimate has pushed them to deny access to the country's assets and cash reserves abroad. As a result, the Afghan government can neither regulate its own currency nor pay its own workers, collapsing the economy and causing corruption.

Food became simply too expensive to buy for many Afghans – and is still currently. Though the US has tried to pull back on some of the sanctions to allow for aid to flow in, the country's economy cannot recover as quickly as it collapsed, especially when many of the financial restrictions remain only partially lifted.

It was in this context that negotiations occurred in Oslo this past January between the Taliban and diplomats from a bevy of Western countries, as well as the European Union (EU). Further talks were held in Qatar in February. But right as it seemed that progress was being made in favor of the Afghan population, Russia invaded Ukraine.

As far as foreign policy goes, the Biden administration is seemingly totally focused on Ukraine, and Afghanistan has been completely forgotten about. With the United Nations (UN) warning that as much as 25 percent more Afghans could fall below the poverty line by mid-2022 leading to a potential total of 97 percent of Afghans in poverty that lack of attention is proving deadly.

However, the Ukraine crisis also poses further issues for Afghanistan because both Russia and Ukraine are major food producers. More specifically, the two countries are the breadbasket of Europe, making up about 25 percent of global wheat and corn exports. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, their foodstuffs actually make up about 12 percent of the calories traded globally each year. It goes without saying that this war will be disastrous for food prices then; food price inflation could even increase by up to 22 percent next year according to the UN. In fact, the UN World Food Program is warning that this conflict could especially impact Afghanistan, which is currently heavily reliant on wheat imports as a result of

the aforementioned droughts. As a result of famine, an economic crisis spurred by the United States, and a war in Eastern Europe, Afghanistan stands to uniquely suffer this year. Overshadowed as the state may be, Western governments need to realize that their officials are capable of multitasking. Afghanistan is a country with nearly 40 million people. One dead child is a tragedy—tens of thousands is an unconscionable moral failure.

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## **21. How did Europe get hooked on Russian energy?**

Bloomberg Opinion, 19 Mar 22, Paul J. Davies

Paul J. Davies: You're a professor of political economy at the University of Cambridge and author of "Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century," which analyzes how the interplay of energy, finance and international politics have contributed to the crises we face today. Let's start with Ukraine directly. How much of Russia's invasion is due to Putin's seeking security for Russian gas exports through Ukraine's pipelines? Or did he perceive Western weakness because of Europe's reliance on Russian energy?

Helen Thompson, professor of political economy, University of Cambridge and author, "Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century": It's more of the second than the first. I don't think we could say that the situation of gas transit through Ukraine was a motive for Putin. What we can say is that for the last two decades, Putin tried to weaken Ukraine's position economically by eliminating it from the transit system for the export of Russia's gas and oil. He didn't succeed, but the way he went about it was very divisive within the European Union. Poland was convinced that trying to remove Ukraine from transit would weaken Ukraine. Meanwhile, the European Commission was rather more tolerant of the pipeline that went under the Baltic Sea, Nord Stream, which took gas from Russia to Germany, than it was for what was coming into southern Europe under the Black Sea. The fact that there were double standards for Russian gas coming in different pipelines caused internal European disunity that to a considerable extent Putin sought to exploit.

PJD: Europe's reliance on Russian gas has a very long history. In your book, a key moment seems to be the 1956 Suez Crisis, when Israel, Britain and France tried to retake control of the Suez Canal from Egypt. It was the moment of realization that British and French imperial power was spent—but also the time that Russia hooked up its energy exports to Europe.

HT: In the 1920s and 1930s, there were quite a number of European countries, including Britain, that were willing to buy Soviet oil. Pretty much all European countries were trying to loosen their dependency on oil from the western hemisphere. After the Second World War, the United States didn't want European countries going back to importing oil from the western hemisphere, because it was concerned about future supply for itself; but nor did it want them importing oil from the Soviet Union. So the solution was for Europe to import oil from the Middle East. The role of guaranteeing those energy interests for western European countries in the Middle East was given to Britain, the dominant imperial power still in the region. It's not something the United States wanted to do itself.

So, there was a huge psychic shock during the Suez crisis when the Eisenhower administration turns around and says: No, you're not supposed to behave in this way and we're not going to send you any emergency oil, either. The response of the west European countries — more France and West Germany than Britain — was to say, "Well, if the Americans can behave like that, we need alternatives." And their really consequential response was to cultivate an oil relationship with the Soviet Union.

By the middle of the '70s, it was quite clear that a significant number of European countries had a dependency on then-Soviet oil and gas. Once the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991 and there were 15 independent republics in its place, the pipelines taking Soviet gas to Europe went through an independent Belarus and most critically, an independent Ukraine.

PJD: So this independent Ukrainian state is very important for gas transit. Russia and Europe are both reliant on it in some way. How does that affect Ukraine and its neighbors?

HT: Beginning in the 1990s, Russian governments began to look to remedy a dependency on Ukraine that they didn't like. What you see is the attempt to say, we're going to deal with this problem by ending this problem. And that means transiting gas under the Baltic Sea for Northern Europe and under the Black Sea for southern Europe and making it more difficult for the Europeans to start importing gas from Azerbaijan, which would have been a potential alternative to Russian gas. Meanwhile, you have a set of conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, including accusations by the Russians that the Ukrainians are siphoning off gas for themselves, rather than letting it flow where it's supposed to into other European countries. Then, at a moment of crisis in 2009, Putin shuts down the flow of gas through at least one of the Ukraine pipelines, causing some southern European countries to really suffer.

So, we see a growing geopolitics around the pipelines, as Putin uses them to try to put pressure on various former members of the Soviet Union — not just Ukraine but Belarus and Georgia too.

PJD: There's a financial element to Ukraine's destabilization, too. You emphasize the importance of the central bank dollar swap lines, from the Federal Reserve and via the European Central Bank, that supported banks in many countries after the 2008 financial crisis. The really interesting thing is the effects on countries that are excluded, including Ukraine. How did that destabilize Ukraine?

HT: I think this is an important part of the story for what happened in 2013-14. The [Ukrainian President Viktor] Yanukovich government had negotiated an associate membership agreement with the EU that would have economically aligned Ukraine with the EU and its single market. Then, in the second half of 2013, it became clear that the Federal Reserve was tapering asset purchases. That really intensified the financial crisis that was already underway in Ukraine.

Yet Ukraine didn't have a dollar swap line by the Federal Reserve. When the crisis came, there was no change in that policy. So, the Ukrainian government looked to the EU and the European Central Bank, but the support that was on offer was really quite meager.

So Yanukovich turned to Putin, who was much more generous in financial support, including reducing the prices of gas. And having made that agreement, Yanukovich said, “We’re not going to go ahead with the associate membership of the European Union.” That produced the popular uprising that led to Yanukovich basically fleeing from power, after which Russia annexed Crimea.

PJD: And why do you think the U.S. and the EU were so reluctant to offer much support?

HT: It’s a really interesting question. I think that the Federal Reserve has not made a habit of giving dollar swaps to countries that are in crisis conditions. They have largely been offered to advanced economies, or to countries that the U.S. regards as fairly fundamental to its interests, such as Mexico or Brazil. So, I think that if you’re not on the dollar-swap line, that says something about where you are in U.S. geopolitical priorities.

The harder thing to explain is the European position. It negotiated this associate membership agreement with Yanukovich’s government, but then at the moment of crisis, it wasn’t willing to really back it and extend substantial amounts of credit to support it. Once you throw in the fact that the EU had thought this agreement could happen without any resolution of the NATO membership issue for Ukraine — Germany and France were bitterly opposed to Ukrainian membership of NATO — it all added up to a really incoherent position.

PJD: The dollar’s role in international trade and as a reserve currency is being questioned again. For China and Russia this is a point of insecurity because of their need to hold dollar reserves and the extraterritorial and geopolitical power that it lends the U.S. Now that we’ve seen central banks freeze the foreign exchange accounts of the Russian Central Bank, what are the consequences of that? Will it end global dollar hegemony?

HT: The incentive that these sanctions create to say, “We can’t put ourselves at the mercy of the Americans like this” is huge. But the actual ability to protect yourself for these countries seems a lot, lot harder, simply because the dollar penetrates the entire international banking system. If you try to decouple from the dollar, you’re decoupling from that system, and that has profound consequences.

PJD: Another possibility could be that the world splits, with China and Russia more closely linked and forming one trade-economic-energy axis for the east and maybe the Global South; and a separate American-European-Middle Eastern axis. Is that possible?

HT: In practice, it’s going to be very difficult for the European countries to move with any alacrity away from Russian gas. To the extent that some countries will be able to do that more rapidly, they’re the ones that have capacity to import liquid natural gas. That means more intense competition between European countries and Asian countries in general, and China in particular, for those liquid natural gas imports. We saw last year that a big increase in China’s demand intensified competition for those imports and forced prices up. That was at the center of the energy shock that went on last autumn as the world economy started to move into recovery mode from Covid.

To the extent that the Middle East comes back into play, there's a question of whether Saudi Arabia will want to give up the relationship with Russia and OPEC+ that they've had since the autumn of 2016. It's quite difficult for the Saudis to control oil prices by themselves, but they proved they could do it reasonably effectively with Russia. Why are they going to want to give that up? At the same time, I don't think Saudi Arabia is just going to cede the China market to Russia, particularly when the United States will be looking to increase domestic production of oil. I think the relations between the three big producers — Saudi Arabia, the United States and Russia — are going to continue to be pretty disruptive.

PJD: The other big factor has been the American shale oil and gas boom, which was driven by the flood of cheap money and higher commodity prices after 2008. That turned the U.S. into a net exporter again and changed its geopolitical interests to some degree.

HT: Yeah, I think the story of the rise of shale oil and gas is the big geopolitical story of the 2010s that was really underplayed. On the oil side, it shook up the U.S.-Saudi relationship at a time in which Saudi Arabia had a growing market in China and the United States was trying to reach some accommodation with Iran, Saudi Arabia's principal regional rival. And in terms of gas, the consequences played out in Europe, because the U.S. was in a position to compete with Russia for European gas markets.

One of the things I think that Putin was always keen on was to frame any U.S. action against the Nord Stream pipeline as not being motivated by concern for Ukraine, but simply being about the commercial interests of shale gas producers in the United States. I don't think we can understand the saga of Nord Stream, and the divisions that it caused within NATO, without understanding that this was something where there were economic interests at stake as well as the geopolitical situation in Europe.

PJD: There's a hope that the green energy revolution will somehow free us from all of these fights and problems. Will it?

HT: Well, if the energy transition is successful and we move toward much higher use of renewables, geopolitics won't be dominated any longer by the need for countries who import large amounts of foreign energy to exercise influence on those parts of the world that export oil and gas. The sun shines in your own country and the wind blows in your own country. So there is some escape. On the other hand, though, all the infrastructure around green energy requires metals and metals are also distributed unevenly around the world. And one country, China, particularly where rare earth metals are concerned, has an extraordinarily dominant position in the extraction and the supply chains around them. So for green energy to be a route to energy independence, there has to be a break in that metal dependency upon China.

*Paul J. Davies is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering banking and finance. He previously worked for the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times.*

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## **22. Memorializing the military achievements of women**

The Hill, 19 Mar 22, Jeremy Butler

Throughout my 20 years of service in the Navy, I've had the privilege of working alongside many brave, resilient, and inspirational women. These servicewomen — more than 345,000 of them — who have deployed since 9/11 have been central to the past and continued success of U.S. operations, fighting tirelessly to protect all Americans.

The achievements of women in the military are vast, stretching back for centuries, and have been demonstrated in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), which began in the wake of 9/11 to fight against those who sought to export terror. Yet, their contributions and sacrifices continue to be largely ignored in the telling of American history.

The world has changed significantly since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom over 20 years ago, and the same is true for our military. While the number of male veterans is expected to decline in the coming decades, the population of women veterans will continue to increase, adding to the ranks of nearly 2 million women veterans in the U.S. today. Although women have served in the military in many roles for over 200 years, there have been a lot of “firsts” for them in recent years.

Opening up all combat positions to women, the first Silver Star awarded to a female soldier since World War II, the first women graduates of the Army Ranger School, and the first woman four-star general, are some of these “firsts.” These distinctions are groundbreaking, but the fact that they've only occurred within the last 25 years is reflective of the gaps in opportunity and recognition for different genders in the military. They serve not only as a reminder of the great strength of women in the military but also of the many barriers that they have had to breakthrough.

We need to ensure that women aren't excluded when it comes to documenting history or expressing gratitude for those who served. And with Congress having recently authorized the construction of the GWOT Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., we, as Americans, have a unique opportunity to do so.

This authorization is only the opening move in a 24-step process before the monument can be built, meaning that now is the time to speak out to guarantee women veterans are aptly represented. The GWOT Memorial is intended to be an inclusive, reverent, and apolitical place of honor for the veterans and their families who have served in the GWOT, presenting a historic opportunity to recognize and honor the contributions of women who fought for our nation. We urge Congress to ensure that the GWOT Memorial safeguards the legacy of women servicemembers among American heroes throughout history.

Representation of women in military memorials is essential. Past and current servicewomen have provided the same strength of character and commitment to the country as their male counterparts. Still, they have not received the same public awareness of their service — a known problem that needs to be addressed.

Speaking as both a veteran and the CEO of a veteran service organization — Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) — a majority of the veteran community have demonstrated their desire to prioritize issues impacting women veterans. VSOs and nonprofit organizations, such as IAVA, have been working to establish equitable awareness and access to VA benefits for servicewomen and veterans. The construction of a memorial on the National Mall represents a significant opportunity for change.

In building the GWOT Memorial, the Global War On Terrorism Memorial Foundation should gather inspiration from the theme of this year's Women's History Month, "providing healing, promoting hope." This should act as a reminder as to why women need to be represented in military tributes for the actions they have taken during their service to heal, protect and provide for our country and the world.

*Jeremy Butler is the Chief Executive Officer for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA).*

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### **23. Putin made a profound miscalculation on Ukraine**

New York Times, 19 Mar 22, Yaroslav Hrytsak

Ukraine is once again at the center of a potentially global conflict. World War I, as the historian Dominic Lieven put it, "turned on the fate of Ukraine." World War II, according to the legendary journalist Edgar Snow, was "first of all a Ukrainian war." Now the threat of a third world war hinges on what could happen in Ukraine.

It's a striking repetition. Why has Ukraine, a midsize country of 40 million people on the eastern edge of Europe, been at the epicenter of warfare not once, not twice, but three times?

Part of the answer, at least, is geographical. Set between Russia and Germany, Ukraine has long been viewed as the site of struggle for the domination of the continent. But the deeper reasons are historical in nature. Ukraine, which has a common origin point with Russia, has developed differently over the course of centuries, diverging in crucial ways from its neighbor to the east.

President Vladimir Putin likes to invoke history as part of the reason for his bloody invasion. Ukraine and Russia, he asserts, are in fact one country: Ukraine, in effect, doesn't exist. This, of course, is entirely wrong. But he is right to think history holds a key to understanding the present. He just doesn't realize that far from enabling his success, it's what will thwart him.

In 1904 an English geographer named Halford John Mackinder made a bold prediction. In an article titled "The Geographical Pivot of History," he suggested that whoever controlled Eastern Europe would control the world. On either side of this vast region were Russia and Germany, poised to do battle. And in between was Ukraine, with its rich resources of grain, coal and oil.

There's no need to go into the finer details of Mackinder's theory; it had its flaws. Yet it proved extremely influential after World War I and became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thanks to the Nazi geopolitician Karl Haushofer, the concept migrated into Hitler's "Mein

Kampf.” Lenin and Stalin had not read Mackinder but acted as if they had. For them, Ukraine was the bridge that would carry the Russian Revolution westward into Germany, making it a world revolution. The path to conflict again ran through Ukraine.

The war, when it came, was catastrophic: In Ukraine, around seven million perished. In the aftermath, Ukraine was sealed up in the Soviet Union, and the question for a time seemed settled. With the collapse of Communism, many believed that Mackinder’s thesis was outdated and the future belonged to independent and sovereign states, free from the ambitions of bigger neighbors. They were wrong.

Mackinder’s argument — that Eastern Europe and Ukraine held the key for a contest between Russia and Germany — never went away. In fact, it took pride of place in Mr. Putin’s mind. With one change, however: He substituted Germany with the West in its entirety. Ukraine, to Mr. Putin, became the battleground for a civilizational contest between Russia and the West.

He didn’t act on it at first. In the early years of his tenure, he seemed to expect — in line with those in Boris Yeltsin’s circle who oversaw the end of the Soviet Union — that Ukrainian independence wouldn’t last long. In time, Ukraine would be begging to be taken back. It didn’t happen. Though some Ukrainians remained under the sway of Russian culture, politically they leaned to the West, as shown by the Orange Revolution of 2004, when millions of Ukrainians protested against electoral fraud.

So Mr. Putin changed course. Soon after the war in Georgia in 2008, in which the Kremlin seized control of two Georgian regions, he designed a new strategic policy for Ukraine. According to the plan, any steps Kyiv might take in the direction of the West would be punished with military aggression. The objective was to cleave off Ukraine’s Russophone east and turn the rest of the country into a vassal state headed by a Kremlin puppet.

At the time, it seemed fantastical, ludicrous. Nobody believed it could be genuine. But by the final weeks of Ukraine’s Maidan revolution in 2014, in which Ukrainians demanded an end to corruption and an embrace of the West, it became horribly clear that Russia was intent on aggression. And so it proved: In a rapid-fire operation, Mr. Putin seized Crimea and parts of the Donbas. But crucially, the full extent of his ambition was thwarted, in large part through the heroic resistance mounted by volunteers in the country’s east.

Mr. Putin miscalculated in two ways. First, he was hoping that, as had been the case with his war against Georgia, the West would tacitly swallow his aggression against Ukraine. A unified response from the West was not something he expected. Second, since in his mind Russians and Ukrainians were one nation, Mr. Putin believed Russian troops needed barely to enter Ukraine to be welcomed with flowers. This never materialized.

What happened in Ukraine in 2014 confirmed what liberal Ukrainian historians have been saying for a long time: The chief distinction between Ukrainians and Russians lies not in language, religion or culture — here they are relatively close — but in political traditions. Simply put, a victorious democratic revolution is almost impossible in Russia, whereas a viable authoritarian government is almost impossible in Ukraine.

The reason for this divergence is historical. Up until the end of World War I (and in the case of western Ukraine, the end of World War II), Ukrainian lands were under the strong political and cultural influence of Poland. This influence was not Polish per se; it was, rather, a Western influence. As the Harvard Byzantinist Ihor Sevcenko put it, in Ukraine the West was clad in Polish dress. Central to this influence were the ideas of constraining centralized power, an organized civil society and some freedom of assembly.

Mr. Putin seems to have learned nothing from his failures in 2014. He has launched a full-scale invasion, seemingly intended to remove the Ukrainian government from power and pacify the country. But again, Russian aggression has been met with heroic Ukrainian resistance and united the West. Though Mr. Putin may escalate further, he is far from the military victory he sought. A master tactician but inept strategist, he has made his most profound miscalculation.

Yet it's one based on the belief that he is at war not with Ukraine but with the West in Ukrainian lands. It's essential to grasp this point. The only way to defeat him is to turn his belief — that Ukraine is fighting not alone but with the help of the West and as part of the West — into a waking nightmare.

How this could be done, whether through humanitarian and military help, incorporating Ukraine into the European Union or even supplying it with its own Marshall Plan, are open questions. What matters is the political will to answer them. After all, the struggle for Ukraine, as history tells us, is about much more than just Ukraine or Europe. It is the struggle for the shape of the world to come.

*Dr. Yaroslav Hrytsak is a professor of history at the Ukrainian Catholic University and the author, most recently, of a global history of Ukraine.*

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## **24. How AI could help new Air Force pilots avoid costly mistakes**

Task and Purpose, 19 Mar 22, Kelsey D. Atherton

On March 2, the US Navy pulled an F-35C from the ocean. The \$94.4 million jet came in hard for a landing on January 24, then skidded across the deck, injuring sailors before it plummeted off and into the sea. The pilot ejected and survived, but the incident raises an ominous question over aircraft operations: What can the military do to ensure pilots land safely as many times as they take off, and help all aviators avoid the mistakes of their peers?

The F-35C is a Navy plane, and aircraft carrier landings are notoriously hard. But no branch of the military is immune to crashes, and both the Marines and Air Force have crashed planes this year. Post-crash investigations, pulling from the recorded avionics and telemetry data of the planes, can reveal the specific causes of error, from mechanical failure to choices made by pilots.

In 2020, the Air Force turned to artificial intelligence to catch unusual flight patterns during training, before they become a costly or even tragic error. To better understand outliers in flight patterns, the Air Force is working with Crowdbotics, an artificial intelligence/machine learning firm, to analyze and process the data that planes already collect. This data processing and

## **25. Japan, Turkey FMs coordinate Middle East and Ukraine policies**

Arab News, 19 Mar 22

Japan and Turkey foreign ministers on March 19 agreed to cooperate and coordinate on the Middle East and Ukrainian issues and deepen bilateral friendly relations toward the year 2024, the 100th anniversary of establishing their diplomatic ties.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, who is visiting Turkey for a short trip that includes the UAE on March 20, exchanged views with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, on the situation in Afghanistan and East Asia, including China and North Korea, and affirmed that they would continue to coordinate on dealing with North Korea, including the abductions issue, the foreign ministry in Tokyo said in a statement.

The Ministers confirmed to hold the first meeting of maritime consultations in the first half of this year to discuss specific cooperation, and to accelerate negotiations toward the early conclusion of the Japan-Turkey Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Japan-Turkey Social Security Agreement, and to aim for the opening of the Turkish-Japanese University of Science and Technology in 2023, the ministry said.

In addition, Minister Hayashi expressed his intention to expand cooperation in new areas, including space and climate change, and they concurred on closely cooperating in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation through Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI).

In the meeting, minister Cavusoglu provided a detailed explanation of Turkey's diplomatic efforts based on its close relations with both Ukraine and Russia, and Minister Hayashi expressed his sincere gratitude and respect for the efforts made by Turkey.

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## **26. Lebanon asks US to continue border demarcation mediation**

Asharq al-Awsat, 19 Mar 22

Lebanon called on the United States to continue its mediation efforts to complete the maritime border demarcation negotiations with Israel in the light of observations made by the Lebanese Technical Committee on the proposal of US mediator Amos Hochstein.

The Lebanese Technical Committee has met to discuss a proposal submitted by Hochstein, to divide the disputed area in a way that does not allow Lebanon to obtain the entire area that it considers its legitimate right, which amounts to 860 nautical kilometers on its southern border.

Lebanon did not provide a definitive answer to the US offer, leaving the matter to the ongoing negotiations and asking the US to maintain its mediation.

President Michel Aoun met on Friday with Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Najib Mikati at the Baabda Palace, where they discussed the recent US proposal and the outcome of a study conducted by the relevant technical committee, which includes representatives from the

Presidency, the Government, the Army Command (the Hydrography Department) and the Petroleum Administration Authority.

A statement issued by the presidential office said that the Lebanese officials decided to ask the United States to “continue its efforts to complete the negotiations, in accordance with the framework agreement and in a manner that preserves Lebanon’s supreme interest and stability in the region.”

Ministerial sources told Asharq Al-Awsat that Hochstein’s proposal required some “clarifications and amendments.”

“There are points that need to be studied in depth, and other details that must be clarified,” the sources emphasized.

In early October 2020, Berri announced a non-final framework agreement, which represents a basis for paving the way for the demarcation of the land and sea borders with Israel. The US-led negotiations were assumed on the Lebanese side by the Army Command, under the auspices of the president and the prime minister.

The meetings began on Oct. 14, and four rounds were held before negotiations stopped when Lebanon sent a letter to the UN, demanding an additional area of 1,430 square km that includes part of the Israeli Karish gas field.

The letter explicitly stated that the area between lines 1 and 23 to the area between lines 23 and 29, with an increase of 1,430 square km in addition to the previous 860 square km, is the disputed area, including the Karish gas field.

The indirect negotiations were stopped as Lebanon’s request was opposed by Israel. They later resumed in May under a new mechanism.

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## **27. UAE FM discusses regional, international developments with UK’s Truss**

Al Arabiya, 19 Mar 22

UAE’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed discussed regional and international developments, including the situation in Ukraine, in a phone call with British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, state news agency (WAM) reported on Saturday.

Sheikh Abdullah reiterated the UAE’s keenness to enhance regional and international security and stability and voiced the UAE’s support to efforts to reach a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine.

He also voiced the importance of intensifying efforts to address the crisis’ humanitarian implications and to meet the humanitarian needs of civilians in Ukraine.

They also discussed the stability of global energy and food markets, the report added.

display today is not a clash of Civilisations, but the discontents of Civilisation. The price of human dignity is, however, a price worth paying.

*His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal was born in Amman to a branch of the Hashemite family directly descended from the Prophet Muhammad, in the forty-second generation of descendants. His Royal Highness is the youngest son of Their late Majesties King Talal and Queen Zein El Sharaf, and is the brother of His late Majesty King Hussein.*

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#### **40. The world's role in Zelensky's conflict**

Jerusalem Post, 19 Mar 22, Vas Shenoy

A comedian kick-starts his career with a parody. The story runs thus: A schoolteacher accidentally gets himself elected as the president of his country when his students post his rant against the government online and crowd-fund for his election.

The show is so successful that four years later, the comedian really lands up in the top office.

The plot doesn't stop there, he takes on a feared, despised, and evil dictator, who decides to invade his country and... (wins?).

World leaders who tolerated the evil dictator and his evil, sidekick corrupt billionaires for decades rally with the upstart and move to send weapons and medicines to the besieged population, while government employees in various countries, which welcomed the evil empire's evil money, go to confiscate their yachts and arrest the billionaire cronies.

This isn't the plot of a B-grade Hollywood film, but of the state of the world's geopolitics. The script seems to have been written in the Obama White House in 2014 as an afterthought to the Maidan Revolution, which brought western democracy to Ukraine and brought Ukraine to the NATO-sphere.

While I'm quite sure the ending is written somewhere, neither the authors nor I am sure it will end as expected. Very few ideas that started in the Obama White House did end as expected: the Arab Spring, peace in the Middle East, the Pivot to Asia, to name a few.

Of course, Ukraine, the withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, and Syria are all a part of the list of former US president Barack Obama's famous idealistic foreign policy disasters.

This isn't a justification for Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin is a dictator, who should not have invaded Ukraine, no matter what.

The waste of life and completely unnecessary destruction were completely avoidable. The entire blame for the deaths of Ukrainian civilians, armed forces and young Russian soldiers serving as cannon fodder, rests squarely on the shoulders of the man once admired for having rescued Russia from the spiral the alcoholic former Russian leader Boris Yeltsin had condemned it to.

But the international community must start shouldering its share of the blame for the conflict and be careful when scripts and ideas like this rollout of Washington DC, Langley, or whichever bar on embassy row where such bad ideas are conceived.

We also need to have a short tolerance for dictators, not letting them rule for decades because our companies make too much money in their markets or because they serve a purpose. Appeasing a dictator ends badly; the longer he is in power the more difficult and bloodier it is to get him out. Hitler, Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Assad (still around)... Much like a stain.

In this case, there are three people who bear some responsibility for the state of affairs in which Ukraine and the world find themselves. The first is former US secretary of state and national security advisor Henry Kissinger.

It's easy to find fault with the only centenarian who has seen World War II and shaped US foreign policy since. Technically, you can blame almost everything on Kissinger. Unfortunately, this issue is a double-edged sword.

Kissinger wrote a famous Washington Post op-ed in 2014 and was very clear that Ukraine needed to remain neutral. For all practical purposes, the man predicted, nay, warned the US administration of the consequences of their actions of baiting Putin on Ukraine.

However, Kissinger's fault lies in his obstinacy on his legacy, China. Much like Obama continues to meddle to preserve his legacies, such as the Iran agreement, Russia, and so on.

It's easy to understand Kissinger's trauma with Asia. But for the relationship with China, be it Vietnam or the Korean War, he has always been in crisis mode on the continent.

Therefore, it's easy to understand that he would promote the idea that the US and China must eventually divide the world into a Sinosphere and a US-dominated area, of course promoting US dominance of Europe and NATO.

Kissinger has a lot of die-hard followers who are still influential and a part of the US system and who were appalled with Trump's idea of pulling the US out of NATO. It isn't surprising, while US President Joe Biden focused on combating China and ignoring NATO at the start of his term, suddenly NATO, almost dead, is now the cornerstone of US foreign policy.

Kissinger's cross will be leaving the US establishment still ambiguous on its policies toward China – one of the reasons why the US establishment may have wanted to goad Russia into a conflict that never should have happened. Losing NATO and Europe would have been too scary. Pivoting to Asia, was a non-starter. Where Obama had failed, Biden could not succeed.

Obama's love of replacing dictators with revolutions and online perception management is historical. When he was drawn into a conflict in Libya and Syria he was quick to withdraw.

He was quick to start the US retreat from Afghanistan and Iraq, which eventually ended with Trump and Biden following through with the retreat. But none of Obama's efforts to spread

peace by turmoil were successful. What started as “Yes, we can!” ended up as “Oops, we did it again!”

In Egypt, the Arab Spring deposed former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and after a brief flirtation with the Muslim Brotherhood at the helm, the US had to get a military dictator to preserve order.

So it went with the rest of the Arab Spring countries. Arab Spring’s gains have become the world’s nightmare. Yemen is a wasteland today and Tunisia a constitutional mess.

Obama’s role in not heeding to good advice in Ukraine is another cross he must bear. While the Maidan Revolution followed the script of the Arab Spring and brought real US-approved democracy, he neither armed Ukraine nor included it in NATO, nor did he encourage their neutrality and a truce with Russia.

Finally, former German chancellor Angela Merkel. If there is anyone guilty of knowing what men like Putin are capable of and continuing to appease them, it is Merkel.

Despite her experience with East Germany and the horrors of Soviet rule, as well as stories and first-hand experience of the KGB and FSB, Merkel continued to increase Germany’s dependence on Russian oil, gas and coal.

She allowed the EU to be a welcoming place for corrupt Russian billionaires, as well as Putin himself. All her foreign policies over 16 years has had to be undone by German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz, her successor, in two weeks. In her last few weeks, she tried to push the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China, a real feat, aimed at appeasing Chinese President Xi Jinping and China.

The world has changed and whether we misjudged Ukraine’s ability to resistor the continuing war is just a part of the script, we shall see.

While Putin’s apparent endgame is to replace Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv, it is possible that the US endgame is replacing Putin in Moscow or forcing his own people to do it. Meanwhile, the Biden administration does its best to stay out of the conflict, while pushing European allies into the path of danger.

For the sake of the argument, what happens if Putin is ousted? Do we deal with another dictator? A wild west Russia of the 1990’s? What happens to all the arms we are sending Ukraine? Do they end up in Somalia, Yemen, Lebanon or Afghanistan? With all our good intentions, are we arming the Islamic jihadists of the future in today’s war against Russia at Europe’s doorstep?

All this while Ukrainians senselessly die on a Cold War chessboard, which should have been thrashed decades ago with the Warsaw pact. Yeah, and we need a new world order.

The author is the president of Glocal Cities. He is a political researcher, consultant and entrepreneur, and has worked in Europe, the Middle East and Africa for two decades. He has had

the privilege to interact with leaders, decision-makers and to work closely with people from all walks of life all over the Middle East.

*Vas Shenoy is an Indian national resident in Italy. Vas has over 22 years of leadership and entrepreneurial experience across a wide range of disciplines including pharmaceuticals, technology, renewable energy, strategic consulting, not-for-profit and development in over 30 countries. Vas has worked closely and continues to advise various governments Europe, Middle East and Africa.*

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#### **41. Palestine tops Chilean president's agenda in first statements after taking office**

Middle East Monitor, 19 Mar 22, Eman Abusidu

Last Friday, thirty-six-year-old Gabriel Boric, the youngest Chilean president ever to have been elected, officially became the president of Chile after winning Chile's presidential elections last December. His victory represents a major revival for Chile's progressive left and a new era for Chile and neighbouring countries. Boric began his inaugural speech by mentioning late president, Salvador Allende: "And as Salvador Allende predicted almost fifty years ago, we are opening the grand avenues where free men – free men and free women – will go forward to build a better society." It was as if he wanted to announce to Chile and the whole world that his presidential era would be an era of hope and change.

The Palestinian cause featured on the president's agenda as soon as he took over the presidency. "We are monitoring what is happening in Ukraine, such as the attack on a children's hospital in Mariupol or the attack that targeted a military base 20 kilometres from Poland. We sympathise with the Ukrainian people because of the war. However, there are a lot of other regions that witness other scourges – Palestine, for example. Nonetheless, we see little solidarity," explained Boric during his first interview on Chile's Canal 13, on the popular programme Las Caras de la Moneda. Boric called on the international community to show solidarity with Palestine as it has shown with Ukraine: "Palestine has been occupied for a long time, and we do not know much about what is happening there."

Boric's statement is neither new nor unexpected, as Boric has always been a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and a defender of human rights in the occupied territories. Boric branded Israel a "genocidal" and "murderous" state more than once. In addition, Boric has always supported the boycott of products from illegal Israeli settlements. In July 2020, Boric, alongside the Chilean Senate, approved a resolution calling on the government to enact legislation that would ban all Israeli settlement products, prohibit companies involved in the Israeli occupation from benefiting from any agreement or bid signed by Chile and apply tourism guidelines for Israel and Palestine that would not allow the promotion of trips to Israel using pictures of East Jerusalem or Bethlehem "among other Palestinian cities". Boric was one of the supporters who voted for this resolution.

Speaking to MEMO, Director of the Palestinian community in Chile Maher Pichara backed Boric's statements on Canal 13: "It is the reality. Many reports have been issued by international

organisations confirming the existence of crimes against humanity committed by Israel, such as apartheid and the persecution of Palestinians. Unfortunately, we have never seen any reaction from the international community," he affirms. "For example, last year was the deadliest for Palestinians since Israeli security forces killed at least 313 Palestinians, including 71 children, according to a report of Israeli human rights organisation B' Tselem. In contrast, there was no major reaction from the international community."

According to Dr Kamal Cumsille, professor of Arab Studies at Chile University: "The media doesn't shine a light on Palestine unless the situation worsens. This week, for example, Zionist settlers attacked a school in Bethlehem. Did we see this on the news or TV? While at the same time, they showed daily that Russia had bombed schools in Ukraine. Today we see how media apologies to the Ukrainian resistance; however, they called the Palestinian resistance terrorists." Dr Cumsille confirmed to MEMO that Boric's victory would have more than a positive impact on the Palestinian community in Chile as well as the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian community in Chile rushed to congratulate the elected president after his victory in December, as well as when he took office, via a formal statement on their official social media pages: "We wish the best of luck and success to our new president who took office today. Together with ministers and parliamentarians, we will govern the destinies of our country for the next four years. We commit ourselves to continue working for Chileans and Palestinians."

Boric's win is considered a victory for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian community in Chile, home to half a million Palestinian immigrants. "The Palestinian community in Chile is grateful to those who express their support for them. Our community here has great support. Therefore, the position of President Boric today will consolidate this support. In his presidential candidacy, he was very clear that he will not only maintain the recognition of the Palestinian state and international law, but he will also support the sanctions and commercialisation of goods and services that come from Israeli settlements," Pichara expressed.

Chile is now under Boric's leadership for the next four years. Chile, Palestine and other countries are hoping he can bring and inspire change. Everyone is betting on him because his new government may shape the future of neighbouring countries, and even abroad. This is the change we hope to see soon.

*Eman Abusidu is MEMO's correspondent in Brazil.*

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#### **42. This is not the time to brand Vladimir Putin an 'evil madman'**

Al Jazeera, 19 Mar 22, Farhan Mujahid Chak

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth week, we routinely hear words like "evil," "unhinged" and "unstable" being used to describe Vladimir Putin. Such labelling is not uncommon in realpolitik. It is a tactic in the ever-present rivalries of international politics – to demonise, caricature and demoralise political opponents, while simultaneously reassuring those on your own ideological flank. After all, who wants to be on the side of a lunatic?

Whether it's describing Saddam Hussein as a "madman," Gaddafi as "insane," or Putin as a "megalomaniac," such caricatures serve broader political objectives by simplifying any conflict into a clear binary of "good" versus "evil".

The Israeli state often indulges in such framing to delegitimise Palestinians – even questioning their intelligence, by repeating ad nauseum the trope that they "never lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity". Likewise, apologists for the occupation, militarisation and colonisation of Kashmir in India designate Kashmiris demanding fulfilment of UN Security Council resolutions as "terrorists," "secessionists" or "anti-nationals."

Such framing is now being tactfully employed to explain away the Russian invasion of Ukraine – a manipulative discourse construction that facilitates a fog of war.

Of course, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a monstrosity. As morally repugnant as the war crimes in Syria, brutal dispossession of Palestinians or militarised occupation of Kashmir. Yet, simplistic framings that deem Putin a "madman" without a purpose inhibit our ability to see the bigger picture and do something to prevent further violence.

In other words, now that the war is here, we should ignore all attempts to frame it merely as a showdown between "good" and "evil", and focus instead on figuring out what steps may be taken not only to end it, but also to prevent it from causing flare-ups in other hotspots across the globe – and possibly triggering another world war.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine – regardless of its rationality or purpose – will inevitably have an impact on three contentious issues: the war in Syria, the Iran nuclear deal and the US-China rivalry.

First and foremost, Russia's invasion of Ukraine will have consequences for Syria. The impact of sanctions on its economy may cause Russia to pull money and military forces from Syria. An embattled and isolated Putin may also decide to double down on his efforts to turn Syria into a satellite state akin to Belarus. In either scenario, the US may respond by starting to funnel resources to the Syrian resistance.

For some time now, Syrian opposition figures have been working to revive their decade-old campaign against al-Assad. In early February, for example, they came together at a major meeting in Doha, Qatar and vowed to "reunite". And after the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, they were very quick to forcefully condemn Putin's move. Meanwhile, al-Assad is said to have sent scores of fighters to Ukraine to assist Russia's military intervention. All in all, there is much reason to suspect the events in Ukraine may trigger a flare-up in Syria's relatively dormant conflict.

Therefore, as the world watches the developments in Ukraine, it should also keep one eye on Syria – to ensure the war in Europe does not translate into more suffering for the people of Syria and more insecurity across the Middle East.

Second, the Russian invasion of Ukraine put the negotiations for a new nuclear deal between the West and Iran into overdrive. US President Biden is now more desperate than ever before to

secure a new deal with Iran, curb its nuclear programme, and most importantly, put Iranian oil back on the market amid an energy crisis exacerbated by the Ukraine invasion.

Just days ago, the future of the deal was in serious jeopardy after Russia reportedly said that it would block any deal that would not include guarantees that Western sanctions on Russia over Ukraine would not impede its future dealings with Iran.

On March 15, however, Moscow announced that it received written guarantees from Washington, signalling that the deal may, in fact, soon be completed. For its part, Iran said it is acting as a “strong, independent party” in the negotiations and has Russia’s full support. While these are somewhat promising developments for the future of the region, it is still less than certain that an isolated Russia crippled by sanctions would allow the deal to go forward and Iranian oil to re-enter global markets. The world should keep its eyes firmly on the Iranian front, as if Russia’s Ukraine invasion leads to the demise of the nuclear deal, it would signal more insecurity and conflict for the Gulf and the wider region.

Third, Russia’s war in Ukraine will likely have a major impact on the US-China rivalry. For now, China appears well positioned to gain from Russia’s aggression in Ukraine on multiple fronts, which can cause the US to assume a more combative posture against its arch rival.

Indeed, Beijing can now not only provide an economic lifeline to Russia, and thus make Moscow much more dependent on itself, but also take advantage of the new dynamics that put the US on the back foot to further its interests in other areas. Some analysts, for example, raised concerns that China may unilaterally act vis a vis Taiwan, after witnessing “the West’s weak-kneed response in Ukraine”. While a Ukraine-style Taiwan invasion is unlikely for various reasons, China may assume a more aggressive posture on other fronts if the US continues to imply Chinese responsibility in Russia’s actions.

The emboldening of China, and the US’s reaction to it, may also lead to further escalations in the Indo-Pacific region. The US has been using its ally India as a strategic bulwark against China for too long, and any new global power play involving China, Russia and the US may result in renewed conflict in regional hot-points, such as Kashmir. India’s attempts to resist aligning itself against Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion already upset its Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) allies. The US and other parties to the dialogue (Australia and Japan) may now demand India to assume a tougher stance if not against Russia, then at least against China. All this may further heighten tensions in the region and lead to violence.

All in all, there are indications that Russia’s war in Ukraine may heighten tensions in various conflict zones, trigger new confrontations, and put the entire planet on a trajectory towards further violence.

Now, therefore, is not the time to complain about what an “evil madman” Putin is, or how “irrational” his actions in Ukraine are. It is not the time to invest in narratives that firmly frame our side as “good” and the other as “evil”. It is time to emphasise de-escalation, intensify confidence-building mechanisms, invest in peace-building and collectively work towards a

have surged among the 370 million children who lost access to nutritious meals served daily at schools in at least 150 countries.

“The ‘three Cs’ – conflict, climate change and COVID-19’s economic impact – have created a perfect storm that requires a global response,” Yahia said.

“The cost of doing nothing will be measured in lives lost, increased destabilization and human migration, and squandered productivity and human potential.”

Clearly, urgent assistance is needed to help protect the most vulnerable populations of the Middle East and other regions from hunger and malnutrition.

Fortunately, it is not too late for rich countries, philanthropists and wealthy individuals to increase funding for the programs that are attempting to address the problem.

*Jumana Khamis is the Freelance Writer at Freelance based in United Arab Emirates. She received a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication from American University of Sharjah.*

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#### **44. India needs no history lessons from US on its decisions in Russia-Ukraine war**

Bloomberg Quint (India), 19 Mar 22, Dr. Tara Kartha

A recent press briefing by White House spokesperson Jen Psaki went viral for all the wrong reasons in India. In answer to a question about a Russian offer to India for discounted crude oil and the US reaction to it, she said while such a move was not against sanctions, India needed to think about “where you want to stand when the history books are written in this moment in time”.

After disregarding history entirely for decades, even while supporting ‘just wars’, it seems the US government is now, as always, set to teach others on what side to pick in the ongoing ‘non-war’ in Ukraine.

**Ukraine has Not Received Anything but Words from Biden**

The US stance on Ukraine has been curious to say the least. After its intelligence clearly foresaw the war as early as 16 January, the President said almost immediately thereafter that no American troops would fight the war in Ukraine. He did, however, warn of sanctions of an unspecified extent. Since Russia has already been under sanctions for years, that was hardly likely to make much of an impression.

Putin's troops, therefore, invaded Ukraine a month later on 20 February. On 23 February, Biden responded with prayers for the Ukrainian people and not much else. Later, he even promised the American people that the US would not change its nuclear alert levels after Russia threatened to use nuclear weapons in response to American and European threats.

Though a raft of sanctions was announced—including by various industry heads—the US did not actually stop buying oil from Russia, which continued as of the first week of March. Though, it's not a lot: just 3 per cent of America's crude oil comes in from Russia. That is obviously due to fear Is the West Taking Ukraine for a Ride?

The Europeans are buying Russian oil. Italy's IMB, for instance, is functioning as usual. So, essentially, the war being 'fought' by the toughest sanctions ever seen since the Second World War, none of which were listed before President Putin actually invaded.

In sum, the threat of sanctions was never meant to deter, only to punish. Now, look at the weapons being delivered by the West. They are primarily the very same arsenal that was once supplied to Afghanistan, including a range of shoulder-fired weapons like anti-aircraft Stingers and anti-tank weapons like the Javelin. That has since progressed up the technology ladder to include Switchblade kamikaze drones. However, in operational terms the arsenal is identical to that used against the Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan.

Simply put, the Ukrainians are to fight to the death for US interests. Learning from history? Hardly, and certainly it places every action by Washington on the wrong side of whatever history will be written in the future. of poll ratings, with gas prices soaring 70 % since Biden came to office.

#### America's Own Dark History in Bangladesh, Cuba, & Elsewhere

Let's take other 'history lessons'. As Pakistan unleashed its brutal genocide on the then East Pakistan in 1971, a flood of some 10 million refugees fled into India. Delhi reached out for help from the 'international community', to no avail. The US indifference, and indeed its decided tilt towards Pakistan, was condemned by its own diplomats in Dacca as moral bankruptcy. History lessons anywhere hardly ever record this criminal indifference. That is because history is usually written by the victors and the big powers.

Don't forget that at the end of the Ukrainian adventure—whenever that will be—it will be Moscow that will be painted as the blackest villain. Not that its actions are not criminal. They are. But to hark back again to history, only consider the obvious example, the near nuclear disaster engendered by the Soviet Union's attempt to get itself a foothold in Cuba and the whole story of the Bay of Pigs.

Don't even forget that the US and the Soviets equally are responsible for the spate of 'small wars' in various parts of the globe as each patronised the most irresponsible governments, and worse, terrorist groups.

#### Lest We Forget What the US Did in Iraq

More history? Remember that in the 1980s, Iraq had the second largest economy in the Arab world, after Saudi Arabia and the third largest in the Middle East. It had a well developed centrally planned economy, and—most importantly—was entirely 'secular'. In short, it was in stark contrast to what was to come years later, in the form of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Certainly Iraq was no democracy, and the Ba'ath was corrupt, but its people not just remained alive, but

lived well. Even more interesting is that the Weapons of Mass Destruction that were supposedly the basis for the US invasion that's right, an invasion had been destroyed years ago, or probably never existed.

Another bit of history, with a remarkable resonance today, is this. US Ambassador April Glaspie met with Saddam Hussein for the first time in 1990 and said "I admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait....We hope you can solve this problem using any suitable methods ...All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly". This was on 25 July. On 2 August, Saddam invaded Kuwait. That was the end of him.

It pays to read history, especially if you are going to invade a country. Too bad for Putin that he missed his history lessons.

### India is Correct in Deciding Its Own Role in History

It is worth asking what India stand to lose by being as it said, "on the wrong side of history'. The answer is nothing very much. Our core interests - the defence of India and the provision of sorely needed defence equipment- is served by not entirely siding with the west, even as we move to diversify our sources of defence trade and production.

Datasets have indicated that our imports from Russia have fallen by 47 per cent (2017-2021) and may yet fall further. If others are willing to offer joint production and subsequent export of high tech missiles like the BrahMos, so be it. But it is for us to decide.

Too many analysts are warning of India turning against 'global opinion' with regard to Ukraine.

First, it is not global at all, with a considerable part of Asia having strong reservations about just who is the worst country in this nightmare.

Second, there's not a lot that India can do other than advice all concerned to stop the fighting. It's not just Moscow who's not listening. As more weapons arrive in Ukraine through the 'generosity' of the United States, it is perhaps best to stay away from the firing.

There is one option though; and that is for India and China to get together to persuade all concerned to stop the murder of Ukrainians. And the icing on top is that such a joint mediation effort would certainly make history.

*Dr Tara Kartha is a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS).*

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## **CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS**

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 24, 2022

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### **COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

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1. The Financial Times led international reporting on the Taliban's reversal to allow teenage girls to attend secondary schools despite repeated assurances they could resume classes. The decision sparked international condemnation.
2. Reuters led wire service reporting that the IRGC not only attended the 21-23 Mar Qatar Defense Exhibit, but also had a booth and was promoting its missile technology for sale. Reuters noted the irony that the IRGC was flouting its wares in the country with the largest US military base in the Middle East, while AP questioned why Qatar would even allow the IRGC to attend the exhibit and promote Iranian arms sales since the country is under extensive economic sanctions.
3. Bloomberg reported President Biden plans to request \$813.3 billion in national security spending -- including \$773 billion for the Pentagon -- in the federal budget he will send to Congress on Monday. The proposed 4% increase from this year's budget includes money to purchase 61 F-35 fighters, initial procurement of the B-21 bomber and two Virginia-class submarines.
4. The New York Times reported the White House has assembled a team of national security officials to sketch out scenarios of how the United States and its allies should respond if Russia uses chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in Ukraine. The team is also looking at options if Russia extends the war into neighboring nations, including Moldova and Georgia. The subject will likely be discussed at today's NATO leadership meeting in Brussels.

### **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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#### **TOP NEWS**

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- 1. Taliban reverses decision to allow girls to attend secondary school in Afghanistan**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Benjamin Parkin

The Taliban have reversed a decision to allow teenage girls back to secondary school despite repeated assurances they could resume classes from Wednesday, sparking international condemnation and leaving desperate students stranded outside campuses.

## **2. Iran's Revolutionary Guards tout missile prowess at Doha exhibition**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Andrew Mills

Commanders of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) drank tea, nibbled dates and displayed models of Iranian missiles at a defense show in Qatar, a Gulf Arab state which is home to the largest American military base in the region.

## **3. White House to seek \$813.3 billion National Security Budget**

Bloomberg News, 23 Mar 22, Tony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

President Joe Biden plans to request \$813.3 billion in national security spending -- including \$773 billion for the Pentagon -- in the federal budget he will send to Congress on Monday, according to officials familiar with the plan. It's an increase of \$31 billion, or 4%, from approved spending for the current fiscal year and about \$43 billion more than the White House budget office had projected a year ago for fiscal 2023.

## **4. U.S. makes contingency plans in case Russia uses its most powerful weapons**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, Helene Cooper and Julian E. Barnes

The White House has quietly assembled a team of national security officials to sketch out scenarios of how the United States and its allies should respond if President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia -- frustrated by his lack of progress in Ukraine or determined to warn Western nations against intervening in the war -- unleashes his stockpiles of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

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### NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (23 Mar):** Education is a human right. The United States rejects the Taliban's excuses for reversing their commitment to the people of Afghanistan that all Afghans would be able to return to school at all levels today.

**Secretary General of the U.N., António Guterres; @antonioguterres (23 Mar):** The failure by Taliban authorities to reopen schools for girls above 6th grade is profoundly disappointing & damaging for Afghanistan. I urge the de facto authorities to open schools for all students without any further delay.

**U.S. Special Representative Thomas West; @US4AfghanPeace (23 Mar):** I join millions of Afghan families today in expressing shock and deep disappointment with the Taliban's decision to not allow women and girls to return to school above grade 6. Education is a fundamental right of all human beings and is essential to Afghanistan's economic growth and stability. This is a betrayal of public commitments to the Afghan people and the international community. The

Taliban have made clear that ALL Afghan citizens have a right to education. For the sake of the country's future and its relations with the international community, I would urge the Taliban to live up to their commitments to their people.

**Oman Embassy, Washington; @OmanEmbassyUSA (23 Mar):** HE Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense met with the General Commander of @CENTCOM on the side line of the 16th meeting of Oman-US Joint Military Committee, they discussed the development of relations & cooperation between the two countries. @MG\_MOD\_OMAN

**U.S. Embassy Syria; @USEmbassySyria (23 Mar):** Today marks the 3rd anniversary of the defeat of ISIS's so-called territorial "caliphate." The US & @coalition are committed to ensuring ISIS's lasting defeat & the US stands behind the push for accountability, such as the al-Jumaily conviction in November. #MarchToAccountability

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## IRAN

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### **5. Under sweeping sanctions, Iran hawks its weapons in Qatar**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Iran, under sweeping economic sanctions, was hawking weapons on Wednesday at a Qatari defense exhibit, a surprising sight at the major conference also showcasing American companies and fighter jets.

### **6. Iran's Revolutionary Guards warn Israel over more attacks**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22

Hossein Salami, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, issued a warning to Israel against more attacks targeting Iranian forces in the region. On March 13, Iran launched ballistic missiles into northern Iraq, claiming the target was a strategic center for Israel. The attack was in retaliation for two Iranian soldiers killed by an Israeli strike in Syria. In total, 12 missiles were launched, and Iraqi officials condemned the attack.

### **7. Russia turns to Iran for assistance with aviation sanctions, but can it do much to help?**

Forbes, 23 Mar 22, Dominic Dudley

Moscow is looking to Iran to help it figure out how to cope with the debilitating sanctions on its aviation sector. Speaking on March 22 at a meeting of the economic policy committee in the upper house of the Russian parliament, transport minister Vitaly Savelyev said "Russia was being guided by Iran's experience of how to service aircraft in a similar situation."

### **8. Iran's foreign minister says nuclear deal closer 'than ever'**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic and world powers are closer than ever to reviving a 2015 nuclear deal.

### **9. U.S. says it is unclear if issues in Iran talks will be resolved**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday the United States and its allies have made progress in Iran nuclear talks but issues remain, and it is unclear if they will be resolved.

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## IRAQ

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### **10. Halabja anniversary takes political turn**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22, Winthrop Rodgers

Snow flurries fell in Halabja on a cold and subdued day of remembrance, marking 34 years since the chemical attack perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's Baath Regime. The city's citizens usually come out in force to honor the victims of the genocide against the Kurdish people, but most stayed at home this year. They boycotted events organized by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a sign of anger at Kurdish and Iraqi politicians who pay what they consider lip service to them on the anniversary and then fail to live up to their promises.

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## SYRIA

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### **11. Iran welcomes Syria ties with Arabs, says nuclear deal close**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Albert Aji

The foreign ministers of Iran and Syria, two allies of Russia, discussed the war in Ukraine and other developments during a meeting in Damascus on Wednesday. Syria's top diplomat said Moscow is defending its people.

### **12. Foreign children risk languishing in Syria for decades: Charity**

Agence France-Presse, 23 Mar 22

Children held in Syrian camps for relatives of suspected extremist fighters may remain stuck there for another 30 years, unless the pace of repatriations accelerates, Save the Children said Wednesday.

### **13. 'It's a kind of revenge': Damascus suburb demolished as Assad builds a 'new Syria'**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Kaamil Ahmed, Mais Katt, Mohammad Bassiki and Bashar Deeb

The Syrian regime is bulldozing former rebel-held neighborhoods in Damascus under the guise of mine clearance to make space for a "new Syria" of upmarket new building developments and pristine gardens.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **14. Taliban leaves shocked students in tears by unexpectedly extending ban on girls in school**

CBS News, 23 Mar 22, Ahmad Mukhtar

The Taliban's de-facto government in Afghanistan announced Wednesday that schools would remain closed to high school-aged girls across the country until a plan is drawn up that will allow

for their education to resume in accordance with Islamic Sharia law and Afghan culture. The news came as a surprise after an earlier indication from the country's education ministry that all Afghan children would be able to return to classrooms, and it left many students in tears.

### **15. Taliban orders that high schools remain closed to girls is a betrayal of commitments, U.S. says**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

The U.S. State Department on Wednesday said the Taliban's announcement that high schools in Afghanistan would remain closed for girls is a betrayal of public commitments to the Afghan people and international community.

### **16. Family of killed photojournalist Danish Siddiqui take Taliban leaders to ICC**

NPR, 23 Mar 22, Robert Griffiths

The family of Pulitzer Prize-winning Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui, who was killed last year in Afghanistan, filed a formal complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Tuesday to investigate his killing and bring to trial the Taliban's leadership for "committing war crimes."

### **17. Silence replaces old folk tunes in historic quarter of Kabul**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Samya Kullab

Nabih Bakhsh's family has been part of Afghanistan's musical tradition for generations. His great-grandfather was a musician in the court of the Afghan emperor 150 years ago. His father was a famous maestro and singer. Bakhsh too carried on the family art, performing and running an instrument repair shop. Until now.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **18. Pakistan showcases its latest equipment during military parade**

Defense News, 23 Mar 22, Usman Ansari

Pakistan showcased its latest defense equipment at its annual Pakistan Day Parade on Wednesday, highlighting ongoing efforts to maintain a credible conventional deterrent against India.

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## YEMEN

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### **19. Senior Yemeni military leader killed in car bombing in Aden - sources**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Mohamed Ghobari and Reyam Mokhashef

A car bombing killed a senior Yemeni military leader and three of his entourage in the southern port city of Aden on Wednesday, three security sources and a local television station said.

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## EGYPT

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## **20. Egypt asks for IMF support to help it weather Ukraine crisis**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Heba Saleh

Egypt has asked for support from the IMF, the fund said, as the country struggles to weather the economic impact of Russia's invasion on Ukraine.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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## **21. Qatar signs deal with Leonardo for first ever Navy Operations Center**

Breaking Defense, 23 Mar 22, Agnes Helou

The Qatari Navy has signed a new contract with Italy's Leonardo to develop a Naval Operation Center (NOC) for the military service, the first of its kind in the country.

## **22. Ukraine War ignites Israeli debate over purpose of a Jewish State**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, Isabel Kershner

Many of the refugees milling about the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel one recent morning had endured harrowing journeys from Ukraine, and in many cases were forced to leave close family members behind. These were the lucky ones. Others were not as fortunate.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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## **23. Top Russian military leaders repeatedly decline calls from U.S., prompting fears of 'sleepwalking into war'**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, John Hudson

Repeated attempts by the United States' top defense and military leaders to speak with their Russian counterparts have been rejected by Moscow for the last month, leaving the world's two largest nuclear powers in the dark about explanations for military movements and raising fears of a major miscalculation or battlefield accident.

## **24. Inside a rare US meeting with a Russian general in Moscow**

CNN, 23 Mar 22, Barbara Starr and Jeremy Herb

A rare face-to-face meeting between Russian and US military officials last week led to an "outburst" of emotion from a normally stoic Russian general, a "revealing moment" that the Americans present believe hinted at larger morale problems in Russia's military, according to a closely held US military readout of what transpired.

## **25. After Iraq and Afghanistan, Marine Corps reserve turns to deterrence**

Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Alex J. Rouhandeh and Naveed Jamali

Four weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, Russia continues to struggle against its lesser-equipped adversary. As with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, even the most dominant military forces can falter when ill-equipped for the situation at hand. Lieutenant General David Bellon, commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, told Newsweek that as the United States finds

itself in an era of great power competition, bolstering the capabilities of the armed forces should be seen as a priority.

#### **26. Army approves reduced physical fitness standards for women, older soldiers**

The Hill, 23 Mar 22, Ellen Mitchell

Following a three-year review, the Army has scrapped plans to use the same physical fitness test for all soldiers, choosing instead to have some reduced standards to allow women and older soldiers to pass, the service announced Wednesday.

#### **27. Israel blocked Ukraine from buying Pegasus spyware, fearing Russia's anger**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Stephanie Kirchgaessner

Israel blocked Ukraine from buying NSO Group's Pegasus spyware for fear that Russian officials would be angered by the sale of the sophisticated hacking tool to a regional foe, according to people familiar with the matter. The revelation, following a joint investigation by the Guardian and Washington Post, offers new insight into the way Israel's relationship with Russia has at times undermined Ukraine's offensive capabilities and contradicted US priorities.

#### **28. US military members who survive Ukraine War may face 'consequences' at home**

Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Tom O'Connor and Naveed Jamali

Members of the U.S. military who travel to Ukraine to join the fight against Russian troops in a grueling war and live to tell the tale may return home only to face administrative or legal ramifications.

#### **29. From Afghanistan to Ukraine: How a team from Silicon Valley is helping evacuate people from war**

Vanity Fair, 23 Mar 22, Nick Bilton

The San Francisco Peninsula is now home to a slew of private security companies filled with ex-military, former international counterterrorism experts, and government officials who were in charge of cyber-warfare with other nation states. The job of these security outfits is to protect the well-being and safety of not only the richest people on the planet, but also the biggest tech companies on earth. Roderick Jones, who founded one such company, Concentric, works at the center of this growing industry. Before moving to Silicon Valley to work with some of the most prominent CEOs on the planet, Jones used to work for Scotland Yard's Special Branch on international terrorism and also protected a high-profile British cabinet member.

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ADJACENT AORs

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#### **30. US mulls larger permanent force in Europe, sends more missiles to Ukraine**

Defense One, 23 Mar 22, Tara Copp

The latest U.S. planeloads of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons for Ukraine are expected to arrive in Europe this week, then be rushed into the country via ground routes, a senior defense official told reporters Wednesday.

### **31. As allies meet, splits emerge in NATO about how to deter Russia**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Michael Birnbaum, Karoun Demirjian and John Hudson

As President Biden landed in Brussels on Wednesday for urgent talks about Russia's war on Ukraine, splits were emerging within NATO and in Washington about how to deter the Kremlin from further escalation. Allied leaders are discussing whether it is best to keep Russia guessing about what will trigger a bigger military response or to outline precisely what would draw NATO into a conflict.

### **32. NATO: 7,000 to 15,000 Russian troops dead in Ukraine**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Nebi Qena and Cara Anna

NATO estimated on Wednesday that 7,000 to 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in four weeks of war in Ukraine, where fierce resistance from the country's defenders has denied Moscow the lightning victory it sought. By way of comparison, Russia lost about 15,000 troops over 10 years in Afghanistan.

### **33. Weapons for Ukraine's fight against Russia flow through small Polish border towns**

Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Drew Hinshaw, Joe Parkinson and Nancy A. Youssef

RZESZOW, Poland—Day and night, truck convoys rumble through once quiet Polish border towns and villages. Giant military transport planes land several times an hour on the single runway at a local airport. Their cargo: weapons for the Ukrainian forces fighting to beat back Russia's invading army.

### **34. NATO likely to approve more troops for its eastern flank, says Stoltenberg**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Sabine Siebold and John Chalmers

NATO will likely decide on Thursday to ramp up military forces on its eastern flank, the head of the alliance said, while also warning Russia against using nuclear weapons after its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

### **35. Blinken says U.S. assesses Russian forces committed "war crimes" in Ukraine**

CBS News, 23 Mar 22, Caroline Linton

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that the U.S. assesses that Russian forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine and will work to hold them accountable.

### **36. Britain sending thousands more missiles to Ukraine**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Britain will send thousands more missiles to Ukraine's government as Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged Western allies to boost the supply of military aid to Ukraine.

### **37. Romania's Prime Minister on how NATO can navigate this 'stark new reality'**

TIME, 23 Mar 22, Charlie Campbell

On Thursday, Romania's prime minister will join U.S. President Joe Biden and other world leaders for an extraordinary NATO meeting and E.U. summit in Brussels. Biden's goal, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters, "is to meet in person face-to-face and talk about and assess where we are at this point in the conflict." Ciucă, however, is blunter about the stakes, which are no less than "the future of the democratic world and the rules-based international order."

### **38. Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparks fierce debate in China**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Kathrin Hille

China's government has leaned towards Russia by backing Moscow's complaints about Nato expansion and refusing to call its actions an invasion. But while Beijing's censors are working hard to suppress any criticism of that position, the conflict has ignited heated controversy both among Chinese policy experts and the public.

### **39. Shabaab attacks international hub in Mogadishu where U.S. Embassy is located**

Long War Journal, 23 Mar 22, Andrew Tobin

On Wednesday, Al Shabaab conducted an attack against Halane camp near Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu. The camp houses the U.S. embassy, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the headquarters for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and most foreign diplomats based in Mogadishu.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **40. Iran's enemies in the Middle East are closing ranks**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, David Gardner

The stop-start efforts to resuscitate the landmark nuclear deal, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran signed with the US and five world powers in 2015 may be in danger of meeting another dead end.

### **41. Iran needs a cushion, and Europe needs gas**

Foreign Policy, 23 Mar 22, Alex Vatanka

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a watershed moment on so many levels for so many countries. Existing political, economic, energy, and transportation channels are being affected across western Eurasia. Countries are maneuvering to minimize the war's detrimental impact while new trade synergies are being formed at a rapid pace. Most recently, Germany and Qatar signed a long-term energy partnership for the delivery of Qatari natural gas as the Germans look to reduce dependence on Russian supplies. Qatar's reserves are located in the world's largest gas field, which it shares with its northern neighbor, Iran.

### **42. We put Iran's Revolutionary Guard on the terrorist list. Biden must keep it there.**

The Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Victoria Coates and Robert Greenway

Multiple reports have suggested that the Biden administration is considering taking Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) off the U.S. government's Foreign Terrorist

Organization list. As the senior Trump administration officials who led the process that recommended the designation in 2019, we feel compelled to explain why taking them off the list as a concession to tempt Tehran back into a nuclear proliferation deal would be dangerous and would undermine the deal itself.

**43. The Taliban has broken a promise to Afghan girls. The U.S. must hold it accountable.**  
Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

Each year, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a nongovernmental organization, publishes the World Happiness Report, which ranks various countries by their sense of well-being, based on Gallup World Poll data. Afghanistan ranked last in the new edition, published March 18 — all too unsurprisingly. Beset by poverty, government human rights violations and continued terrorist attacks, the Afghan people have had little to feel good about since August 2021, when the United States withdrew its remaining troops amid violent chaos, the U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed and the Islamist Taliban movement seized power. Now comes word of yet another crushing disappointment.

**44. Afghanistan's struggle: it isn't just the Taliban**  
The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

When 98% of the population is short of food, all that is left is hope. In Afghanistan there is not much of that either. On Wednesday, the Taliban abruptly reversed their decision to let girls return to secondary school; the last-minute chaos appears to reflect internal disagreements. Tears fell as pupils arrived in classrooms for the first time since the Taliban takeover last August, only for their dreams to be shattered once more.

**45. Afghan evacuees are stuck in legal limbo. Here's how to help them.**  
Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Krish O'Mara Vignarajah

Even as Americans have been riveted by the war in Ukraine, another humanitarian emergency looms closer to home for the tens of thousands of Afghans who fled their nation after the Taliban takeover this past year.

**46. Madeleine Albright shaped a generation of foreign policy leaders**  
Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, David Ignatius

Madeleine K. Albright, who passed away on Wednesday, shaped a generation of foreign policy leaders — gently and usually with a smile. She knew every senior official, mentored many of them, and managed to say a cheery word even to people who took “dour” as a compliment.

**47. A realistic plan for peace for Ukraine and Russia**  
TIME, 23 Mar 22, Michael O'Hanlon

As the tragic war in Ukraine has now driven roughly 10 million from their homes and killed many thousands, with no end in sight and no real prospect of near-term victory for either side, it is increasingly necessary to focus on a possible peace plan.

**48. Ukraine's government is willing to make big concessions to end the war, but it doubts that Russia is negotiating in good faith**

The Economist, 23 Mar 22

At a secret location in a blacked-out high-rise in the suburbs of Kyiv, a senior Ukrainian intelligence officer shared what he claimed was Russia's invasion blueprint. The classified document, supposedly compiled before Russian troops crossed the border, envisages the complete takeover of Ukraine: seizing private property and taking over banks, transport, ports and elected institutions. There are provisions for a federation of puppet "peoples' republics" and perhaps their annexation into Russia if needed. There is a line about "denazifying" the Ukrainian education system, whatever that means.

**49. Ukraine can win with enough help**

Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

The public message out of Thursday's meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels is sure to be heavy on unity and resolve in support of Ukraine. But the unfortunate reality is that the democratic alliance confronting Vladimir Putin still isn't doing enough to ensure the Russian's defeat. And behind the scenes, some leaders would prefer if Volodymyr Zelensky agreed to a peace settlement sooner rather than later.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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**50. Jordan King to visit Ramallah to ease tension ahead of Ramadan**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 23 Mar 22, Kifah Zboun

Jordan's King Abdullah II will visit Ramallah soon to meet Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in an attempt to contain a possible escalation during Ramadan month, according to the official Kan Channel.

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### IRAN

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**51. IRGC chief threatens Israel, US with Iranian missiles**

Jerusalem Post, 24 Mar 22

Iran's enemies, such as Israel and the United States, have an "expiration date" as a new world order is upon us, Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commander-in-chief Hossein Salami threatened on Wednesday, Iranian news outlet Tasnim reported.

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### IRAQ

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**52. Independent MPs to issue a position regarding Saturday's session**

Shafaq News, 23 Mar 22

Independent MPs are scheduled to meet today, to decide whether they will attend the Presidential vote session on Saturday or not, a parliamentary source reported.

### **53. Sadr thanks independent parliament members for supporting majority government**

Kurdistan 24, 23 Mar 22

Sadrism Movement leader Muqtada al-Sadr thanked the independent members of the Iraqi Parliament who showed their willingness to support his efforts to form a new government.

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## SYRIA

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### **54. Syria Kurds warn world allowing IS to rebuild**

Dhaka Tribune, 23 Mar 22

The Syrian Kurdish forces that spearheaded the battle to crush the Islamic State group's self-proclaimed "caliphate" in 2019 warned on Wednesday that the world's lack of support risked allowing for a jihadist rebirth.

### **55. Different photos, same wounds: Images from Ukraine, Syria mirror war**

Anadolu Agency, 23 Mar 22, Ethem Emre Özcan and Seda Sevcen

It has been 11 years since the civil war in Syria started, and images have now been reflecting same wounds and grief from the Russian war in Ukraine for a month. Besides military attacks, bombing and destruction, war is pain, tears and loss.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **56. Outcry raised as Afghan girls over grade 6 barred from school**

TOLOnews, 23 Mar 22

International organizations and diplomatic missions called to reopen all girls' schools across the country.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **57. Pakistan Day: Armed forces show off military might as OIC officials watch**

DAWN, 23 Mar 22

As the country celebrates Pakistan Day on Wednesday, the armed forces displayed their might in the annual military parade in Islamabad while dignitaries participating in the 48th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) watched as guests of honor.

### **58. Pakistan Air Force aircraft crashes, killing two pilots**

Ariana News, 23 Mar 22

A Pakistan Air Force (PAF) trainer aircraft crashed on Tuesday while on a training mission in the country's northwest, killing the two pilots on board, a spokesman for the air force said.

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## YEMEN

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### **59. Saudi Arabia urges OIC states to help curb Houthi aggression**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 23 Mar 22, Saima Shabbir

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister on Tuesday condemned the aggression of the Houthis in Yemen and urged Muslim nations to apply more pressure on the Iran-backed militia.

### **60. Saudi-led coalition thwarts Houthi rebel attack on oil tankers**

The National, 23 Mar 22, Ismaeel Naar

The Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen destroyed two explosive-laden boats on Wednesday which Iran-backed Houthi rebels planned to use in attacks on oil tankers in the Red Sea, according to a statement.

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## EGYPT

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### **61. Egypt seeks greater international coordination to overcome water challenges**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 23 Mar 22, Mohammed Abdo Hassanein

Egypt has called on all countries to cooperate on water challenges to achieve the sustainable development plan.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **62. Iran media accuses Turkey of backing 'terrorists'**

Jerusalem Post, 23 Mar 22, Seth J. Frantzman

Iran may be upping tensions with Turkey. The evidence can so far be found in one article at Fars News which accuses Turkey and its leading AKP party of backing "terrorists." This comes as the world is changing and countries weigh their next moves amid the Ukraine war. Turkey is seeking to play both sides, being friendly with Russia and also Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia is holding up the Iran deal.

### **63. Bennett sends signals from Sharm al-Sheikh**

Jerusalem Post, 23 Mar 22, Herb Keinon

Israel's policy towards Russia and the Ukraine crisis is a high-wire acrobatic act: trying to balance principles on one hand and interests on the other; doing right by the Ukrainians without inciting Moscow's anger – an anger that could trigger Russian actions that might significantly harm Israeli security.

### **64. Sharm al-Sheikh three-way summit ushers in new Arab-Israeli alliance**

The Arab Weekly, 23 Mar 22,

Arab diplomatic sources in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, described the tripartite meeting that brought together Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh

Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, on Monday and Tuesday, in Sharm el-Sheikh, as ushering in the birth of an Arab-Israeli alliance.

V/R Mal

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 24, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Financial Times led international reporting on the Taliban's reversal to allow teenage girls to attend secondary schools despite repeated assurances they could resume classes. The decision sparked international condemnation.
- 2) Reuters led wire service reporting that the IRGC not only attended the 21-23 Mar Qatar Defense Exhibit, but also had a booth and was promoting its missile technology for sale. Reuters noted the irony that the IRGC was flouting its wares in the country with the largest US military base in the Middle East, while AP questioned why Qatar would even allow the IRGC to attend the exhibit and promote Iranian arms sales since the country is under extensive economic sanctions.
- 3) Bloomberg reported President Biden plans to request \$813.3 billion in national security spending -- including \$773 billion for the Pentagon -- in the federal budget he will send to Congress on Monday. The proposed 4% increase from this year's budget includes money to purchase 61 F-35 fighters, initial procurement of the B-21 bomber and two Virginia-class submarines.
- 4) The New York Times reported the White House has assembled a team of national security officials to sketch out scenarios of how the United States and its allies should respond if Russia uses chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in Ukraine. The team is also looking at options if Russia extends the war into neighboring nations, including Moldova and Georgia. The subject will likely be discussed at today's NATO leadership meeting in Brussels.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. Taliban reverses decision to allow girls to attend secondary school in Afghanistan**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Benjamin Parkin

The Taliban have reversed a decision to allow teenage girls back to secondary school despite repeated assurances they could resume classes from Wednesday, sparking international condemnation and leaving desperate students stranded outside campuses.

## **2. Iran's Revolutionary Guards tout missile prowess at Doha exhibition**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Andrew Mills

Commanders of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) drank tea, nibbled dates and displayed models of Iranian missiles at a defense show in Qatar, a Gulf Arab state which is home to the largest American military base in the region.

## **3. White House to seek \$813.3 billion National Security Budget**

Bloomberg News, 23 Mar 22, Tony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

President Joe Biden plans to request \$813.3 billion in national security spending -- including \$773 billion for the Pentagon -- in the federal budget he will send to Congress on Monday, according to officials familiar with the plan. It's an increase of \$31 billion, or 4%, from approved spending for the current fiscal year and about \$43 billion more than the White House budget office had projected a year ago for fiscal 2023.

## **4. U.S. makes contingency plans in case Russia uses its most powerful weapons**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, Helene Cooper and Julian E. Barnes

The White House has quietly assembled a team of national security officials to sketch out scenarios of how the United States and its allies should respond if President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia -- frustrated by his lack of progress in Ukraine or determined to warn Western nations against intervening in the war -- unleashes his stockpiles of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

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## **NOTABLE TWEETS**

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**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (23 Mar):** Education is a human right. The United States rejects the Taliban's excuses for reversing their commitment to the people of Afghanistan that all Afghans would be able to return to school at all levels today.

**Secretary General of the U.N., António Guterres; @antonioguterres (23 Mar):** The failure by Taliban authorities to reopen schools for girls above 6th grade is profoundly disappointing & damaging for Afghanistan. I urge the de facto authorities to open schools for all students without any further delay.

**U.S. Special Representative Thomas West; @US4AfghanPeace (23 Mar):** I join millions of Afghan families today in expressing shock and deep disappointment with the Taliban's decision to not allow women and girls to return to school above grade 6. Education is a fundamental right of all human beings and is essential to Afghanistan's economic growth and stability. This is a betrayal of public commitments to the Afghan people and the international community. The Taliban have made clear that ALL Afghan citizens have a right to education. For the sake of the country's future and its relations with the international community, I would urge the Taliban to live up to their commitments to their people.

**Oman Embassy, Washington; @OmanEmbassyUSA (23 Mar):** HE Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense met with the General Commander of @CENTCOM on the side line of the 16th meeting of Oman-US Joint Military Committee, they discussed the development of relations & cooperation between the two countries. @MG\_MOD\_OMAN

**U.S. Embassy Syria; @USEmbassySyria (23 Mar):** Today marks the 3rd anniversary of the defeat of ISIS's so-called territorial "caliphate." The US & @coalition are committed to ensuring ISIS's lasting defeat & the US stands behind the push for accountability, such as the al-Jumaily conviction in November. #MarchToAccountability

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## IRAN

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### **5. Under sweeping sanctions, Iran hawks its weapons in Qatar**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Iran, under sweeping economic sanctions, was hawking weapons on Wednesday at a Qatari defense exhibit, a surprising sight at the major conference also showcasing American companies and fighter jets.

### **6. Iran's Revolutionary Guards warn Israel over more attacks**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22

Hossein Salami, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, issued a warning to Israel against more attacks targeting Iranian forces in the region. On March 13, Iran launched ballistic missiles into northern Iraq, claiming the target was a strategic center for Israel. The attack was in retaliation for two Iranian soldiers killed by an Israeli strike in Syria. In total, 12 missiles were launched, and Iraqi officials condemned the attack.

### **7. Russia turns to Iran for assistance with aviation sanctions, but can it do much to help?**

Forbes, 23 Mar 22, Dominic Dudley

Moscow is looking to Iran to help it figure out how to cope with the debilitating sanctions on its aviation sector. Speaking on March 22 at a meeting of the economic policy committee in the upper house of the Russian parliament, transport minister Vitaly Savelyev said "Russia was being guided by Iran's experience of how to service aircraft in a similar situation."

### **8. Iran's foreign minister says nuclear deal closer 'than ever'**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic and world powers are closer than ever to reviving a 2015 nuclear deal.

### **9. U.S. says it is unclear if issues in Iran talks will be resolved**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday the United States and its allies have made progress in Iran nuclear talks but issues remain, and it is unclear if they will be resolved.

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## IRAQ

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### **10. Halabja anniversary takes political turn**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22, Winthrop Rodgers

Snow flurries fell in Halabja on a cold and subdued day of remembrance, marking 34 years since the chemical attack perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's Baath Regime. The city's citizens usually come out in force to honor the victims of the genocide against the Kurdish people, but most stayed at home this year. They boycotted events organized by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a sign of anger at Kurdish and Iraqi politicians who pay what they consider lip service to them on the anniversary and then fail to live up to their promises.

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## SYRIA

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### **11. Iran welcomes Syria ties with Arabs, says nuclear deal close**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Albert Aji

The foreign ministers of Iran and Syria, two allies of Russia, discussed the war in Ukraine and other developments during a meeting in Damascus on Wednesday. Syria's top diplomat said Moscow is defending its people.

### **12. Foreign children risk languishing in Syria for decades: Charity**

Agence France-Presse, 23 Mar 22

Children held in Syrian camps for relatives of suspected extremist fighters may remain stuck there for another 30 years, unless the pace of repatriations accelerates, Save the Children said Wednesday.

### **13. 'It's a kind of revenge': Damascus suburb demolished as Assad builds a 'new Syria'**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Kaamil Ahmed, Mais Katt, Mohammad Bassiki and Bashar Deeb

The Syrian regime is bulldozing former rebel-held neighborhoods in Damascus under the guise of mine clearance to make space for a "new Syria" of upmarket new building developments and pristine gardens.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **14. Taliban leaves shocked students in tears by unexpectedly extending ban on girls in school**

CBS News, 23 Mar 22, Ahmad Mukhtar

The Taliban's de-facto government in Afghanistan announced Wednesday that schools would remain closed to high school-aged girls across the country until a plan is drawn up that will allow for their education to resume in accordance with Islamic Sharia law and Afghan culture. The news came as a surprise after an earlier indication from the country's education ministry that all Afghan children would be able to return to classrooms, and it left many students in tears.

**15. Taliban orders that high schools remain closed to girls is a betrayal of commitments, U.S. says**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

The U.S. State Department on Wednesday said the Taliban's announcement that high schools in Afghanistan would remain closed for girls is a betrayal of public commitments to the Afghan people and international community.

**16. Family of killed photojournalist Danish Siddiqui take Taliban leaders to ICC**

NPR, 23 Mar 22, Robert Griffiths

The family of Pulitzer Prize-winning Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui, who was killed last year in Afghanistan, filed a formal complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Tuesday to investigate his killing and bring to trial the Taliban's leadership for "committing war crimes."

**17. Silence replaces old folk tunes in historic quarter of Kabul**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Samya Kullab

Nabih Bakhsh's family has been part of Afghanistan's musical tradition for generations. His great-grandfather was a musician in the court of the Afghan emperor 150 years ago. His father was a famous maestro and singer. Bakhsh too carried on the family art, performing and running an instrument repair shop. Until now.

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PAKISTAN

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**18. Pakistan showcases its latest equipment during military parade**

Defense News, 23 Mar 22, Usman Ansari

Pakistan showcased its latest defense equipment at its annual Pakistan Day Parade on Wednesday, highlighting ongoing efforts to maintain a credible conventional deterrent against India.

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YEMEN

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**19. Senior Yemeni military leader killed in car bombing in Aden - sources**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Mohamed Ghobari and Reyam Mokhashef

A car bombing killed a senior Yemeni military leader and three of his entourage in the southern port city of Aden on Wednesday, three security sources and a local television station said.

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## EGYPT

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### **20. Egypt asks for IMF support to help it weather Ukraine crisis**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Heba Saleh

Egypt has asked for support from the IMF, the fund said, as the country struggles to weather the economic impact of Russia's invasion on Ukraine.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **21. Qatar signs deal with Leonardo for first ever Navy Operations Center**

Breaking Defense, 23 Mar 22, Agnes Helou

The Qatari Navy has signed a new contract with Italy's Leonardo to develop a Naval Operation Center (NOC) for the military service, the first of its kind in the country.

### **22. Ukraine War ignites Israeli debate over purpose of a Jewish State**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, Isabel Kershner

Many of the refugees milling about the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel one recent morning had endured harrowing journeys from Ukraine, and in many cases were forced to leave close family members behind. These were the lucky ones. Others were not as fortunate.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **23. Top Russian military leaders repeatedly decline calls from U.S., prompting fears of 'sleepwalking into war'**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, John Hudson

Repeated attempts by the United States' top defense and military leaders to speak with their Russian counterparts have been rejected by Moscow for the last month, leaving the world's two largest nuclear powers in the dark about explanations for military movements and raising fears of a major miscalculation or battlefield accident.

### **24. Inside a rare US meeting with a Russian general in Moscow**

CNN, 23 Mar 22, Barbara Starr and Jeremy Herb

A rare face-to-face meeting between Russian and US military officials last week led to an "outburst" of emotion from a normally stoic Russian general, a "revealing moment" that the Americans present believe hinted at larger morale problems in Russia's military, according to a closely held US military readout of what transpired.

### **25. After Iraq and Afghanistan, Marine Corps reserve turns to deterrence**

Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Alex J. Rouhandeh and Naveed Jamali

Four weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, Russia continues to struggle against its lesser-equipped adversary. As with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, even the most dominant military forces can falter when ill-equipped for the situation at hand. Lieutenant General David Bellon, commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, told Newsweek that as the United States finds itself in an era of great power competition, bolstering the capabilities of the armed forces should be seen as a priority.

#### **26. Army approves reduced physical fitness standards for women, older soldiers**

The Hill, 23 Mar 22, Ellen Mitchell

Following a three-year review, the Army has scrapped plans to use the same physical fitness test for all soldiers, choosing instead to have some reduced standards to allow women and older soldiers to pass, the service announced Wednesday.

#### **27. Israel blocked Ukraine from buying Pegasus spyware, fearing Russia's anger**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Stephanie Kirchgaessner

Israel blocked Ukraine from buying NSO Group's Pegasus spyware for fear that Russian officials would be angered by the sale of the sophisticated hacking tool to a regional foe, according to people familiar with the matter. The revelation, following a joint investigation by the Guardian and Washington Post, offers new insight into the way Israel's relationship with Russia has at times undermined Ukraine's offensive capabilities and contradicted US priorities.

#### **28. US military members who survive Ukraine War may face 'consequences' at home**

Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Tom O'Connor and Naveed Jamali

Members of the U.S. military who travel to Ukraine to join the fight against Russian troops in a grueling war and live to tell the tale may return home only to face administrative or legal ramifications.

#### **29. From Afghanistan to Ukraine: How a team from Silicon Valley is helping evacuate people from war**

Vanity Fair, 23 Mar 22, Nick Bilton

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Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Michael Birnbaum, Karoun Demirjian and John Hudson

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Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Drew Hinshaw, Joe Parkinson and Nancy A. Youssef

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### **36. Britain sending thousands more missiles to Ukraine**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Britain will send thousands more missiles to Ukraine's government as Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged Western allies to boost the supply of military aid to Ukraine.

### **37. Romania's Prime Minister on how NATO can navigate this 'stark new reality'**

TIME, 23 Mar 22, Charlie Campbell

On Thursday, Romania's prime minister will join U.S. President Joe Biden and other world leaders for an extraordinary NATO meeting and E.U. summit in Brussels. Biden's goal, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters, "is to meet in person face-to-face and talk about and assess where we are at this point in the conflict." Ciucă, however, is blunter about the stakes, which are no less than "the future of the democratic world and the rules-based international order."

### **38. Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparks fierce debate in China**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Kathrin Hille

China's government has leaned towards Russia by backing Moscow's complaints about Nato expansion and refusing to call its actions an invasion. But while Beijing's censors are working hard to suppress any criticism of that position, the conflict has ignited heated controversy both among Chinese policy experts and the public.

### **39. Shabaab attacks international hub in Mogadishu where U.S. Embassy is located**

Long War Journal, 23 Mar 22, Andrew Tobin

On Wednesday, Al Shabaab conducted an attack against Halane camp near Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu. The camp houses the U.S. embassy, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the headquarters for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and most foreign diplomats based in Mogadishu.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **40. Iran's enemies in the Middle East are closing ranks**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, David Gardner

The stop-start efforts to resuscitate the landmark nuclear deal, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran signed with the US and five world powers in 2015 may be in danger of meeting another dead end.

### **41. Iran needs a cushion, and Europe needs gas**

Foreign Policy, 23 Mar 22, Alex Vatanka

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a watershed moment on so many levels for so many countries. Existing political, economic, energy, and transportation channels are being affected across western Eurasia. Countries are maneuvering to minimize the war's detrimental impact while new trade synergies are being formed at a rapid pace. Most recently, Germany and Qatar signed a long-term energy partnership for the delivery of Qatari natural gas as the Germans look

to reduce dependence on Russian supplies. Qatar's reserves are located in the world's largest gas field, which it shares with its northern neighbor, Iran.

**42. We put Iran's Revolutionary Guard on the terrorist list. Biden must keep it there.**

The Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Victoria Coates and Robert Greenway

Multiple reports have suggested that the Biden administration is considering taking Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) off the U.S. government's Foreign Terrorist Organization list. As the senior Trump administration officials who led the process that recommended the designation in 2019, we feel compelled to explain why taking them off the list as a concession to tempt Tehran back into a nuclear proliferation deal would be dangerous — and would undermine the deal itself.

**43. The Taliban has broken a promise to Afghan girls. The U.S. must hold it accountable.**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

Each year, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a nongovernmental organization, publishes the World Happiness Report, which ranks various countries by their sense of well-being, based on Gallup World Poll data. Afghanistan ranked last in the new edition, published March 18 — all too unsurprisingly. Beset by poverty, government human rights violations and continued terrorist attacks, the Afghan people have had little to feel good about since August 2021, when the United States withdrew its remaining troops amid violent chaos, the U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed and the Islamist Taliban movement seized power. Now comes word of yet another crushing disappointment.

**44. Afghanistan's struggle: it isn't just the Taliban**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

When 98% of the population is short of food, all that is left is hope. In Afghanistan there is not much of that either. On Wednesday, the Taliban abruptly reversed their decision to let girls return to secondary school; the last-minute chaos appears to reflect internal disagreements. Tears fell as pupils arrived in classrooms for the first time since the Taliban takeover last August, only for their dreams to be shattered once more.

**45. Afghan evacuees are stuck in legal limbo. Here's how to help them.**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Krish O'Mara Vignarajah

Even as Americans have been riveted by the war in Ukraine, another humanitarian emergency looms closer to home for the tens of thousands of Afghans who fled their nation after the Taliban takeover this past year.

**46. Madeleine Albright shaped a generation of foreign policy leaders**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, David Ignatius

Madeleine K. Albright, who passed away on Wednesday, shaped a generation of foreign policy leaders — gently and usually with a smile. She knew every senior official, mentored many of them, and managed to say a cheery word even to people who took “dour” as a compliment.

#### **47. A realistic plan for peace for Ukraine and Russia**

TIME, 23 Mar 22, Michael O’Hanlon

As the tragic war in Ukraine has now driven roughly 10 million from their homes and killed many thousands, with no end in sight and no real prospect of near-term victory for either side, it is increasingly necessary to focus on a possible peace plan.

#### **48. Ukraine’s government is willing to make big concessions to end the war, but it doubts that Russia is negotiating in good faith**

The Economist, 23 Mar 22

At a secret location in a blacked-out high-rise in the suburbs of Kyiv, a senior Ukrainian intelligence officer shared what he claimed was Russia’s invasion blueprint. The classified document, supposedly compiled before Russian troops crossed the border, envisages the complete takeover of Ukraine: seizing private property and taking over banks, transport, ports and elected institutions. There are provisions for a federation of puppet “peoples’ republics” and perhaps their annexation into Russia if needed. There is a line about “denazifying” the Ukrainian education system, whatever that means.

#### **49. Ukraine can win with enough help**

Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

The public message out of Thursday’s meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels is sure to be heavy on unity and resolve in support of Ukraine. But the unfortunate reality is that the democratic alliance confronting Vladimir Putin still isn’t doing enough to ensure the Russian’s defeat. And behind the scenes, some leaders would prefer if Volodymyr Zelensky agreed to a peace settlement sooner rather than later.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **50. Jordan King to visit Ramallah to ease tension ahead of Ramadan**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 23 Mar 22, Kifah Zboun

Jordan's King Abdullah II will visit Ramallah soon to meet Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in an attempt to contain a possible escalation during Ramadan month, according to the official Kan Channel.

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### IRAN

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#### **51. IRGC chief threatens Israel, US with Iranian missiles**

Jerusalem Post, 24 Mar 22

IRGC officials at the Doha defense show, from March 21-23, declined to speak to Reuters. While some huddled in meetings at the booth, which featured a giant poster of a fast boat filled with commandos, others explored the trade floor.

They passed the entourage surrounding the commander of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, snapped cellphone photos of an Italian armored personnel carrier and handled Turkish machine guns.

In a booth adjacent to the IRGC one, US firm General Atomics showcased its MQ-9B predator drone, which is engineered to conduct anti-surface warfare, including maritime surveillance and precision-guided munitions.

The US State Department has authorized the company to sell 18 of the unmanned aircraft to the United Arab Emirates in a deal worth as much as \$2.9 billion.

Qatar's DIMDEX exhibition drew international defense firms hoping to boost sales to wealthy Gulf states that are moving to boost military capabilities of the energy-producing region.

Qatar has good ties with Iran, with which it shares a giant gas field. In contrast Qatar's neighbor Saudi Arabia is locked in several proxy conflicts with Tehran in a struggle for regional dominance.

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### **3. White House to seek \$813.3 billion National Security Budget**

Bloomberg News, 23 Mar 22, Tony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

President Joe Biden plans to request \$813.3 billion in national security spending -- including \$773 billion for the Pentagon -- in the federal budget he will send to Congress on Monday, according to officials familiar with the plan.

It's an increase of \$31 billion, or 4%, from approved spending for the current fiscal year and about \$43 billion more than the White House budget office had projected a year ago for fiscal 2023.

The full national security budget includes spending for the Defense Department, the Energy Department's nuclear weapons and the FBI's national security functions. The officials familiar with the budget plan asked not to be identified before its release.

The budget reflects the increasing military challenge from China and the development of costly new defense systems -- from upgrading the nation's aging nuclear arsenal to development of new hypersonic weapons. It was completed with an expectation that Russia was likely to invade Ukraine and some defense spending was shifted accordingly. Support in Congress is likely to be buoyed by the added challenge of confronting Russia.

The request will include \$130.1 billion for research and development --the Pentagon's largest-ever request in that category -- that will be steered to categories such as accelerated research into

hypersonics and artificial intelligence. That's about \$15.6 billion more than the budget office had projected last year.

A White House official who was granted anonymity to discuss the spending plan, said it marked one of the biggest national security investments in American history that would strengthen U.S. allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific and provide assistance to Ukraine.

The administration requested \$145.9 billion for procurement, about \$9.4 billion more than projected last year. Among items on the to-buy list: 61 F-35 jet fighters from Lockheed Martin Corp., fewer than previously planned, as well as initial procurement of the B-21 bomber from Northrop Grumman Corp. and two Virginia-class submarines from General Dynamics Corp. and Huntington Ingalls Industries Corp.

The budget request will also call for as much as \$548 million in improvements to the nuclear submarine industrial base.

The national security request typically constitutes about half of the entire discretionary federal budget that's approved by Congress. The White House has yet to release either its National Security Strategy or the Pentagon-generated National Defense Strategy that are supposed to outline the strategic rationale for the spending.

Biden signed into law \$782 billion for national defense activities in the current year, a \$32.5 billion increase over fiscal 2021 levels. Out of that the Pentagon's discretionary spending slice is \$728.5 billion.

There's continued willingness both among Republicans and some key Democrats to increase defense spending. Republican members of the House and Senate Armed Services panels -- led by Representative Mike Rogers of Alabama and Senator Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma -- have been pressing Biden to request a national security budget for 2023 that would account for inflation plus an additional 5% over the \$782 billion enacted for this year.

Inflation most immediately eats into fuel and military pay and benefits, and less immediately into weapons procurement contracts.

"While the higher number for defense this year over last year's projections recognizes the problem of inflation, it still creates a problem for the Hill in that it is not enough," said MacKenzie Eaglen, a defense budget expert with the American Enterprise Institute. "If the president's defense budget for 2023 fails to keep pace with inflation and does not even grow at the levels seen in the recently passed omnibus spending bill for 2022," Congress will insist on larger increases, she said in an email.

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#### **4. U.S. makes contingency plans in case Russia uses its most powerful weapons**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, Helene Cooper and Julian E. Barnes

The White House has quietly assembled a team of national security officials to sketch out scenarios of how the United States and its allies should respond if President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia — frustrated by his lack of progress in Ukraine or determined to warn Western nations against intervening in the war — unleashes his stockpiles of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

The Tiger Team, as the group is known, is also examining responses if Mr. Putin reaches into NATO territory to attack convoys bringing weapons and aid to Ukraine, according to several officials involved in the process. Meeting three times a week, in classified sessions, the team is also looking at responses if Russia seeks to extend the war to neighboring nations, including Moldova and Georgia, and how to prepare European countries for the refugees flowing in on a scale not seen in decades.

Those contingencies are expected to be central to an extraordinary session here in Brussels on Thursday, when President Biden meets leaders of the 29 other NATO nations, who will be meeting for the first time — behind closed doors, their cellphones and aides banished — since Mr. Putin invaded Ukraine.

Just a month ago, such scenarios seemed more theoretical. But today, from the White House to NATO's headquarters in Brussels, a recognition has set in that Russia may turn to the most powerful weapons in its arsenal to bail itself out of a military stalemate.

NATO's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, underscored the urgency of the preparation effort on Wednesday, telling reporters for the first time that even if the Russians employ weapons of mass destruction only inside Ukraine, they may have “dire consequences” for people in NATO nations. He appeared to be discussing the fear that chemical or radioactive clouds could drift over the border. One issue under examination is whether such collateral damage would be considered an “attack” on NATO under its charter, which might require a joint military response.

The current team was established in a memo signed by Jake Sullivan, Mr. Biden's national security adviser, on Feb. 28, four days after the invasion began, according to the officials involved in the process, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive planning. A previous iteration had worked for months, behind the scenes, to prepare the U.S. government for the likelihood of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

That team played a central role in devising the playbooks of deep sanctions, troop buildups in NATO nations and arming the Ukrainian military, which have exploited Russian weaknesses and put its government and economy under tremendous pressure.

Mr. Stoltenberg, sounding far more hawkish than in the past, said he expected “allies will agree to provide additional support, including cybersecurity assistance and equipment to help Ukraine protect against chemical, biological, radiologic and nuclear threats.”

As Mr. Biden flew to Europe on Wednesday, both he and Mr. Stoltenberg warned of growing evidence that Russia was in fact preparing to use chemical weapons in Ukraine.

These are questions that Europe has not confronted since the depths of the Cold War, when NATO had far fewer members, and Western Europe worried about a Soviet attack headed into Germany. But few of the leaders set to meet in Brussels on Thursday ever had to deal with those scenarios — and many have never had to think about nuclear deterrence or the effects of the detonation of battlefield nuclear weapons, designed to be less powerful than those that destroyed Hiroshima. The fear is that Russia is more likely to use those weapons, precisely because they erode the distinction between conventional and nuclear arms.

Senator Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat who heads the Armed Services Committee, said on Wednesday that if Mr. Putin used a weapon of mass destruction — chemical, biological or nuclear — “there would be consequences” even if the weapon’s use was confined to Ukraine. Mr. Reed said radiation from a nuclear weapon, for instance, could waft into a neighboring NATO country and be considered an attack on a NATO member.

“It’s going to be a very difficult call, but it’s a call that not just the president but the entire NATO Council will have to make,” Mr. Reed told reporters, referring to the governing body of the Western alliance.

“The bottom line is this is a NATO decision,” Mr. Reed said. “It won’t be the president’s decision alone. I don’t think he’d want to take action unilaterally.”

One major issue the Tiger Team is looking at is the threshold that could prompt the alliance to use military force in Ukraine. Mr. Biden has made clear that he is enormously reluctant to do so, fearing that direct confrontation with Russia could escalate the conflict beyond control. “That’s World War III,” he noted recently.

A second team of officials, also created by Mr. Sullivan’s Feb. 28 memo, is looking at long-term opportunities for the United States to improve its geopolitical position as a result of Mr. Putin’s invasion. Inside the White House, it has become an article of faith that the Russian leader made a huge strategic error — one that will diminish Russia’s standing, cripple its economy and alienate potential allies for years. But it is early in the conflict, other officials caution, and that conclusion may prove premature.

The immediate concern is what Mr. Putin may do next — driven by a desire to rescue a failing military effort or re-establish his credentials as a force to be feared.

Officials believe the chances that Mr. Putin will resort to detonating a nuclear weapon are small. But Russia’s steady stream of reminders that it has its arsenal at the ready, and could use it in response to anything it perceives as an “existential threat,” has put Washington on high alert.

Mr. Biden will take up with allies “how to deal with the rhetoric and the commentary coming out of Russia on this whole question of the potential use of nuclear weapons,” Mr. Sullivan told reporters on Wednesday.

“We haven’t seen anything that’s made us adjust our posture, our nuclear posture, but it is of course something we will have to continue to stay in close consultation with allies and partners on, as well as communicate directly to the Russians.”

Several officials said the White House and Pentagon have had some tension over how much detail the Defense Department is willing to share on its highly secretive war planning especially concerning responses to any use of nuclear weapons even in the classified setting of the Tiger Team. (The term has been used for many years to describe an emergency task force inside the National Security Council.)

A U.S. official said Mr. Biden remained adamant about keeping American forces out of Ukraine. But the official said the administration believed it would be misguided not to closely examine the thresholds, if any, under which the president would reverse himself, or to be prepared to deal with the consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction.

A senior administration official said any use of a “small” tactical nuclear bomb by Russia even inside Ukraine and not directed at a NATO member would mean that “all bets are off” on the United States and NATO staying out of the war. But when pushed, the official declined to lay out the responses under discussion.

The official said American and NATO intelligence communities had not seen any activity by Russian military officials that suggested preparations to use a nuclear weapon. But he said that during internal discussions, administration officials were urging caution, because there was more at stake than just Ukraine.

If Mr. Putin did strike a NATO country intentionally, he would not only bring the force of the military alliance to bear on Russia, but also probably find himself facing NATO troops inside Ukraine, Artis Pabriks, Latvia’s defense minister, told reporters traveling in his country this month with Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“He will get Article 5,” Mr. Pabriks said, in a reference to the NATO pledge that an attack on one alliance member is an attack on all.

“If he gets that, basically that would also make us involved in Ukraine,” Mr. Pabriks said, adding: “He has no way out of that. So I don’t think he should be so stupid.”

Senator Angus King of Maine, an independent and a member of the Senate Intelligence and Armed Services Committees, visited the Polish-Ukrainian border over the weekend, meeting with officials from allied countries, visiting a refugee processing center and talking with Ukrainians. Mr. King said that as Russian forces struggle to make headway, Mr. Putin could try to strike a diplomatic agreement, intensify his bombardment of Ukrainian cities and level them, or lash out against the West with a cyberattack.

“The fourth is escalate to de-escalate, which is a tactical nuclear weapon,” Mr. King said, using the term for a Russian military doctrine in which it would employ a nuclear weapon as a warning and then negotiate.

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## **5. Under sweeping sanctions, Iran hawks its weapons in Qatar**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Iran, under sweeping economic sanctions, was hawking weapons on Wednesday at a Qatari defense exhibit, a surprising sight at the major conference also showcasing American companies and fighter jets.

Tucked away in the far left corner of the carpeted convention center, commanders from Iran's defense ministry marketed their missiles and air defense weapons systems. The defense ministry manufactures arms for both Iran's military and its powerful paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guard, a group that plays a singular role in the creation and execution of Iran's national security and foreign policy.

The DIMDEX exhibition serves to promote Qatar, a major non-NATO ally of the United States that's home to the largest American military base in the Middle East. The tiny Gulf Arab country, however, also maintains good relations with Iran, with which it shares the world's largest gas field.

Iranian representatives declined to speak with The Associated Press. They handed out brochures to an AP journalist promoting their homemade jet trainers, helicopters and hovercraft.

The Qatari armed forces chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Salem al-Nabet, toured Iran's pavilion before the exhibition wrapped up, inspecting displays of lethal merchandise in glass cases and listening to a sales pitch about machine guns. A giant American flag representing U.S. military contractor General Atomics Aeronautical Systems could be seen hanging just beside the Iranian stand.

Notably, Iran's pavilion cannot be found on the conference map. The country's defense ministry and armed forces logistics remain under crushing U.S. sanctions over suspected illegal weapons trade.

The Revolutionary Guard, for its part, is widely regarded as a toxic business partner for its designation as a terrorist group by the Trump administration, its global reputation for meddling in regional conflicts and sanctions over its ballistic missile programs and alleged human rights violations.

With talks to restore Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers nearing a resolution four years after former President Trump abandoned it, the possible removal of the Guard's terrorism designation has drawn fierce criticism from America's Mideast allies, like Israel.

The U.S. has balked at the Iranian demand, barring commitments from Tehran to stop funding and arming extremist groups in the region and beyond. Nuclear negotiators have yet to reconvene in Vienna.

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## **6. Iran's Revolutionary Guards warn Israel over more attacks**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22

Hossein Salami, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, issued a warning to Israel against more attacks targeting Iranian forces in the region. Speaking in the city of Dezful at an event commemorating previous IRGC fighters, Salami said, “You saw in recent weeks how the Zionists, who constantly make mistakes in their calculations, were under the attacks of the IRGC missiles.” On March 13, Iran launched ballistic missiles into northern Iraq, claiming the target was a strategic center for Israel. The attack was in retaliation for two Iranian soldiers killed by an Israeli strike in Syria. In total, 12 missiles were launched, and Iraqi officials condemned the attack.

Salami continued, “We warn them to stop their wickedness, otherwise we will close these small holes that are open to you in the world.” In response to Iraqi criticism of the attack, Iran said that it has repeatedly warned the Iraqi government not to permit Israel to operate within the country, particularly in Iraq’s Kurdish region.

Addressing Israel, Salami added, “Be careful. We not only conduct funerals and processions for our martyrs but we will immediately exact revenge.” He continued, “This is a real and serious message, and if it is continued, again you will experience IRGC missiles.”

The missile attacks, which hit a compound in Erbil, caused considerable damage but no casualties. More than anything, they signaled that Iran has taken its retaliation against Israel to the next level. For years, Israel has attacked Iranian and Iranian-backed forces in Syria. The acknowledgement of two Iranians killed in a recent attack and Iran’s immediate response suggests that tensions will continue to rise, and that each attack and retaliatory attack will be publicized.

The direct confrontation could also be heating up due to the possible revival of the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In a phone conversation with his Iraqi counterpart, Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said, “We are close to the final stages of the agreement.” He added, “On the few important remaining issues we presented initiatives from European intermediaries to the US.” Since the US exited the Iran deal in 2018, they are technically not part of the Vienna negotiations, but Iran needs US sanctions removed if they are to return their nuclear program to agreed-upon levels. Abdollahian said, “Now it is the Americans who must show their good intentions through actions. We are determined to achieve a good, stable and durable agreement.”

Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber also addressed the final stages of the negotiations, warning that hostilities between Iran and the US would not end. Negotiations are important for removing sanctions, he said, but although some feel that talks can resolve the two countries’ enmity, some “problems cannot be resolved through negotiations.”

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**7. Russia turns to Iran for assistance with aviation sanctions, but can it do much to help?**  
Forbes, 23 Mar 22, Dominic Dudley

Moscow is looking to Iran to help it figure out how to cope with the debilitating sanctions on its aviation sector. Speaking on March 22 at a meeting of the economic policy committee in the upper house of the Russian parliament, transport minister Vitaly Savelyev said “Russia was being guided by Iran’s experience of how to service aircraft in a similar situation.”

Tehran certainly has plenty of experience, having been the target of U.S. and other international sanctions on and off for several decades. However, its track record suggests its advice might be of limited use to Moscow.

Iran has been prevented from receiving spare parts or new planes from international manufacturers for many years, but the country’s airlines have managed to keep flying, largely by using some planes for spare parts. Of its fleet of around 250 aircraft in 2018, around 100 of them were grounded because they had either broken down or been stripped for parts.

When Iran has had a chance to buy western jets, it has jumped at the opportunity. During a brief lull in international sanctions following the signing of the nuclear deal in 2015, Iranian airlines put in orders for more than 300 new aircraft from Airbus, Boeing and ATR. However, just a handful of the planes were ordered before then U.S. president Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions in 2018.

Thereafter, it looked around for alternatives to western aircraft, but found any deals difficult to complete. Agreements were announced in 2018 for two Iranian airlines – Aseman Airlines and Iran Air Tours – to buy 40 Sukhoi SuperJet 100 from Russia at a list price of around \$2 billion, but the deal collapsed due to sanctions. Iran even began to look at developing its own passenger plane, but that project appears to have suffered from a shortage of funding.

In the absence of any new aircraft being available, Iran has had to turn to the second-hand market to buy much older planes. On March 16, the head of the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAOI) Mohammad Mohammadi-Bakhsh said Iranian airlines had bought ten passenger aircraft with an average age of 15-20 years over the past three months. It is not clear where they are coming from.

### **Sanctions cut off Russia by air**

The sanctions imposed on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine in February have been even more far-reaching than those placed on Iran. They have included bans on Russian aircraft using airspace and airports in the U.S., Canada, the European Union and the UK. In addition, aircraft manufacturers have stopped delivering new aircraft or providing spare parts or servicing.

More than 500 of the planes which Russia’s airlines use are leased from companies in Ireland or Bermuda, but the regulators in those countries have suspended or cancelled their air-worthiness certificates. In response, President Vladimir Putin has signed a law which allows Russian airlines to put these aircraft on a local register, which can then issue air-worthiness certificates.

International leasing companies have found themselves unable to reclaim their assets. Savelyev said on March 22 “We are looking for legal ways to negotiate with lessors and resolve this issue,

but so far we have not managed to do this. But we are not losing hope, and we are not handing anything back either. To do so would mean to leave ourselves without [an] air fleet.”

To date almost 800 planes out of a Russian fleet of some 1,367 aircraft have been transferred to Russia’s register, Savelyev said. At least some of the aircraft registered in Russia have not been deregistered elsewhere, in contravention of international aviation rules. The Irish Aviation Authority has identified at least 11 Boeing aircraft which are now dual registered, including planes flown by Rossiya and Alrosa.

### **International networks**

International flights by Russian airlines have been severely curtailed due to the sanctions. On March 8, national carrier Aeroflot suspended all international flights, except for its service to the Belarus capital Minsk, due to the sanctions.

Earlier in the month, the country’s second largest airline S7 had also suspended all international flights. Other carriers including Smartavia and Aeroflot’s low-cost subsidiary Pobeda have taken similar action.

However, in recent days Aeroflot has started piecing its international network back together. On March 14, it resumed flights to Bishkek and Osh in Kyrgyzstan and a week later began flying to Azerbaijan’s capital Baku once more. From April 2 it is due to restart flights to Tehran.

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### **8. Iran's foreign minister says nuclear deal closer 'than ever'**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic and world powers are closer than ever to reviving a 2015 nuclear deal.

"If the U.S. acts pragmatically, we are ready to have foreign ministers of countries belonging to the nuclear deal's joint commission gather in Vienna to finalize the agreement," Amirabdollahian said during a press conference in Damascus alongside his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad.

"We believe that today we are closer to an agreement in Vienna than ever before."

Following 11 months of negotiations, Iran and the United States are now saying that the ball is in the other's court to revive the accord, which would curb Tehran's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting tough sanctions on Iran's economy.

On Tuesday, the U.S. State Department said a return to the deal was neither certain nor imminent. [read more](#)

The talks were close to agreement until Russia demanded guarantees from the United States that sanctions imposed on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine would not hurt its trade with Iran.

"We have given our latest proposals to the U.S. through the European Union's Coordinator to reach a final deal. We reminded the Americans that we will not cross our red lines," Amirabdollahian said on Wednesday.

The foreign minister also said that Tehran welcomes new talks between Syria and certain Arab countries.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad travelled to the United Arab Emirates last week, his first visit to an Arab state since the Syrian war began in 2011, underlining warming ties with a U.S.-allied country that once backed rebels who sought his removal. [read more](#)

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### **9. U.S. says it is unclear if issues in Iran talks will be resolved**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday the United States and its allies have made progress in Iran nuclear talks but issues remain, and it is unclear if they will be resolved.

"We've made progress over the course of the last several weeks. There are still some issues left," Sullivan told reporters aboard Air Force One as President Joe Biden flew to Brussels. He said it is "unclear if this will come to closure or not" but the allies are trying to use diplomacy to put Iran's nuclear program "back in a box."

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## IRAQ

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### **10. Halabja anniversary takes political turn**

Al-Monitor, 23 Mar 22, Winthrop Rodgers

Snow flurries fell in Halabja on a cold and subdued day of remembrance, marking 34 years since the chemical attack perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's Baath Regime. The city's citizens usually come out in force to honor the victims of the genocide against the Kurdish people, but most stayed at home this year. They boycotted events organized by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a sign of anger at Kurdish and Iraqi politicians who pay what they consider lip service to them on the anniversary and then fail to live up to their promises.

"We have given sacrifices, so we should have our needs met. We shouldn't still have to demand the basics. That includes medical treatment and a normal life like any other people who have never made any sacrifices," Luqman Abdulqadir, head of the Halabja Chemical Victims' Society, told Al-Monitor in an interview.

"Yes, this year was different. After 34 years, the victims voiced their complaints," he added.

Brigadier General Thabet Gawas was returning from a personal visit when his car was hit by the blast in a suburb of the city, the sources said.

Aden's AIC Television announced his death and showed footage of a car in flames.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Gawas had long been an enemy of Yemen's Houthi movement, fighting the group in their northern stronghold of Saada even before they ousted the Saudi-backed government from the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014.

He participated in operations that expelled the Houthis from the southern Lahj region in 2015, the year that a Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen against the Iran-aligned movement.

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## EGYPT

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### **20. Egypt asks for IMF support to help it weather Ukraine crisis**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Heba Saleh

Egypt has asked for support from the IMF, the fund said, as the country struggles to weather the economic impact of Russia's invasion on Ukraine.

Cairo is facing mounting pressures on its public finances as Moscow's assault in Kyiv has sent grain prices soaring and increased the price of oil. Egypt is the world's biggest wheat importer, is heavily reliant on supplies from Russia and Ukraine and has a subsidized bread programme which feeds 70mn people.

Its predicament underscores how the war is rippling into Arab and African states that rely on food and energy imports.

"The rapidly changing global environment and spillovers related to the war in Ukraine are posing important challenges for countries around the world, including Egypt," said Celine Allard, IMF mission chief for Egypt in a statement released on Wednesday evening.

"In that context, the Egyptian authorities have requested the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) support to implement their comprehensive economic programme."

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous nation, has benefited from previous IMF loans and programs. In 2016 it secured a \$12bn loan over three years after a crippling foreign currency crisis as it emerged from the political upheavals that followed its 2011 revolution.

It also received \$8bn in 2020 to deal with the impact of the pandemic, making it one of the biggest borrowers from the fund after Argentina. At the time of the 2016 agreement it devalued the currency, which lost half its value against the dollar.

Analysts have been expecting this latest announcement after the country devalued its currency on Monday in a move seen as a prelude to discussions with the fund on a potential loan. Egypt also announced a package of tax breaks and increases in social spending worth \$7bn.

The Egyptian pound has fallen 14 per cent against the dollar since Monday when the central bank allowed its value to slip, citing the role of exchange rate flexibility as a shock absorber. The dollar traded at E£18.4 on Monday up from E£15.66 on Sunday.

Goldman Sachs said the devaluation “smooths the path for an IMF programme which we believe will help anchor confidence in Egypt’s fiscal and reform trajectory”.

Allard’s statement welcomed the devaluation and the expansion of the social protection network and added that “continued exchange rate flexibility will be essential to absorb external shocks and safeguard financial buffers during this uncertain time. Prudent fiscal and monetary policies will also be needed to preserve macroeconomic stability.”

The war has also hit the country’s tourism, a main source of foreign currency, because it stopped the flow of visitors from Russian and Ukraine – both important markets for the sector.

Foreign debt investors have also pulled billions of dollars from Egypt in recent months, adding to pressure on its currency. “There were around \$5bn of net outflows in September-December and further outflows accompanied news of the Ukraine conflict,” said Fitch Ratings agency in a note last week.

“In our view, these outflows reflect tighter global financial conditions, as well as investor concerns about Egypt’s external funding needs in the absence of an IMF programme, the impact of rising inflation on Egypt’s real interest rates, and the sustainability of Egypt’s exchange-rate level, after significant real appreciation in recent years.”

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **21. Qatar signs deal with Leonardo for first ever Navy Operations Center**

Breaking Defense, 23 Mar 22, Agnes Helou

The Qatari Navy has signed a new contract with Italy’s Leonardo to develop a Naval Operation Center (NOC) for the military service, the first of its kind in the country.

The center will ensure navy forces monitor and control Qatar’s territorial water, Exclusive Economic Zone and adjacent waters. The center, which will control radars and sea-based tracking in real time, will include electronic warfare systems.

“This agreement is very important for us,” Qatari Emiri Navy Chief Maj. Gen. Abdullah Hassan Al-Sulaiti told Breaking Defense. “The resulting maritime command and control center will be linked with the ships in the theater of operations. It is like the Navy’s eye in the sea.”

Located inside the naval base in Umm Al Houl, a new naval base adjacent to the Hamad commercial port in development south of Doha, the center will enhance cooperation with other national agencies in charge of maritime security, according to a statement by Leonardo.

“The Centre leverages on innovative systems and technologies as well as the full integration of air and maritime components,” the statement said.

Notably, Al-Sulaiti said that the physical center is already constructed, and just needs the equipment from Leonardo installed. “Its equipment will allow data storage, complete maritime monitoring and vision, so the decision making for the naval theatre of operation’s will be facilitated,” he said.

Al-Sulaiti disclosed that the center will be linked to a satellite allowing real time imagery, but he didn’t respond to Breaking Defense question about the worth of the deal or give details on what satellite would be connected to.

Under the agreement, the center will provide command, control and coordination of operations at sea allowing the Armed Forces to carry out integrated monitoring between all the sensors on the field.

Hence the navy will have a full integrated situational awareness to support operational and tactical decision-making process and rapid interventions along the entire chain of command.

The Umm Al Houl base was also the subject of a new letter of intent signed during the show between Barzan Holdings and BAE Systems to establish a center to provide technical and logistical services for the base. Technical services to support and maintain parts of the Qatari fleet are included in the deal.

A feasibility study for the project will be conducted, and implementation will be carried out after agreement and signing the official contract, according to the announcement.

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## **22. Ukraine War ignites Israeli debate over purpose of a Jewish State**

New York Times, 23 Mar 22, Isabel Kershner

Many of the refugees milling about the lobby of a Jerusalem hotel one recent morning had endured harrowing journeys from Ukraine, and in many cases were forced to leave close family members behind.

Now safely in Israel, they were picking up SIM cards issued by the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption and starting to contemplate next steps.

“I feel safe here, which is probably the most important thing for now,” said Lena Ivanova, 32, who owns a fashion business in Odessa and came to Israel with her two sons, Vadym, 9, and Evgen, 2. “Now I’m focusing on where to live. I need to make a lot of decisions.”

These were the lucky ones.

By virtue of their being Jewish, having at least one Jewish parent or grandparent or, as in Ms. Ivanova's case, having a Jewish spouse, they automatically qualified for Israeli citizenship upon landing at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Others were not as fortunate.

Of the more than 15,200 Ukrainians who have arrived in Israel since the war began last month, nearly 11,000 do not meet the citizenship threshold. Even though most have relatives or friends in Israel, they are considered refugees, not immigrants, and subject to stricter rules.

The influx has ignited an emotional debate over what it means to be a Jewish state, pitting the national imperative to maintain Israel's Jewish character against Jewish values that demand caring for those in need.

Some right-wing politicians and commentators have warned that the continued flow of non-Jews into the country could dilute its Jewish identity. Bezalel Smotrich, a far-right lawmaker, warned that Israel's acceptance of refugees would "flood the state of Israel with gentiles."

More liberal politicians and religious leaders have cited the biblical mandate to love the stranger and the ethical lessons of a long history of Jews being refugees themselves.

Nachman Shai, the left-wing minister of diaspora affairs, said the debate should focus on "the values of the state of Israel, because without them this is not a Jewish state."

Speaking by phone from a train platform packed with refugees in Warsaw, he added, "Anything bearing the message that we are closing the door is terrible and against our Jewish and human values."

Israel's right-wing interior minister, Ayelet Shaked, announced this month that Israel would take in up to 5,000 non-Jewish refugees on a temporary basis, and would allow 20,000 Ukrainian non-Jews already in the country, most of them illegally, to stay until the end of the fighting.

"The images of the war in Ukraine and the suffering of its citizens shake one's soul and do not allow us to remain indifferent," she said.

But the strict quota, which was already close to being filled when she made the announcement, prompted public outrage and criticism from other government ministers.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said Israel had a "moral duty" to take in more non-Jewish refugees.

"We won't close our gates and our hearts to those who lost everything," he said as he toured a border crossing between Ukraine and Romania. "In Israel there are nine million residents and our Jewish identity won't be harmed by a few more thousand refugees."

Ms. Shaked later liberalized the guidelines, saying any Ukrainians with relatives living in Israel would be allowed in temporarily and would not count toward the quota of 5,000. That policy too has been criticized as too restrictive because it penalized refugees without families in Israel.

On Sunday, in a virtual address to Israeli lawmakers, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, who is Jewish, begged them to show more compassion, comparing the suffering of Ukrainians to that of the Jewish people during the Holocaust.

"Our people are now scattered around the world," he said. "They are looking for security. They are looking for a way to stay in peace. As you once searched."

Israel has walked a fine line during the war, trying to aid Ukraine without alienating Russia, whose cooperation it needs to operate against Iranian forces in Syria. Israel has deep connections to both countries, and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has served as a mediator.

Jews have a complicated history with Ukraine. Once home to a large, thriving Jewish population, Ukraine was the scene of widespread pogroms in the early 1900s and some of the worst mass killings of the Holocaust during World War II, often carried out with the help of Ukrainian auxiliaries.

That history looms large in the current debate.

"We have our memories from when Jews were not accepted in so many Western countries," said Prof. Yedidia Stern, president of the Jewish People Policy Institute, an independent research group based in Jerusalem.

Some of those waiting at the borders are "the grandchildren of the people who were cruel to my grandparents," he added. "So what? They are human beings. The lesson of the Holocaust is not to behave the same way, but to open the door."

But to others, the lesson of the Holocaust is the need for a Jewish homeland, and for that reason some right-wing activists have objected to Israel taking in any more than a symbolic number of non-Jewish refugees, even on a temporary basis.

"We know that in Israel what is temporary becomes permanent," said Avichay Buaron, an Israeli lawyer and right-wing activist. "Uprooting them will be even harder."

Rancorous debate over immigration policy is hardly new in Israel, erupting recently over the fate of relatives of Israelis of Ethiopian origin and previously over asylum seekers, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea, who entered Israel illegally from Egypt.

But even for many of the lucky Ukrainians, life in Israel is likely to be complicated. While Israel's Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to many people with Jewish connections, religious law as applied by Israeli authorities is stricter.

Less than a quarter of the roughly 200,000 Ukrainians eligible for Israeli citizenship are considered Jewish under religious or Israeli law and those who are not could face problems such

as not being able to officially marry. Strictly Orthodox state religious authorities have a monopoly over legal Jewish weddings in Israel and there is no civil marriage.

“Once here, many will have to face the complexity of life in Israel for non-Jewish migrants,” said Alex Rif, a Ukrainian-born poet and an advocate for Russian speakers in Israel.

One solution, she said, lies in a more liberal conversion policy for those who want to convert to Judaism.

The religious services minister, Matan Kahana, has been promoting one version of such a reform but has met with stiff opposition from ultra-Orthodox leaders.

Mr. Kahana has also tried to promote a plan to narrow the scope of the Law of Return to exclude the non-Jewish grandchildren of a Jew and reduce the number of non-Jewish immigrants, but he found little support for the proposal in the current government.

Ms. Rif and other activists met last week with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and urged him “not to repeat the mistakes of the 90s,” including failures in integrating new immigrants into the work force, which led doctors and engineers to take cleaning jobs to make a living.

For the dozens of new immigrants from Ukraine being put up at Jerusalem’s Caesar Hotel, it was hard to think further than a day ahead. Many had left behind elderly parents, as well as husbands, brothers and sons of draft age who could not leave the country.

Viacheslav Kolpaka, 65, a physician from Kyiv, had come with his wife, Svitlana, and a teenage daughter, Daria. One son was already living in Israel. The other was unable to leave Ukraine.

“How can a person feel who left their home, everything they had collected in life, and fled with only the clothes on their back?” Dr. Kolpaka said. His hope, he said, was to be able contribute to his new home by working in his profession.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **23. Top Russian military leaders repeatedly decline calls from U.S., prompting fears of ‘sleepwalking into war’**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, John Hudson

Repeated attempts by the United States’ top defense and military leaders to speak with their Russian counterparts have been rejected by Moscow for the last month, leaving the world’s two largest nuclear powers in the dark about explanations for military movements and raising fears of a major miscalculation or battlefield accident.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have tried to set up phone calls with Defense Minister

Sergei Shoigu and Gen. Valery Gerasimov but the Russians “have so far declined to engage,” said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby in a statement Wednesday.

The attempted calls by Austin and Milley, which have not previously been reported, come as Russia conducts operations near the borders of NATO members Poland and Romania while the United States and its European allies conduct air-policing operations over the Baltic Sea and pour weapons and equipment into Ukraine by ground transport.

Moscow and Washington maintain a deconfliction channel but current and former officials say contact from higher-ranking military leaders is needed to avoid unnecessary escalation or confusion.

“There is a high risk of escalation without the firebreak of direct contact between the most senior officials,” said James Stavridis, who served as the Supreme Allied Commander at NATO from 2009 to 2013. “Very young people are flying in jets, operating warships, and conducting combat operations in the Ukrainian war. They are not seasoned diplomats, and their actions in the heat of operations can be misunderstood.”

“We must avoid a scenario of NATO and Russia sleepwalking into war because senior leaders can’t pick up a phone and explain to each other what is happening,” he added.

Russia’s recent use of hypersonic missiles and other sophisticated weaponry against targets in western Ukraine have underscored the threat of spillover into a broader confrontation.

“The risks are obviously elevated currently,” said Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. “Russia is striking targets in western Ukraine, which are not far from the border with NATO members, and the Ukrainian Air Force apparently continues to operate from that region, which means there is a risk that its aircraft could be mistaken for NATO aircraft across the border.”

U.S. defense officials have described the deconfliction phone line as a tactical mechanism to avoid miscalculations, especially when it comes to protecting NATO airspace or territory, but its functionality can be limited.

“It’s not set up to be a complaint line where you can just call in and just grouse about stuff,” said a U.S. defense official this week when asked about whether anything had been communicated through the channel. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon.

Sam Charap, a senior political scientist at Rand Corporation, said calls by Austin and Milley serve a “fundamentally different purpose” than the deconfliction channel.

“One is about tactical accident avoidance. The other about strategic engagement,” he said. “It’s always important to maintain the strategic level to communicate our interests clearly and better understand theirs. When there’s no communication at that level, their worst-case assumptions, often based on poor information, are more likely to drive their behavior.”

As Russia's battlefield setbacks become more pronounced and the conflict nears its second month, U.S. officials are concerned that Russian President Vladimir Putin may escalate militarily in the hopes of changing the trajectory of the war. As more dangerous weaponry and tactics are deployed, the risks of a wider conflict grow.

"A nightmare scenario would be a Russian missile or attack aircraft that destroys a U.S. command post across the Polish-Ukrainian border," said Stavridis, a retired admiral. "A local commander might respond immediately, thinking the event was a precursor to a wider attack. This could lead to rapid and irreversible escalation, to include potential use of nuclear weapons."

Stavridis said when he was Supreme Allied Commander, he could dial his Russian counterpart anytime "and did on several occasions to clarify a situation and de-escalate."

The Pentagon holds the view that engagement between the U.S. and Russian defense leaders is "critically important at this time," Kirby said. Besides the deconfliction channel, the United States and Russia can also engage through the defense attache at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow or the relaying of messages to the Ministry of Defense.

Communications between the United States and Russia have been much more sparse since the war began last month. The U.S. ambassador to Russia, John J. Sullivan, has met with Russian officials most frequently with on and off visits and calls in Moscow. President Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, spoke to his counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev, last week for the first time since the start of the conflict. Some U.S. and Russian military officials met last week at the Russian Ministry of Defense, CNN first reported.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has not attempted any conversations with his counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, since the start of the conflict, according to U.S. officials.

It remains unclear why Russia's top generals have refused to hold calls with their U.S. counterparts.

"I suspect that the problem lies with the Russian insistence that this is a 'special military operation' and unwillingness to admit the real nature of the war," said Angela Stent, a Russia scholar at Georgetown University who served as a senior intelligence officer in the Bush administration.

The generals may also be waiting on Putin's approval to make the calls, given the high stakes of the conflict, and he may not be signing off, Charap said.

Another theory is that Putin may now view the United States as a determined adversary bent on his downfall and not worth engaging. Russian officials bristled at Biden calling Putin a "war criminal," saying it could lead to a complete break in relations.

Biden has sought to avoid a conflict by keeping U.S. troops out of Ukraine and U.S. aircraft out of its airspace.

“You’re talking about avoiding incidents with aircraft or at sea,” said Ben Hodges, a retired Army officer who served as commanding general of the U.S. Army Europe. “I’m sure they would’ve wanted to convey to Gerasimov and Shoigu that Russian pilots should not be launching missiles too close to the Polish border, but they would also want to talk about other places, not just Ukraine, where you have Russian aircraft.”

“I would also imagine they would want to convey here’s what we’re doing, don’t interpret what we’re doing as a provocative act,” he added.

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#### **24. Inside a rare US meeting with a Russian general in Moscow**

CNN, 23 Mar 22, Barbara Starr and Jeremy Herb

A rare face-to-face meeting between Russian and US military officials last week led to an "outburst" of emotion from a normally stoic Russian general, a "revealing moment" that the Americans present believe hinted at larger morale problems in Russia's military, according to a closely held US military readout of what transpired.

The readout, which was reviewed by CNN, describes the perspective of the two defense attachés who attended and their own impressions of what they saw and heard. It does not offer a definitive explanation of the Russian general's behavior. Readouts of sensitive meetings are never made public by the military or intelligence community because they are scrutinized for clues about an adversary's thinking and intentions.

The meeting, held at the Russian ministry of defense in Moscow, is a rare instance of Russian and American defense officials sitting down in person since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. The readout describes the meeting as tense, with visible signs of stress on the Russian side.

It makes particular note of the behavior of Russian Major General Yevgeny Ilyin, deputy chief of the main directorate of international cooperation who has a long track record of dealing with American officials. In a break from typical practice, Ilyin spoke with no notes or set talking points, according to the readout.

As the meeting was breaking up, one US defense attaché "casually inquired" about Ilyin's family roots in Ukraine, and the Russian general's "stoic demeanor suddenly became flushed and agitated," according to the readout. The Americans reported Ilyin responded "yes," and said that he was born in Dnipropetrovsk before moving with his family to Donetsk, where he went to school.

But the US officials reported Ilyin then added that the current situation in Ukraine is "tragic and I am very depressed over it" -- and then he walked out without shaking hands, according to the readout.

It's unclear why the meeting was held or the circumstances behind it. CNN does not know if there's additional documentation describing the meeting. The readout does not include the names of the American attachés in the meeting, and CNN has been unable to learn their identities. The

Pentagon and State Department declined to comment. CNN has reached out to the Russian Ministry of Defense for comment.

The US team had the sense, according to the readout, that Ilyin stopped just short of accusing US and Ukraine of atrocities against his family. It's not clear what specifically caused them to reach that conclusion, but one of the attachés said, "The fire in his eyes and flustered demeanor left a chill down the spine."

The readout said one of the attaché's jaw dropped, and both Americans reported they had never "witnessed such an outburst by Russian counterparts at an official meeting."

US meetings with Russian officials are typically scripted affairs. While it's not clear from the summary what precisely led to Ilyin's reaction, the two US defense attachés who attended the meeting assessed the general's reaction as a possible sign of morale problems.

"At the very least, it is clear that morale problems among Russian forces are not limited to front-line troops," the readout concludes.

### **A glimpse into US-Russia military relations**

The readout provides a peek behind the scenes of a Russian military that has failed in its apparent goal of quickly taking Kyiv after launching the invasion last month. Senior US military officials have said publicly and privately that the morale of Russian military forces is suffering as they enter the fourth week of their invasion of Ukraine -- an invasion that US officials think Russian President Vladimir Putin believed would go much more quickly and smoothly than it has.

In an interview Tuesday with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov disputed US assessments that Russian troops had morale problems. "You would probably have to doubt this information," Peskov said. "You have to doubt it, and you have to think twice whether it is true or not."

The Kremlin has continued since well before the invasion to refuse direct high-level contact between senior US generals and Russian counterparts making this meeting one of increased interest. The US has a deconfliction phone line of communication with the Russian military that has been tested daily but has not been used.

The US believes that the refusal for high-level meetings is due to Kremlin worries that the encounters would show them to be vulnerable if they allowed such meetings, because it risks a tacit admission that an abnormal situation exists, according to the readout.

Even before the remarkable end to the meeting, the US officials reported that Ilyin's stoicism began to wilt in the meeting when the Americans called the Ukraine situation a crisis, and the Russian general quickly "corrected and countermanded" them.

The Russian general did not deviate in the discussions from the win-at-all-costs Russian strategy of the invasion of Ukraine, according to the readout. In this instance, the two Americans believe

they witnessed a Russian general who was "clearly in distress over the situation but who had nowhere to project his anger except in line with Kremlin's state sponsored narrative," according to the readout.

The readout notes the Americans are not discounting the encounter may have underscored the hardening of the Russian position on the war and the Russian military officials' need to fulfill their orders because they have no other choice.

A senior defense official said last week that the US has "picked up anecdotal indications that morale is not high" in some of the Russian forces' military units.

"We certainly have indications that morale is a growing problem inside the Russian forces that are fighting in Ukraine," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby told reporters Tuesday. "As time goes on, and they continue to fail to achieve the progress on the ground that they want to achieve, we've seen increasing indications that morale and unit cohesion is a problem."

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## **25. After Iraq and Afghanistan, Marine Corps reserve turns to deterrence**

Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Alex J. Rouhandeh and Naveed Jamali

Four weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, Russia continues to struggle against its lesser-equipped adversary. As with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, even the most dominant military forces can falter when ill-equipped for the situation at hand.

Lieutenant General David Bellon, commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, told Newsweek that as the United States finds itself in an era of great power competition, bolstering the capabilities of the armed forces should be seen as a priority.

"We are in an era now, often referred to as the great power competition, where deterrence is a significant part of our mission," Bellon told Newsweek. "To do that, you have to be forward deployed, you have to be competing and pushing back where our adversaries are pushing forward."

Over the last 20 years, the United States has relied heavily on reserve forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Marine Corps reservists played an especially active role in those two wars, with some having completed five combat tours abroad. These troops now stand poised to pass on their knowledge to younger members of the Corps.

The experience of Marine leadership fosters a greater level of trust between senior and junior members of the Corps, Bellon said. Not only has Russia's military leadership faced questions over their decision making, but questions of morale in the ranks have risen amid reports that troops were told they were heading into a training exercise rather than combat prior to the invasion of Ukraine.

As Russia's military is marred by morale and logistical challenges. Bellon said Marine Reserves are leveraging what makes them different from Putin's forces to come out ahead.

The maximum score for each test event is 100 points, and soldiers must get at least 60 points on each event to pass. If a soldier fails, they will be able to retake the test after several months but will be discharged from the Army if they fail twice.

With the changes, the Army will join the other military services, which also have tiered event requirements based on gender and age for their tests.

The new standards will only be applied to the regular fitness test given to all soldiers annually and will not change the tests troops need to take to qualifying for certain Army jobs such as combat positions or specialties.

The new plan will also be under a trial period, with active-duty soldiers to begin taking the test in April but not penalized if they fail. The test will then officially take effect in October, to be taken twice a year.

National Guard and Reserve soldiers, meanwhile, will have until April 2023 to take the test without penalties, and will take the test once a year.

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## **27. Israel blocked Ukraine from buying Pegasus spyware, fearing Russia's anger**

The Guardian, 23 Mar 22, Stephanie Kirchgaessner

Israel blocked Ukraine from buying NSO Group's Pegasus spyware for fear that Russian officials would be angered by the sale of the sophisticated hacking tool to a regional foe, according to people familiar with the matter.

The revelation, following a joint investigation by the Guardian and Washington Post, offers new insight into the way Israel's relationship with Russia has at times undermined Ukraine's offensive capabilities and contradicted US priorities.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has been critical of Israel's stance since Russia launched its full and bloody invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, saying in a recent address before members of Israel's Knesset that Israel would have to "give answers" on why it had not given weapons to Ukraine or applied sanctions on Russians.

People with direct knowledge of the matter say that, dating back to at least 2019, Ukrainian officials lobbied Israel to try to convince it to license the spyware tool for use by Ukraine.

But those efforts were rebuffed and NSO Group, which is regulated by the Israeli ministry of defense, was never permitted to market or sell the company's spyware to Ukraine.

When it is successfully deployed against a target, Pegasus can be used to hack into any mobile phone and intercept phone conversations, read text messages, or view a user's photographs. It can also be used as a remote listening device, because a government user of the spyware can use it to remotely turn a mobile phone recorder on and off.

Recent press reports, including by the Pegasus project, a media consortium that investigated NSO and included the Guardian and Washington Post, has focused on how the spyware has been used by NSO's government clients to target journalists and human rights defenders around the world. The consortium's reporting has also showed how, from Hungary to Saudi Arabia, sales of Pegasus were often aligned with Israeli foreign policy.

The spyware has also been used against senior government and diplomatic officials, from Spain to France to Uganda, in cases that were seen as attempts by some countries to use the tool to conduct domestic or international espionage.

NSO has said its spyware is meant to be used by government clients to target serious criminals and terrorists. It has also said it investigates serious allegations of abuse.

People with knowledge of the matter said that in most routine cases, Israel's ministry of defense first grants NSO permission to market Pegasus to a government client and then, following a review, either allows or blocks a sale of the technology.

One senior Ukrainian intelligence official said Israel's decision had left Ukrainian officials feeling "confused". The official said he did not have total visibility into why Ukraine was denied access to the powerful spying tool but added that he believed the US government supported Ukraine's efforts.

Sources close to the matter said Israel's decision reflected a reluctance to agitate Russia, which has a close intelligence relationship with Israel. The sources said Israel feared that granting Ukraine the ability to target Russia-based mobile phone numbers through Pegasus would be viewed as an act of aggression against Russian intelligence services.

It was not the only time one of Russia's key regional foes had been denied some access to Pegasus. People familiar with the matter say that Estonia, a Nato member, acquired access to Pegasus in 2019 but was informed by NSO in August that year that the company would not permit Estonian officials to use the spyware against Russian targets.

The Estonian ministry of defense spokeswoman Susan Lilleväli declined to comment.

In response to a detailed set of questions, NSO issued a one-line statement: "NSO continues to be subjected to inaccurate media reports regarding alleged clients, which are based on hearsay, political innuendo and untruths."

The Israeli defense ministry on Tuesday also responded to a list of questions by issuing a statement that did not directly address most of them.

"The state of Israel regulates marketing and export of cyber products in accordance with the 2007 Defense Export Control Act," the statement said.

It added: "Policy decisions regarding export controls take into account security and strategic considerations, which include adherence to international arrangements. As a matter of policy, the state of Israel approves the export of cyber products exclusively to governmental entities, for

lawful use, and only for the purpose of preventing and investigating crime and counter terrorism, under end-use/end-user declarations provided by the acquiring government.”

Nearly a month into the war, Ukraine’s armed forces – though massively outnumbered – have surprised outside observers by containing Russian military advances, even as Russia has bombarded civilian targets and is seeking to raze the port city of Mariupol.

Ukrainian officials declined to comment on Pegasus or their overall efforts to seek powerful surveillance technology.

But Mykhailo Fedorov, a vice-prime minister who oversees digital technology for Ukraine, said: “The government of Israel is at this time not participating in any discussion or facilitation regarding offensive tech, but we have ongoing conversations with a lot of the Israeli companies in the market and they’re at various stages. But again, let me say this: we have enough capability to continue winning and we’re adding new tools, including emerging tools, every day.”

Experts say Israel has political motives to stay close to Russia, from its hopes that Moscow will refrain from signing a revival of the Iran nuclear deal, which is close to completion in Vienna, to its reliance on Russia to mount attacks on Iranian positions inside Syria.

Ukraine’s request for Pegasus was previously reported by Israel’s Channel 12.

Zelenskiy’s address to the Knesset last weekend was delivered as the government of Israel’s prime minister, Naftali Bennett, who is brokering negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, has faced criticism for adopting what is in effect a neutral stance on the war. Bennett has spoken directly to Zelenskiy and Putin while his foreign minister has met with his US counterpart, Antony Blinken.

While Bennett was ultimately persuaded to support a UN general assembly resolution on 2 March to condemn Russia for its illegal invasion, Zelenskiy complained about Israel’s inaction in his Knesset address. Israel also refused to sell its Iron Dome missile defense system to Ukraine last year, the Israeli news organization Ynet recently reported.

“We ask why we’re not receiving weapons from you, why you haven’t applied sanctions on Russia, and on Russian businesses. You will need to give answers, and to be able to live with those answers,” he said in the address.

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**28. US military members who survive Ukraine War may face 'consequences' at home**  
Newsweek, 23 Mar 22, Tom O’Connor and Naveed Jamali

Members of the U.S. military who travel to Ukraine to join the fight against Russian troops in a grueling war and live to tell the tale may return home only to face administrative or legal ramifications.

Days after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the onset of what he called a "special military operation" against neighboring Ukraine nearly a month ago, Kyiv established a new foreign fighters' force, the International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine. Since then, Ukrainian officials have said the volunteer militia has garnered tens of thousands of recruits from at least 52 countries, including the United States.

In fact, the U.S. has regularly been cited by Ukrainian officials as among the most (if not the most) prolific countries of origin, with more than 7,000 U.S. citizens having applied, according a figure provided to Newsweek by Ukraine's embassy in Washington, which noted that "not all of them are approved and not all of them are going to Ukraine."

And while no readily apparent legal barriers exist for U.S. civilians to sign up, the situation is far more complicated for active service members and reservists, who must notify their commanders of such travel and may face disciplinary action if they do not.

Reached for comment on what these protocols entail, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence referred Newsweek to Security Executive Agent Directive-3 (SEAD-3).

SEAD-3-covered individuals, which includes those who have access to classified information or hold a sensitive position, are required to notify their command or agency head of all unofficial foreign travel. Failure to do so may result in the "revocation of national security eligibility."

And even more serious actions may be pursued in the case of U.S. military personnel joining the ranks of a foreign country in active combat with a nuclear-armed rival.

Asked about what such recourse could be taken against U.S. reservists who go to Ukraine to fight, a Pentagon spokesperson told Newsweek that "due to the complex nature of reserve member statuses — regardless of whether they are members of the Selected Reserves, Retired Reserves, or Individual Ready Reserve — the answer isn't simple."

"For that reason, we are looking at the implications and consequences that would be associated with reserve members fighting in a foreign country on behalf of another government," the spokesperson said. "As each member is an American citizen, there are other considerations individuals must factor into a decision to fight in the Ukraine to include potential impacts to their citizenship, criminal or legal implications, etc."

While some mechanisms for the Pentagon to monitor the whereabouts of U.S. active-duty service members exist, the situation is more complex when it comes to reservists or members of the National Guard, who answer to states rather than the federal government. The lack of a clear-cut, daily-updated process has raised questions as to whether the U.S. military would even be immediately aware if members had already gone to Ukraine.

The United Kingdom, a NATO ally of the U.S. and another ardent supporter of Ukraine, faced a similar situation earlier this month when the U.K. Defense Ministry acknowledged that four of its soldiers had gone AWOL (absent without leave) and may have traveled to Ukraine. Doing so, the ministry warned, would be punishable by court martial.

From Ukraine's point of view, however, active duty or reserve status is not a barrier for membership.

Corporal Damien Magrou, spokesperson for Ukraine's International Legion, told Newsweek that the Legion was "aware of the legal constraints, both for active servicemen and other American citizens," but that this "is not a disqualifying factor" for aspiring recruits from the U.S. and other countries.

"Their enlisting in the Legion is perfectly legal under Ukrainian law, it's perfectly legal under international humanitarian law," Magrou said. "And from there on, it is not my role as a spokesperson for the International Legion of Ukraine, which is a part of the Ukrainian Army, to go and comment on possible consequences or whatever for our American recruits under American law."

He said that Ukraine's embassy in Washington and other consulates that accept applications to volunteer provide a "disclaimer" as to how such actions could be subject to U.S. laws, so "all of our recruits are aware of or should be aware of the legal situation in their home country."

"In this context, all of our recruits come in full knowledge of the situation and they make this decision themselves," Magrou said. "It's not for us to stop them if they want to come."

Despite the overwhelming U.S. support politically, economically and militarily to Ukraine's resistance against the Russian incursion, President Joe Biden's administration is not encouraging U.S. nationals outside of the military to join the fight either.

"Regarding volunteer fighters, Ukrainians have shown their courage and they are calling on every resource and lever they have to defend themselves," a State Department spokesperson told Newsweek. "We applaud their bravery. However, our Travel Advisory remains: U.S. citizens should not travel to Ukraine, and those in Ukraine should depart immediately if it is safe to do so using commercial or other privately available options for ground transportation."

The State Department issued a Level 4 "Do Not Travel" advisory last month in the leadup to the conflict, as U.S. officials repeatedly warned that Moscow was planning an attack amid an unprecedented Russian military buildup along Ukraine's borders in spite of Kremlin denials.

With war having erupted, the U.S. has only doubled down on such warnings to those may seek to travel to Ukraine.

"We urge all to carefully consider routes and the risks of travel, because Ukraine's roads may be crowded, exposed to combat operations, or have deteriorated infrastructure due to damage to bridges, roads, and facilities," the State Department spokesperson said.

"U.S. citizens who travel to Ukraine, especially in order to participate in fighting there, face significant risks to personal safety, including the very real risk of capture or death," the spokesperson added. "The United States is not able to provide assistance to evacuate U.S. citizens from Ukraine, including those U.S. citizens who travel to Ukraine to engage in the ongoing war."

The spokesperson also referenced another ominous development for those in the U.S. who seek to join the fight.

"In addition to other risks to personal safety, U.S. citizens should be aware that Russia has stated it intends to treat foreign fighters in Ukraine as 'mercenaries,' rather than as lawful combatants," the spokesperson said. "While the United States expects Russia to respect all of its obligations under the law of war, in light of this statement, U.S. citizens who are detained by Russian authorities in Ukraine may be subject to potential attempts at criminal prosecution and may be at heightened risk of mistreatment."

The Russian Defense Ministry has repeatedly warned foreigners not to join the fight, and has claimed to have conducted high-precision cruise missile attacks against positions hosting foreign fighters, including those in the provinces of Lviv, Zhytomyr and Rivne, counting hundreds of casualties among Ukrainian troops and international recruits.

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev warned Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, directly on the matter during a phone call between the two last week, in which the senior Kremlin official told his White House counterpart "to stop Washington's support for neo-Nazis and terrorists in Ukraine and facilitating the transfer of foreign mercenaries to the conflict zone, as well as to refuse to continue supplying weapons to the Kiev regime."

Such steps, Patrushev warned, "will only lead to further escalation."

On Wednesday, Russia's ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, also issued a warning on the topic.

"Pumping the Kiev regime with weapons and sending foreign mercenaries to the Ukrainian territory is irresponsible and extremely dangerous," Antonov said in a statement. "The militarization of Ukraine poses a direct threat to the European and global security."

The Biden administration has sought to walk a careful line in backing Ukraine's war effort, while holding back on certain offensive weapons systems such as fighter jets, and dismissing the possibility of declaring a no-fly-zone or sending U.S. troops to fight Russia, a scenario the president has said would lead to "World War III."

While the U.S. and Ukrainian officials as well as a number of experts have dismissed Putin's "denazification" justification for initiating hostilities against Ukraine, Newsweek has previously reported on far-right elements traveling from abroad, including the U.S., to join Ukraine's fight against pro-Moscow separatists that first rose up in the eastern Donbas region eight years ago amid political unrest that brought to power a pro-West government in Kyiv.

Forces associated within Ukraine's far-right such as the National Guard's Azov Regiment as well as nationalist political paramilitaries like Right Sector and even Russia-linked extremist groups like the neo-Nazi Wotanjugend have held a prominent place on the battlefield alongside a broad representation of Ukrainian society against the Kremlin's attack. So far, however, there is no evidence of a mass influx of far-right militants traveling to enter the fray.

Speaking on behalf of the International Legion, Magrou told Newsweek that "Ukraine is fighting on the side of different democratic freedoms, and one of these freedoms is freedom of conscience."

"Active military servicemen in Ukraine, including Legionnaires, have a duty of restraint when it comes to expressing their own views publicly and this includes both religious and political views," Magrou said. "So as long as the person is respecting their duty restraint and is not expressing any political points of view which may be controversial, then they can have whatever opinions or convictions they want, that is part of their freedom of conscience."

"If however, the recruit is taking a public stance or has in the past taken very public stances, with, let's say controversial, political, political convictions, that may reflect badly on the Legion," he added, "then that is one of the factors that we'll look at before they're accepted."

Magrou emphasized, however, that "there is no such thing as a blanket ban based off one more other political association, nor do I think it would be appropriate to operate in that way."

But he added that "when it comes to actual hate groups or extremist groups, if they do have public links to these groups, obviously that's one of the factors that we'll take into consideration" when reviewing applications.

The Biden administration, for its part, has encouraged U.S. citizens to help in other ways, including through U.S. AID's Center for International Disaster Information portal.

"The American people have demonstrated an incredible outpouring of support for Ukraine in the face of unprovoked Russian aggression," the State Department spokesperson told Newsweek. "It truly reflects the generosity and compassion of the American people."

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## **29. From Afghanistan to Ukraine: How a team from Silicon Valley is helping evacuate people from war**

Vanity Fair, 23 Mar 22, Nick Bilton

The San Francisco peninsula is now home to a slew of private security companies filled with ex-military, former international counterterrorism experts, and government officials who were in charge of cyber-warfare with other nation states. The job of these security outfits is to protect the well-being and safety of not only the richest people on the planet, but also the biggest tech companies on earth. Roderick Jones, who founded one such company, Concentric, works at the center of this growing industry. Before moving to Silicon Valley to work with some of the most prominent CEOs on the planet, Jones used to work for Scotland Yard's Special Branch on international terrorism and also protected a high-profile British cabinet member.

While Jones could easily be a central character in a John le Carré novel (who knows, maybe he secretly is), he's been getting more attention in the tech world lately for a new nonprofit he started called the 188 Foundation, which is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit with one simple goal: getting people out of war zones using donations from the tech world. He works with a network of

volunteers as well as a team of employees who used to work for a variety of clandestine divisions of the government made up of three-letter acronyms (who could also be characters in the same le Carré novel). Currently, Jones has a team in Ukraine helping to get people to safety in Poland and elsewhere, almost exclusively using donations from people who work for tech companies. The team of volunteers in Ukraine—56 people in all, unarmed, and six dogs, across 19 separate and unique operations—have spent the past three weeks shepherding babies and families out of the country against the backdrop of falling bombs, gunfire, and power outages. While Jones can't go into the exact specifics of each operation for security reasons, he says the team has been evacuating some of the country's most vulnerable, including a blind woman they got out of the center of the war. The following is an edited conversation with Jones.

**Vanity Fair: You have a team in Ukraine right now getting people out of the country. How is it going so far?**

Roderick Jones: The team is led by a couple of experts from the U.S. national security community who are familiar with the country and in particular the Russian threat. They speak the local languages and have the capability to move around the non-occupied parts of the country. Their approach is similar to how we do a lot of private security jobs around the world by sending in domain experts from our company who then integrate local capabilities into the team. The evacuations of citizens all require constant intelligence analysis of Russian presence and occupation, logistical coordination, connecting people to vehicles with the necessary fuel, and permissions and specific paperwork to pass through countless checkpoints.

**You first started this new kind of work in Afghanistan. How successful was that operation, and how did it come to be?**

We evacuated over 188 people from Mazar-i-Sharif in the north of Afghanistan, approximately eight hours before the last American soldiers left the country. Our flight of passengers was Afghan citizens (and their families) who had aided the United States—they'd worked on empowering women, or had worked on the in-country polio eradication efforts. As the situation deteriorated in Kabul, I was initially contacted by a good friend who was trying to help evacuate some of the local Afghans and who had helped document human rights abuses in the country. As a security company, we maintain a large network of people globally, and we were able to connect resources, contacts, and capabilities together rapidly to conduct a rescue. As a result of the war and subsequent success of rescuing people, we founded our own 501(c)(3), the 188 Foundation—after the number of people we were able to save. After that, we knew there would be more opportunities in which we could provide security solutions to philanthropic initiatives, but we didn't think it would come as swiftly, nor on the mass scale, as the Ukraine humanitarian crisis did.

Afghanistan had so many more diplomatic hurdles to leap over than Ukraine. Getting an aircraft into a Taliban-controlled airport and paying for it was hard enough, but then finding a country to take Afghan refugees was an extra layer of effort, which took tremendous levers to work out. The Mexican government agreed to help us, and that is how our flight managed to take off and land in the UAE before flying on to Mexico City. Afghanistan was also unique because the citizens we were focused on rescuing were also being specifically targeted by the Taliban, thus

their movement within the country needed to be covert. Ukraine is very different in that it borders the E.U., who have agreed to take any Ukrainian over a land border. So our focus has been more on helping less-able-bodied people to leave areas under Russian attack. The movement of these citizens can be more overt due to a lack of specific targeting, but is still delicate from areas Russia is actively and indiscriminately bombing.

**You recently got a blind woman out of Ukraine? How did that happen?**

One of our more difficult evacuations, so far, was for an elderly blind woman abandoned in a large apartment complex in Irpin. Her U.S.-based daughter contacted us to rescue her. Unfortunately, Russian forces had her village surrounded. Our evacuation teams attempted access for six straight days but were unsuccessful. Worse, the bombing had taken out the power in the apartment building, so the woman couldn't charge her cell phone; meaning, she didn't know we were trying to get to her. Finally, on the sixth day, we found a very narrow window [and] had her daughter in the U.S. connect us with her daughter in Germany who could walk our operators through the apartment building to find her exact location and safely exfiltrate her to the Hungarian border.

**There are Ukrainians who work for Silicon Valley companies. Have you been able to get any of those employees out of the country?**

We actually had some former tech contractors of ours join the military when the war started, so [we] are well aware of the challenges facing the tech community there. We moved a group of tech workers to the western part of Ukraine as well as evacuating some tech workers' families. Martial law exists in Ukraine, so any fighting-age males—which are the majority of tech workers—are legally required to join the military and cannot leave the country. Our team has relayed stories of fighting-age males being caught attempting to leave the country and tied to trees overnight before being drafted into the military again the next day. Ukraine is facing an existential threat, so they are acting accordingly.

**Where's the money coming from to fund these operations?**

The funds tend to come from two main sources: tech entrepreneurs who are in our network and want to act during these crises, as well as veterans communities who were widely activated during the Afghanistan collapse and are still engaged philanthropically. For the Ukrainian efforts, we have benefited from having more time to engage potential donors, so [we] have received donations from private citizens eager to support the 188 Foundation and its cause.

**Would these kinds of philanthropic rescue operations be possible without the internet?**

The internet has enabled a variety of rapid networks to build quickly in order to safely move people. It might be an overused phrase already, but the open-source and direct nature of this kind of philanthropy is here to stay. Individuals around the world can connect to the problem and immediately donate their expertise or money to the cause. Of course there are some downsides to this in terms of the integrity of the approach, but it allows for rapid philanthropic networks to form organically, set objectives, and execute faster than traditional organizations. In both

Afghanistan and in Ukraine, the power of private citizens to work on a seemingly impossible problem was fundamentally made possible due to the connected nature of everyone involved. The organic nature of the networks is also appealing to donors, as the money donated goes directly to the cause, with little, if anything, spent on overhead.

**You work in security in Silicon Valley. Do you expect an increase in cyberattacks (from Russia) toward the West because of the help being offered to Ukraine?**

Like everyone, I'm surprised there hasn't been more of a cyber-backlash from Russia, but I expect it's coming and will probably be financial. The nature of the conflict in Ukraine, so far, has been straight from the 20th century, but the Western response led by the United States has been to weaponize finance, with a sanction regime designed to fundamentally weaken the Russian state. What we should therefore expect is an increase in financial crime as Russia seeks to fight back in that space. Ransomware was already a massive issue for most companies; it seems logical that more and increasingly sophisticated attempts will be made to blackmail Western companies in order to inflict economic damage on the West, or as an act of retribution for Ukrainian support during the conflict.

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**30. US mulls larger permanent force in Europe, sends more missiles to Ukraine**

Defense One, 23 Mar 22, Tara Copp

The latest U.S. planeloads of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons for Ukraine are expected to arrive in Europe this week, then be rushed into the country via ground routes, a senior defense official told reporters Wednesday.

The Stinger and Javelin missiles aboard those planes are part of the \$800 million in additional security assistance President Joe Biden announced for Ukraine last week.

The weapons delivery is part of the ongoing international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which could require more U.S. troops to head overseas now, but ultimately also produce a larger and permanent U.S. and NATO footprint.

Biden, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken landed in Brussels on Wednesday for an emergency NATO summit and European Council meeting.

"The security environment in Europe is different now," the defense official said. "And it will be different no matter what the outcome is of this war. I think it's safe to say that the United States, as well as other NATO nations, will be taking a hard look at whether we have the footprint right and whether the posture is appropriate to the new security environment that results from all this. ... We're going to be open to discussing with our allies what the new security environment is going to require of every NATO ally, including us."

As part of its immediate response to Russia's actions, the U.S. has deployed more than 14,000 troops to NATO's eastern front. Sending in even more short-term forces is a possibility, the senior defense official said.

On Wednesday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced the alliance would deploy four more battle groups to bolster defenses for Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

"In terms of the immediate need to bolster the Eastern flank with temporary forces, the secretary is obviously looking at this every day and monitoring it," the U.S. defense official said. "We're not going to take off the table the possibility that he will flow more forces in from the United States or reposition them from elsewhere in Europe."

Now, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reached its 28th day, Ukrainian forces have repelled some attacks by ground troops around the country and some Russian forward elements have stopped their advances short of reaching Kyiv. But some of those stalled Russian units are also now establishing defensive positions.

Russia continues to fire long-range missiles at Ukrainian targets; the Pentagon's estimate has climbed past 1,200.

Also Wednesday, Stoltenberg said NATO will send protective gear to Ukraine to use in the event of chemical or biological weapons attacks. The U.S. defense official said its aid does not include that gear, because it was not seen as an immediate priority.

The U.S. shipments will include "small arms, ammunition, Stingers, Javelins, body armor, and helmets," for the vast number of Ukrainian civilian men and women who have remained in the country to fight.

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### **31. As allies meet, splits emerge in NATO about how to deter Russia**

Washington Post, 23 Mar 22, Michael Birnbaum, Karoun Demirjian and John Hudson

As President Biden landed in Brussels on Wednesday for urgent talks about Russia's war on Ukraine, splits were emerging within NATO and in Washington about how to deter the Kremlin from further escalation. Allied leaders are discussing whether it is best to keep Russia guessing about what will trigger a bigger military response or to outline precisely what would draw NATO into a conflict.

Some NATO policymakers in Europe worry that there has been too much public messaging about what the alliance won't do — send its troops into Ukraine, nor, for the moment, send fighter jets for which Kyiv has been campaigning. With the threat of Russian nuclear and chemical weapons looming over the battlefields of Ukraine, a better approach, they say, would be not to rule out anything publicly.

The stakes could not be higher, with officials on both sides of the debate agreed that a mishandled response could draw NATO and Russia into a direct conflict, with potentially

calamitous consequences for the world. The discussion extends both to what to do for Ukraine and how best to bolster NATO's defenses within its own territory to deter Russia from attacking.

"We are determined to do all we can to support Ukraine, but we have a responsibility to ensure that the war does not escalate beyond Ukraine, and become a conflict between NATO and Russia," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on Wednesday, summing up the dilemma.

When asked what NATO would do if Russia were to use chemical weapons in Ukraine, Stoltenberg kept his answer vague — a traditional approach that was used to for decades to maintain strategic ambiguity about how nuclear weapons would be used as well.

"Any use of chemical weapons would totally change the nature of the conflict and have far-reaching consequences," he said.

Critics of the U.S. handling of deterrence say that by being so clear about what the United States won't do for Ukraine, Washington is potentially emboldening Russian President Vladimir Putin to act more aggressively than he otherwise would.

"I don't think this is very productive when we say every so often, 'We don't want World War 3,' or 'We don't want conflict with Russia,' " said Marko Mihkelson, the head of the foreign affairs committee of the Estonian parliament, who was in Washington last week to lobby for additional troops and equipment for NATO's eastern flank. "That's a green light to the Russians that we're afraid of them."

Defenders of the Biden administration's approach say that the White House has helped deliver unprecedented sanctions against the Russian economy and is in the middle of a large-scale effort to deliver defensive weaponry to Ukraine. And NATO leaders, meeting at a summit in Brussels on Thursday, are expected to announce new deployments to the alliance countries that border Ukraine.

"The president has the responsibility to make clear our goal is to make sure to bring this war to an end," said a senior Biden administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the dispute. "To that end, we have made clear, we're not going to take steps that would expand this war, put more lives at risk and that could lead to a much larger conflict. That is a responsible approach and that is one centered on saving lives and bringing an end to this conflict as quickly as we can."

Fundamentally, there is little difference between Europe and Washington's appetite for war, said Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.).

The United States is "pretty war weary and knows what it feels like to have thousands of soldiers dying in conflict, so it was important for the president to make clear what he's going to do and what he's not going to do," Murphy said. "But I don't think there's much separation at all in our bottom lines."

And elements of NATO deterrence appear to be working. There have been no Russian strikes against the logistics centers on NATO territory that are helping to organize the delivery of military aid to Ukraine, even though destroying the weaponry could advance the Kremlin's battlefield aims. Nor, at least for now, have there been significant cyberattacks against NATO nations that some policymakers had worried might follow the sanctions imposed on Russia. Alliance leaders say that cyberattacks could trigger NATO's collective defense treaties, but they haven't spelled out how.

But skeptics say that Biden has left some doors open for Putin from the outset, including in early December, just as Russian troops were starting to swell along Ukraine's border, when he said that "the idea that the United States is going to unilaterally use force to confront Russia invading Ukraine is not in the cards right now."

More recently, the administration declined a Polish offer of MiG fighter jets for the Ukrainian military, as Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declared that the U.S. assessment was that Russia would view it as an escalation. And some Eastern European officials say they are worried that there is foot-dragging about bolstering troops and equipment for vulnerable NATO nations.

The Biden administration "just cannot understand that there are times when you have to shut your mouth," said François Heisbourg, a senior adviser for Europe at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and a past adviser to the French defense ministry. "Overall, the crisis has been well-managed, the diplomacy has been superb, and they haven't really done any stupid stuff. It's shooting off their mouth about what they won't do."

By staying silent about issues such as troop deployments, "you are not signaling that you are going to deploy troops, you are leaving an uncertainty in the mind of your adversary that there is just this chance you are going to deploy troops, but it's for him to take the chance in escalating," Heisbourg said.

Republicans have echoed the criticism.

"It's better for [Russians] to wonder what we're going to do rather than telling them what we're going to do, exactly," said Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah. "Generally, strategic ambiguity is the best way."

At NATO, European diplomats have also raised concerns about the U.S. handling of the public messaging, two senior officials said, though they have done so in the measured tones typical of the consensus-driven alliance. Britain in particular has been vocal, along with Eastern European countries, but other Western European countries share some of the worries, the diplomats said. The diplomats spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the closed deliberations.

"They're saying we should stop saying openly, in advance, what NATO will not be doing," one of the diplomats said.

Biden has not been the only NATO leader to try to be clear about limits.

“We will not give in to the demands for a no-fly zone,” German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told his country’s parliament on Wednesday. “NATO will not become a party to the war.”

And top Russian officials have admitted that no matter what Biden and other leaders might have outlined in the months leading up to the conflict, the Kremlin was still taken aback by the strength of the Western response.

“No one could have imagined that the West could impose these sanctions. It’s just theft,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told students at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations on Wednesday.

The debate about how to maintain pressure on Russia — while trying to avoid escalating the situation — will continue among leaders in Brussels on Thursday. The Eastern European nations that border Russia — Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — have been requesting additional troops and more advanced anti-aircraft capabilities, which they say would make clear to the Kremlin that NATO is capable of backing up its warnings with military might. Since 2016, the alliance has maintained about 1,000 rotating troops in each of the four countries, enough to serve as a tripwire, but not enough to defend against a Russian invasion, and the Baltic states could easily be severed from the rest of NATO territory if Russian troops cut off the 40-mile corridor that connects Poland to Lithuania.

After Putin made some miscalculations about Ukraine, to leave NATO’s eastern flank lightly reinforced could risk that he would make the same mistake about alliance territory, said Jonatan Vseviiov, the secretary general of the Estonian Foreign Ministry.

“These miscalculations make it at least plausible that he would miscalculate regarding the whole viable reinforcement part as well,” Vseviiov said. “That’s end-of-the-world dangerous.”

In the short run, alliance leaders are expected to focus elsewhere, by deploying new troops to Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia — NATO countries that ring Ukraine and the Black Sea and are close to the current fighting.

Biden backers in Washington say that this week’s discussions in Europe should help address whatever splits exist.

“This is exactly why a long, detailed in-person conversation with the heads of state and the chiefs of defense is critical, because we will succeed in deterring Putin only to the extent we are united,” said Sen. Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.).

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### **32. NATO: 7,000 to 15,000 Russian troops dead in Ukraine**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22, Nebi Qena and Cara Anna

NATO estimated on Wednesday that 7,000 to 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in four weeks of war in Ukraine, where fierce resistance from the country's defenders has denied Moscow the lightning victory it sought.

By way of comparison, Russia lost about 15,000 troops over 10 years in Afghanistan.

A senior NATO military official said the alliance's estimate was based on information from Ukrainian authorities, what Russia has released intentionally or not and intelligence gathered from open sources. The official spoke on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by NATO.

Ukraine has released little information about its own military losses, and the West has not given an estimate, but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said nearly two weeks ago that about 1,300 Ukrainian servicemen had been killed.

When Russia unleashed its invasion Feb. 24 in Europe's biggest offensive since World War II, a swift toppling of Ukraine's government seemed likely. But with Wednesday marking four full weeks of fighting, Moscow is bogged down in a grinding military campaign.

Zelenskyy — who has riveted the world's attention with ad hoc videos and speeches to legislatures seeking military aid for his country — seized on the anniversary to plead for people around the world to gather in public Thursday to show support for Ukraine, saying the war breaks the heart of “every free person on the planet.”

“Come to your squares, your streets. Make yourselves visible and heard,” Zelenskyy said in English during an emotional video address to the nation, recorded in the dark near the presidential offices in Kyiv. “Say that people matter. Freedom matters. Peace matters. Ukraine matters.”

Speaking in Russian, Zelenskyy appealed to Russians “to leave Russia so as not to give your tax money to the war.” Tens of thousands of Russians already have fled their country since the war began, fearing an intensifying crackdown on dissent that has included the arrest of thousands of antiwar protesters and suppression of the media.

Zelenskyy, who will speak to NATO members by video on Thursday, also said he is asking the alliance to provide “effective and unrestricted” support to Ukraine, including any weapons the country needs to fend off the Russian invasion.

With its ground forces slowed or stopped by hit-and-run Ukrainian units armed with Western-supplied weapons, Russian President Vladimir Putin's troops are bombarding targets from afar, falling back on the tactics they used in reducing cities to rubble in Syria and Chechnya.

A senior U.S. defense official said Wednesday that Russian ground forces appear to be digging in and setting up defensive positions 15 to 20 kilometers (9 to 12 miles) outside Kyiv, the capital, as they make little to no progress toward the city center.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military assessments, said it appears the forces are no longer trying to advance into the city, and in some areas east of Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have pushed Russian soldiers farther away.

Instead, Russian troops appear to be prioritizing the fight in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in the Donbas, in what could be an effort to cut off Ukrainian troops and prevent them from moving west to defend other cities, the official said. The U.S. also has seen activity from Russian ships in the Sea of Azov, including what appear to be efforts to send landing ships ashore with supplies, including vehicles, the official said.

In an ominous sign that Moscow might consider using nuclear weapons, a senior Russian official said the country's nuclear arsenal would help deter the West from intervening in Ukraine.

"The Russian Federation is capable of physically destroying any aggressor or any aggressor group within minutes at any distance," Dmitry Rogozin, the head of the state aerospace corporation, Roscosmos, said in televised remarks. He noted that Moscow's nuclear stockpiles include tactical nuclear weapons, designed for use on battlefields, along with far more powerful nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles. Roscosmos oversees missile-building facilities.

U.S. officials long have warned that Russia's military doctrine envisages an "escalate to deescalate" option of using battlefield nuclear weapons to force the enemy to back down in a situation when Russian forces face imminent defeat. Moscow has denied having such plans.

Rogozin is known for his bluster, and he did not make clear what actions by the West would be seen as meddling, but his comments almost certainly reflect thinking inside the Kremlin. Putin has warned the West that an attempt to introduce a no-fly zone over Ukraine would draw it into a conflict with Russia. Western nations have said they would not create a no-fly zone to protect Ukraine.

As U.S. President Joe Biden left for Europe to meet with key allies about new sanctions against Moscow and more military aid to Ukraine, he warned there is a "real threat" Russia could use chemical weapons.

On the eve of a meeting with Biden, European Union nations signed off on another 500 million euros (\$550 million) in military aid for Ukraine.

Zelenskyy appealed to Western countries to stay united in the face of Russia's efforts to "lobby its interests" with "some partners" to bring them over to its side, and noted during his national address that Ukraine has not received the fighter jets or modern air-defense systems it requested. He said Ukraine also needs tanks and anti-ship systems.

"It has been a month of defending ourselves from attempts to destroy us, wipe us off the face of the earth," he said

The U.S. has determined that Russian troops have committed war crimes in Ukraine, and it will work to prosecute the offenders, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. He cited evidence of indiscriminate or deliberate attacks against civilians and the destruction of apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, shopping centers and other sites.

Still, major Russian objectives remain unfulfilled, including in Kyiv, where near-constant shelling and gunfire shook the city Wednesday as the two sides battled for control of multiple

suburbs. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at least 264 civilians have been killed in the capital since the war broke out.

The shelling also claimed the life of another journalist Wednesday. The independent Russian news outlet The Insider said Russian journalist Oksana Baulina had been killed in a Kyiv neighborhood.

In the south, the encircled port city of Mariupol has seen the worst devastation of the war, enduring weeks of bombardment and, now, street-by-street fighting. But Ukrainian forces have prevented its fall, thwarting an apparent bid by Moscow to fully secure a land bridge from Russia to Crimea, seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Zelenskyy said 100,000 civilians remain in the city, which had 430,000 people before the war. Efforts to get desperately needed food and other supplies to those trapped have often failed.

Zelenskyy accused Russian forces of seizing a humanitarian convoy. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said the Russians were holding captive 11 bus drivers and four rescue workers along with their vehicles.

In their last update, over a week ago, Mariupol officials said at least 2,300 people had died, but the true toll is probably much higher. Airstrikes in the past week destroyed a theater and an art school where civilians were sheltering.

In the besieged northern city of Chernihiv, Russian forces bombed and destroyed a bridge that was used for aid deliveries and civilian evacuations, regional governor Viacheslav Chaus said.

Kateryna Mytkevich, who arrived in Poland after fleeing Chernihiv, wiped away tears as she spoke about what she had seen. The city is without gas, electricity or running water, said Mytkevich, 39, and entire neighborhoods have been destroyed.

"I don't understand why we have such a curse," she said.

Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted the military operation is going "strictly in accordance" with plans.

The NATO official said 30,000 to 40,000 Russian soldiers are estimated to have been killed or wounded. In its last update, Russia said March 2 that nearly 500 soldiers had been killed and almost 1,600 wounded.

Ukraine also claims to have killed six Russian generals. Russia acknowledges just one dead general.

The figures from NATO represent the alliance's first public estimate of Russian casualties since the war began. The U.S. government has largely declined to provide estimates of Russian or Ukrainian casualties, saying available information is of questionable reliability.

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### **33. Weapons for Ukraine's fight against Russia flow through small Polish border towns** Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Drew Hinshaw, Joe Parkinson and Nancy A. Youssef

RZESZOW, Poland Day and night, truck convoys rumble through once quiet Polish border towns and villages. Giant military transport planes land several times an hour on the single runway at a local airport. Their cargo: weapons for the Ukrainian forces fighting to beat back Russia's invading army.

The U.S. and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies have been racing for weeks to deliver antitank missiles, air-defense batteries and other armaments in one of the largest international arms transfers since World War II. Hundreds of millions of dollars of weaponry has already been shipped.

Now, pressure is growing to ramp up the pace further, as Ukraine says it is running out of weapons and ammunition as it fights to blunt Russian advances and counterattack. Antitank and anti-aircraft missiles are in especially short supply, Ukrainian defense officials say. During this week's NATO summit and meeting of the European Union, President Biden is expected to press allies to give Ukraine more, particularly air defense systems, U.S. officials said.

Ukraine's ambassador to Britain, Vadym Prystaiko, on Wednesday said stocks of some key weapons could soon run out and that Ukrainian forces urgently needed long-range weaponry. "We didn't have enough in the first place. Running out of weaponry will be seen in the week to come," Mr. Prystaiko said in a television interview. "Tomorrow, President Zelensky will talk to NATO to see how we can replenish our stocks," he said.

The U.S. and its NATO allies have been sending Javelins, Stingers and other weapons to Ukraine to help the country defend itself from Russian attacks. WSJ's Shelby Holliday explains how some of these weapons work, and why experts say they're useful to Ukrainian forces. Photo: Ukrainian Defense Ministry Press/AFP via Getty Images

Western security officials say their strategy initially envisaged equipping a nascent Ukrainian insurgency recalling the transfer of weapons to mujahedeen fighters who defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that would employ guerrilla tactics against Russian occupiers.

Instead, because Ukraine's military has managed to keep Moscow's forces at bay in much of the country, the task has become equipping a regular army engaged in a large-scale conventional war.

"The Ukrainians are expending a lot of ordnance, and this is more than we anticipated," said a Western security official. "We are trying to step up the flow of weapons to meet that new requirement and there are constant shortages."

Ukraine says keeping the flow moving is central to its war effort. NATO allies have debated which systems would provoke an escalation from Russia, ruling out fighter jets, for example.

While U.S. and European officials said they are moving as quickly as possible, some also fear that some of the weapons systems could end up in Russian hands or circulate for years on the

black market. Some European nations are reluctant to provide more arms they fear could fuel a war on the continent. And U.S. officials, in the run-up to the Feb. 24 invasion, said they didn't plan to support Ukraine with arms for a protracted period.

Meanwhile, Moscow has warned that it considers arms shipments legitimate targets. "Any cargo moving into Ukrainian territory which we believe is carrying weapons would be fair game," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said last week.

Russia hit a Ukrainian military base near the Polish border with cruise missiles on March 13, killing at least 35 people. Russia's air force, however, doesn't control the skies over Ukraine and so far doesn't appear to have hit any arms consignments en route.

The main artery for the weapons transfer is the sleepy southern Polish town of Rzeszow. The local airport normally caters to budget airlines ferrying travelers from elsewhere in Europe. Now, passenger jets there are dwarfed by giant C-130 military transports. Patriot missile batteries stand guard near the runway.

Ground handlers pull cargoes covered in camouflage tarps from the bellies of planes. On a recent day, soldiers from the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division stood by the runway as other personnel swiftly unloaded a Turkish Gulfstream G450, which didn't appear on ordinary flight-tracking websites. Turkey has supplied armed drones that Ukraine has used to attack Russian armored columns and other targets.

The arrivals terminal was surrounded by military vehicles, shipping containers and mounds of equipment that stretched the length of several football fields. At the airport's northern perimeter, behind a row of trees, a line of trucks with Ukrainian plates waited to be loaded. American soldiers based next to a Holiday Inn shuttled back and forth into town to do shopping and pick up takeout. Pentagon officials said they weren't discussing the deployment in detail to the media.

Closer to the border, daylight convoys still pass through main frontier crossings but are increasingly supplemented by nighttime deliveries through border villages. For such shipments, "you're only using low-key civilian vehicles and trucks," said a British contractor.

"I don't know if I'm supposed to tell you," said Marek, a 61-year-old Polish construction worker who declined to give his surname and lives about 500 yards from the Ukrainian border. "It's kind of a secret, but at night lots of aid goes across." He said he regularly sees small convoys passing an ordinarily fenced-off border crossing nearby.

Not long after, Polish border guards riding an ATV over gravel roads intercepted a pair of Wall Street Journal reporters and encouraged them to leave.

Local officials say the increased military deployment is reassuring, but say they worry it could make Rzeszow a target. Polish farmers are putting land up for sale, nervous their property is too close to the front line. Last week, the town's mayor, Konrad Fijolek, told constituents to check the living conditions in bomb shelters built during the Cold War.

“We have to be ready for different scenarios: The Russian military is just across the border,” Mr. Fijolek said. “You never know whether they will launch rockets and whether they will land here.”

On Wednesday, German officials said they would deliver another 1,700 Strela antiaircraft missiles, after delivering 500 last week. The Soviet-made weapons, inherited from former East Germany, have been languishing in military depots for decades.

Berlin originally said it would send 2,700 pieces of the hand-held weapons, but around 500 proved to be dysfunctional. On Wednesday, Sweden said it would send 5,000 antitank weapons.

In the days after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. allotted \$350 million to fund weapons such as Stingers and Javelins to Ukraine, and finished delivering that tranche within the past week, U.S. defense officials said. Earlier this month, Congress approved another \$200 million of military assistance, and the Biden administration has said it would spend another \$800 million after that. The U.S. is expected to deliver 1,400 Stingers and 4,600 Javelins through this year’s funding requests.

Before the invasion, weapons manufacturers weren’t geared up to make antitank and antiaircraft arms at a wartime pace. While the U.S. had 13,000 Stingers in its stockpile before the invasion, there were no plans to produce more en masse, U.S. officials said. Militaries in Europe that have given their Stingers and antitank missiles to Ukraine now want to refill depleted stocks, creating competition for new units rolling off the assembly line.

“Ready-made stocks are not inexhaustible,” said a defense contractor in Poland. “It isn’t the arsenal of democracy where refrigerator plants are also making airplanes. No. There is a very limited number of production facilities. You can maybe speed up some stuff, but it’s not like you can suddenly open up two or three new production lines.”

Now, as the warfare appears to emulate World War II, defense contractors are racing to ramp up the supplies of antiaircraft and antitank weaponry and ammunition. Central European defense ministers say they have set up a hotline into Ukraine, so that President Volodymyr Zelensky’s military chiefs can order former Soviet equipment from their stocks.

The Czech Republic has given Kyiv’s Defense Ministry a list of \$500 million of gear in Czech warehouses, and says the U.S. has signaled its willingness to buy much of it, for onward donation to Ukraine. The items on the list range from ordinary machine gun ammunition to antiaircraft missiles capable of intercepting war planes at high altitudes, all of it ready to be delivered within four days of an order.

“The Ukrainians are choosing from it on a daily basis,” said Czech Deputy Defense Minister Tomáš Kopečný. Several times, he added, Russian operatives posing as European or American companies have tried to buy the weaponry, before it can be dispatched eastward into Ukraine.

“We have instructed all the companies in the Czech Republic just to produce at their maximum capacity, because the moment they roll it from the factory, we take it, and we ship it there,” he said.

Last week, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said her country had already hit the limit on how many weapons it could ship to Ukraine. A senior official in the Defense Ministry said Germany had plenty of weapons in its stocks it could send, but the real shortage was of political will.

“For 20 years, most Western countries were not investing enough in their own supply lines, their own militaries, and now we pay the price,” said Latvian Defense Minister Artis Pabriks.

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### **34. NATO likely to approve more troops for its eastern flank, says Stoltenberg**

Reuters, 23 Mar 22, Sabine Siebold and John Chalmers

NATO will likely decide on Thursday to ramp up military forces on its eastern flank, the head of the alliance said, while also warning Russia against using nuclear weapons after its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

NATO has sharply increased its presence at the eastern border of the alliance, with some 40,000 troops spread from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and is seeking to deploy four new combat units in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia.

"I expect leaders will agree to strengthen NATO's posture in all domains, with major increases in the eastern part of the alliance. On land, in the air and at sea," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg told a news conference ahead of a NATO summit in Brussels on Thursday.

Putin sent troops into Ukraine in what he calls a "special military operation" to demilitarize and "denazify" Ukraine. Ukraine and the West say Putin launched an unprovoked war of aggression.

The additional multinational battlegroups come on top of four existing combat units, with a total of some 5,000 troops, deployed by NATO to the three Baltic states and Poland after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Stoltenberg said the Ukraine crisis had shown that NATO must reset its deterrence and defense posture for the longer term, an issue NATO leaders are expected to discuss at their next regular summit at the end of June in Madrid.

"There is a new sense of urgency because we cannot take peace for granted," he told reporters.

NATO leaders are also set to agree additional aid for Kyiv, according to Stoltenberg, including equipment to help Ukraine protect against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

He warned Russia against using nuclear, biological or chemical weapons in Ukraine, while stressing NATO's readiness to "protect and defend allies against any threat any time".

"Russia should stop this dangerous irresponsible nuclear rhetoric... Russia must understand that it can never win a nuclear war," he said, adding that any use of biological or chemical weapons would have "far-reaching consequences".

Stoltenberg also called on China to condemn Russia's war in Ukraine and to not provide "material support" for Moscow.

China has not condemned Russia's invasion, though it has expressed concern about the war. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said on Saturday that Western sanctions against Russia were getting "more and more outrageous".

"For NATO, it is of particular concern that China now, for the first time, has questioned some of the key principles for security, including the right for every nation in Europe to choose his own path," Stoltenburg said.

In a show of Western unity against the war in Ukraine, Brussels will also host a G7 and an EU summit on Thursday.

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### **35. Blinken says U.S. assesses Russian forces committed "war crimes" in Ukraine**

CBS News, 23 Mar 22, Caroline Linton

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that the U.S. assesses that Russian forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine and will work to hold them accountable.

"Today, I can announce that, based on information currently available, the U.S. government assesses that members of Russia's forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine," he said in a statement Wednesday.

"We've seen numerous credible reports of indiscriminate attacks and attacks deliberately targeting civilians, as well as other atrocities," Blinken said. "Russia's forces have destroyed apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, critical infrastructure, civilian vehicles, shopping centers, and ambulances, leaving thousands of innocent civilians killed or wounded. Many of the sites Russia's forces have hit have been clearly identifiable as in-use by civilians."

Blinken cited reports of several incidents in besieged Mariupol, such as the bombing of a maternity hospital and a strike that hit a Mariupol theater, which Blinken said "clearly marked with the word 'дети' Russian for 'children' in huge letters visible from the sky."

Blinken said Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces used the same tactics in Grozny, Chechnya, and in Aleppo, Syria, "where they intensified their bombardment of cities to break the will of the people."

According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, some 100,000 civilians remain in Mariupol, "in inhuman conditions, under a full blockade, without food, without water, without medicine and under constant shelling, under constant bombardment," he said in a video address Tuesday.

"We are trying to organize stable humanitarian corridors for Mariupol residents, but almost all of our attempts, unfortunately, are foiled by the Russian occupiers, by shelling, or deliberate terror," Zelenskyy said.

The secretary of state's statement comes one day after the Defense Department said it had "seen clear evidence that over the last week or so the Russians have deliberately and intentionally targeted civilian infrastructure."

Blinken and President Biden are headed Wednesday to Brussels for a NATO summit on Ukraine. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Zelenskyy will address world leaders gathering in Brussels Thursday for an extraordinary meeting of the alliance.

On Friday, they will head to Warsaw, Poland, to meet with Polish President Andrzej Duda.

Mr. Biden last week called Putin a "war criminal" for launching the attack in Ukraine.

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### **36. Britain sending thousands more missiles to Ukraine**

Associated Press, 23 Mar 22

Britain will send thousands more missiles to Ukraine's government as Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged Western allies to boost the supply of military aid to Ukraine.

Johnson is traveling to Brussels on Thursday for talks with NATO and leaders of the Group of Seven. He is expected to provide further details of the new British aid during the visit, including the donation of 6,000 more missiles comprising anti-tank and high-explosive weaponry.

"The United Kingdom will work with our allies to step up military and economic support to Ukraine, strengthening their defenses as they turn the tide in this fight," Johnson said.

Britain has already sent more than 4,000 anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

The U.K. government also says it is providing some 4 million pounds (\$5.3 million) in emergency funding to the BBC World Service to counter disinformation in Russia and Ukraine.

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### **37. Romania's Prime Minister on how NATO can navigate this 'stark new reality'**

TIME, 23 Mar 22, Charlie Campbell

There are plenty of national heroes that are tricky for outsiders to properly appreciate. Even so, Romania's Vlad Țepeș, or Vlad the Impaler, takes some beating. A Wallachian prince from the 15th century, Vlad had a reputation for boiling babies and drinking blood, though his trademark was impaling a foe on a stake in the ground from anus to armpit, thus missing any major organs and prolonging death for up to an agonizing 48 hours. Following a battle against Ottoman

soldiers in 1462, Vlad left a screaming forest of impaled thousands as a warning to pursuing troops set on conquering his lands.

Barbaric as these acts certainly were, ask people in Romania's stately capital Bucharest today about Vlad's deeds and they will shrug and offer a standard reply: that's what happens if you invade a person's home. It is, of course, a sentiment that has been galvanized by the war launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin in neighboring Ukraine, where millions have fled indiscriminate bombing, more than 500,000 of them across the 400 mi. shared border into Romania.

Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă may not endorse Vlad's methods but tells TIME that he shares the widely held appreciation for how he "played a major role in defending Europe and its values." There was, Ciucă insists in an exclusive written interview, more to the man whose family name, Dracula, inspired Irish novelist Bram Stoker's vampiric creation. "Beyond the military strategies always used for defense, never for the conquest of other territories, Romanian rulers were also brilliant diplomats, visionaries, peace-seekers."

The world needs such skills today. How to stop the "illegal, unprovoked and brutal aggression against Ukraine," as Ciucă, a former army general, describes it, is "the biggest test since the end of the Cold War," promising to "open a new chapter of European history." Ciucă says that NATO needs to radically broaden and embolden its mandate to meet this next generation threat.

On Thursday, Romania's prime minister will join U.S. President Joe Biden and other world leaders for an extraordinary NATO meeting and E.U. summit in Brussels. Biden's goal, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters, "is to meet in person face-to-face and talk about and assess where we are at this point in the conflict." Ciucă, however, is blunter about the stakes, which are no less than "the future of the democratic world and the rules-based international order."

Even if few Americans might be able to find Romania on a map, the nation of 19 million is set to have a notable geostrategic role to help navigate the aftermath of Putin's invasion — what Ciucă calls a "stark new reality." Even under the rule of communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania was arguably the most independent and Western-looking of the Soviet satellite states, and that deep mistrust of Russian encroachment has only swelled since its 1989 democratic revolution.

Although most famous for its forested Transylvania region and picture-postcard medieval towns, Romania is also the E.U.'s leading grains exporter, whose potential to boost capacity could help mitigate global shortages owing to disruptions to Ukrainian production. It also has significant underutilized oil and gas reserves, which could go a small way to help wean Europe off its Russian energy dependence that now funds the Kremlin's war machine.

More immediately, Romanians have opened their hearts and homes to the influx of refugees: Church groups, civil society, businesses, and regular people have flocked to border crossings to offer a ride or box of groceries. "We don't just say we are good neighbors here," Ciucă says proudly. "We show it!"

Ciucă's resumé makes him serendipitously well suited for a conflict role, despite assuming the job during peacetime 4 months ago. Born in the tiny village of Plenița by the southern border with Bulgaria, he served as chief of Romania's armed forces from 2015 to 2019, and then Defense Minister from 2019 to 2021. His elevation to head of government in November was a messy, uninspiring affair: he emerged as the least objectionable compromise candidate between bickering factions. Even then, Ciucă had to fend off allegations that he plagiarized almost a third of his doctoral thesis. (He has denied it).

Yet it is Ciucă's close connections with the U.S. military that have proven "invaluable" given the present tumult, says a senior Western diplomat in Bucharest, who asked to remain anonymous due to official protocol. Ciucă served alongside U.S. forces in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, earning recognition in the International Hall of Fame at the U.S. Army War College, where he studied in 2006. This year marks 25 since the signing of Romania's Strategic Partnership with the U.S. "Security is probably the strongest pillar of the [U.S.-Romania] relationship," says the diplomat. "Our military and Romania's military are very interoperable. A lot of their officers have gone to our schools."

Romania has been a NATO member since 2004, joining the E.U. three years later. The country is welcoming thousands of troops from alliance members, including the U.S., France, Belgium and Portugal. As well as having the longest land border with Ukraine of any NATO state, Romania has a de facto maritime boundary with Russia since the 2014 annexation of Crimea. As such, Romania's role has swelled in terms of the collective defense of the Black Sea region, NATO's Eastern Flank and the whole Euro-Atlantic space, says Ciucă. "We are at the fulcrum of both the security and defense aspects of this crisis, but also of its tragic humanitarian dimension."

Ciucă's praise of the NATO alliance is perhaps unsurprising. He says his missions in Iraq and Afghanistan were "essential stepping stones" for Romania's U.S. and NATO-aligned security and defense posture. But while "both were difficult and complex," he explains, "they were nothing like the challenge represented by the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Hundreds of thousands of forces and the vast capabilities represent a threat of a different magnitude."

Ciucă belies the stereotype of the combat-hungry general. He stresses that NATO is a defensive alliance and says it does not serve Ukraine or anyone else to risk an even larger conflict. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly pleaded with the U.S. and NATO to enforce a no-fly zone to prevent Russia's aerial assault on his cities. Ciucă is full of praise for his counterpart—"as somebody that stared down the barrel of a weapon, I respect his courage and conviction," he says—though warns that a no-fly zone would necessitate direct conflict between Russia and NATO and would be a price too high. "However dangerous and odious Russia's actions are, NATO needs to avoid playing into an escalatory logic," he says.

That does not mean there should be inaction, however. The Ukraine war has served as a wake-up call to many NATO members, including Romania, which on March 1 boosted defense spending from 2% to 2.5% of GDP. Two days later, Poland unveiled a hike to 3% in 2023. And on Feb. 27, Germany surprised many by announcing an extra \$111 billion on defense in 2022, tripling its

annual budget. Other defense dawdlers like Italy and Spain are following suit. “Let’s be clear, defense starts at home,” Ciucă says.

It’s a shift in tenor welcomed by Romanians who have long sounded the alarm about Russia’s intentions. In a late 2020 poll, 30% of Romanian respondents said that Russia posed a direct threat to their country—one of the highest rates in Eastern Europe. “There’s been dissatisfaction with specific E.U. member states, like Germany and Italy, that have opposed the full range of sanctions against Russia, or that have over time been in favor of doing business with Russia and so propped up the Putin regime,” says Oana Popescu-Zamfir, director of the Bucharest-based Global Focus think tank.

Still, it’s unclear whether the newfound urgency is enough: Since 2000, Russia’s defense spending has increased by 183% and China’s by 495%. Ciucă says that NATO must rethink its Strategic Concept—setting out the bloc’s fundamental security tasks, challenges and opportunities—given this shift: the structure and elements of its posture from the Baltic to the Black Sea to face the new reality of a massive Russian troop deployment in Ukraine and Belarus. NATO also needs to better prepare for combat “in cyberspace and in space,” he says, urging investment in fields like quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and autonomous weapons.

But NATO also needs to rethink not only how, but also what it defends. Hybrid actions like covert influence lobbying lawmakers and buying influential sporting franchises and massive disinformation campaigns, as well as repeated cyber-attacks against E.U. and NATO countries, should be considered as part of a wider campaign against its citizens’ democratic values and principles and warrant a robust response, Ciucă says. Strengthening strategic communications, while combating malign influence campaigns, should be “an essential part of NATO’s adaptation,” says Ciucă.

It’s clear that Ciucă has NATO in his bones. Still, he can’t hide the frustration palpable among Eastern Europeans that warnings regarding Russian aggression weren’t taken seriously enough. In praising Zelensky, he says the Ukrainian president “provides now for the Ukrainians and Europe a stark contrast to the hesitations, willingness to eschew responsibilities and avoiding hard and difficult decisions that often characterized the West’s dealings with Russia.” The burning question for the world whether or not Russia’s gambit in Ukraine is successful is whether it’s possible to deal with Russia with Putin as leader. The Russian President’s willingness to target civilians, increasingly unhinged speeches railing at West-leaning “scum and traitors,” and threats to unleash nuclear war renders fulsome reengagement meaningless. “Normalization of relations with the world requires rebuilding trust,” says Ciucă. “Seeing the sort of Orwellian propaganda and unwillingness to negotiate even to ensure the safety of civilians leaves doubts as to that possibility in the near future.”

But the alternative, barring a palace coup or other extraordinary change of leadership in the Kremlin, is shunning Russia long-term. That, however, is also highly undesirable. Ciucă emphasizes that Russia had for years been a valued partner of the E.U., with institutions like the now suspended NATO-Russia council established to deepen security cooperation. “Russia is an important country. Russia is also a European country,” says Ciucă, emphasizing “profound and extensive” economic interactions. “Nobody wants to ostracize Russia.”

Still, Putin's actions leave few other options, Ciucă says. "An imperialist regime that operates on the logic of spheres of influence and limited sovereignty, that brutally invades neighboring countries, foments separatism and annexes neighboring countries' territory, curtails domestic and regional democracy, deploys hybrid actions against other countries, cannot be a respected or even trusted partner."

It's a burning quandary though perhaps one that can be tabled for now. More immediately, the question for Biden, Ciucă and other leaders in Brussels will be how to stop the bloodshed. Sanctions and supplying weapons may have stalled the Russian advance for now but every new escalation will bring calls to deepen involvement. "President Zelensky and the whole of Ukraine are very much doing their part," he says. "We must continue to do ours."

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### **38. Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparks fierce debate in China**

Financial Times (UK), 23 Mar 22, Kathrin Hille

Chinese internet users called it a "proxy war": three weeks ago, two pensioners in a Shanghai Park got into a fight over the Ukraine conflict that left Russia-backing Shen Jianguo, 70, bleeding from the ear and trending on social media.

China's government has leaned towards Russia by backing Moscow's complaints about Nato expansion and refusing to call its actions an invasion. But while Beijing's censors are working hard to suppress any criticism of that position, the conflict has ignited heated controversy both among Chinese policy experts and the public.

Analysts say the debate shows the strains caused by a clash between alignment with Russia and long-avowed Chinese diplomatic principles as Beijing struggles to assess how the war will affect its interests.

"The discussions are pretty intense. There are a lot of different points of view on this, the debate is extremely diverse," said Zhao Tong, senior fellow at Carnegie Tsinghua Center in Beijing.

The fiercest arguments are raging about basic beliefs. "It is about right and wrong," said Yun Sun, a China foreign policy expert at the Stimson Center in Washington. "I am struck by how intense the debate is, not just among policy folks, but also among ordinary people."

Zhang Guihong, an international relations professor at Fudan University, said China needed to better balance its values and its interests.

"We have been leaning towards Russia. But there is a bottom line which we need to insist upon," he said, citing respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, two principles China says guides its foreign policy.

"In international relations, there are two legal options to use force: one is a mandate from the UN Security Council, the other is self-defense," Zhang added. "Although Russia felt threatened, for

example by Nato expansion, that is a future threat, not a direct one that would justify self-defense.”

Five Chinese history professors have called on President Vladimir Putin to stop the war and declared sympathy with the Ukrainian people.

Separately, Hu Wei, vice-chair of a public policy research center under China’s central government, urged an end to support for Russia. “Cutting off from Putin and giving up neutrality will help build China’s international image and ease its relations with the US and the west,” Hu wrote.

However, such voices are in the minority and are quickly silenced. After publishing Hu’s call, the website of the US-China Perception Monitor, a project promoting mutual understanding between the two countries, was fully blocked in China for the first time.

Mainstream scholars and opinion leaders see the war as a plot instigated by the US to weaken Russia, strengthen Nato and make Europe more dependent on Washington again.

“Some people in China continue to advocate for us to follow the west in condemning and sanctioning Russia,” wrote Hu Xijin, the firebrand nationalist former editor-in-chief of Global Times, the tabloid state newspaper. “Such propositions are very childish.”

Zuo Dapei, an economist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, justified Russia’s actions as “righteous” because they were aimed against Nato. “We, the Chinese people, should voice the strongest call for justice on behalf of all the oppressed peoples in the world: Nato should be disbanded. Down with Nato!” he wrote last week.

Beyond the ideological divides, Chinese scholars are engaged in a sober discussion about how the Ukraine war affects their country. “For the Chinese it is simple: This is not Chinese territory, this is not a Chinese war,” Sun said. “Everything on top of that is a cool calculation of what benefits or hurts China — it is a power-centric world view.”

China Strategy think-tank, a website backed by Beijing scholars, argued that the conflict creates a strategic opportunity for China. “The longer the fighting drags on, the more it will exhaust Europe, America and Russia, and overall this benefits China,” said the piece, which has since been taken down without explanation. Its authors argued that China should stand by and watch the war and could emerge as a mediator or even rule maker in a new order.

Others focus on the economic impact. Some economists argue Russia’s increased dependence on China due to international sanctions will make it a good source of cheap supplies of commodities such as potash, coal or meat. But others express deep concern about the damage sanctions will do.

“There are a lot of worries about the economic fallout,” said Tuvia Gering, a researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security who focuses on Chinese foreign and security policy. “China has a lot on its plate with a very ambitious growth target, Covid, climate and geopolitical competition.”

The most hotly debated question is the long-term strategic outcome of the war. Some Chinese analysts are convinced that Europe, forced to increase defense spending, will evolve into a new geopolitical force more independent from the US. “There is the belief that in this situation Europe will need China more,” Zhao said. “I think it is a misjudgment.”

Chinese observers are equally divided on whether the war will preoccupy the US enough to undermine its efforts to counter China, or whether European countries’ return to a more muscular security posture will free up resources for the US to pursue its pivot to the Indo-Pacific.

“China’s assessment of the war is continuously evolving,” Zhao said. “People are realizing that the impact will be profound and lasting.”

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### **39. Shabaab attacks international hub in Mogadishu where U.S. Embassy is located**

Long War Journal, 23 Mar 22, Andrew Tobin

On Wednesday, Al Shabaab conducted an attack against Halane camp near Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu. The camp houses the U.S. embassy, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the headquarters for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and most foreign diplomats based in Mogadishu.

In the assault, two gunmen disguised as airport workers attempted to breach the base’s gates where they were confronted by security forces. These Shabaab gunmen, armed with small arms and hand grenades, reportedly killed six security forces, including five AMISOM peacekeepers and trainers, and injured an additional three police officers.

In a statement by spokesman Abdiasis Abu Musab, Shabaab claimed credit for the attack, asserting that their militants broke through checkpoints, shot multiple foreign AMISOM troops, and set fire to buildings within the base.

The group also claimed to have fired mortars into the base, targeting AMISOM buildings. The Al Qaeda affiliate claimed that the attack targeted international troops in an effort to drive them from Somalia. Shabaab has long opposed the presence of foreign troops in the country and sees their withdrawal as a precondition for taking control of the country, much like the Taliban’s stance in Afghanistan.

Somali security forces reported that the two militants were killed and that the attack was thwarted. However, Shabaab’s ability to inflict casualties on foreign troops within the well-defended Halane military base with only two gunmen is certainly cause for concern for the future of Somalia’s security. This attack in Mogadishu follows Shabaab’s major assaults last month across the city, demonstrating the group’s continued willingness and ability to strike secure points across the Somali capital.

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As the tragic war in Ukraine has now driven roughly 10 million from their homes and killed many thousands, with no end in sight and no real prospect of near-term victory for either side, it is increasingly necessary to focus on a possible peace plan.

Ukraine and Russia will have to agree on specifics, and at this point it is very difficult to know what either side would accept, but this war involves us all in one way or another, and springs in part from a disagreement about whether Ukraine should ever be allowed into NATO. As such, the U.S. has a big stake in this issue, and the Biden Administration should play a major role in helping the parties conceptualize a possible compromise.

The essence of any deal would presumably be that Ukraine forgo its aspirations to join NATO, that the Ukrainian governments as well as NATO formalize that commitment, and that Russia agree to a ceasefire as well as withdrawal of its forces from Ukrainian territory. All parties would also formally commit to uphold and promote the security of a neutral Ukraine. NATO and the European Union would convey the resolute message that if Russia again attacked, all of our economic sanctions against Russia and military assistance to Ukraine would snap back on.

Beyond these general principles, a number of additional ideas might be considered

**Territory.** It is tolerable, and probably inevitable, that Russia will insist on holding onto the Crimean Peninsula, given Crimea's role in Russian history and its importance for the Russian Navy. However, we in the West are not obliged to recognize this annexation dating back to 2014. Ukraine should be allowed to keep the issue alive in the future with Moscow, if it so chooses, perhaps proposing various types of dual citizenship and guaranteed access within this choice real estate. By contrast, the Donbas regions of eastern Ukraine should be returned to Ukraine, given the naked and violent Russian aggression that has since 2014 victimized this region though if Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky were willing to modify borders in that region, we should not oppose the idea.

**U.N. peacekeepers.** To reduce the odds of renewed fighting, a U.N. monitoring mission (with troops from outside the Russia and NATO regions) could be deployed along whatever future borders are agreed upon. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should deploy monitors as well.

**U.N. presence.** Today, most U.N. agencies are home-based in New York, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria. The latter two countries are neutral, like Ukraine would itself remain in the future. Thus, it would be natural that some technical U.N. agencies (not security organizations per se) be moved to Ukraine in a demonstration of the confidence and commitment of the international community to Ukraine's sovereignty and as a symbolic recognition of its enduring neutrality.

**Rebuilding Ukraine.** The international community will need to help Ukraine rebuild after the war. Ideally, if improbably, Russia should make at least a token contribution to this effort itself, as one of the key members of the U.N. and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Its financial contribution should not however be couched as reparations, since that would make the idea a non-starter in Moscow. Russia itself should not be eligible for any financial assistance.

**Ukraine's future military and political system.** Some Russians are insisting on a demilitarized Ukraine as part of any deal, as well as the end of the Zelensky government. The latter demand would be an unconscionable infringement on Ukraine's sovereignty. The former is also unacceptable; it would only give Putin the prospect of easily resuming the war at a future time. Ukraine cannot be a threat to Russia, given its size, and Putin knows it, so any Russian demand to demilitarize Ukraine demonstrates bad faith. That said, Ukraine's future military forces should resemble those of Finland or Switzerland or Sweden—with a modest active-duty force and a large reserve capability, primarily of infantry, that can resist any attack or attempt at occupation. This is not too different from Ukraine's current defense posture, so the goal should be to avoid new constraints, not change the basic situation dramatically.

**Military aid.** The U.S. can and should commit as part of any deal to limit our own military aid to Ukraine to the scale and character that preceded the war—several hundred million dollars a year on average—rather than to the much greater flow that we have been providing in recent weeks since the conflict began.

**Finland and Sweden.** These two countries have long been proud of their neutrality, but Putin's behavior has made them reconsider fundamentally whether they wish to join NATO, and a majority in each country now support the idea. Putin must accept that possibility; it is not his right to deny it, Finland and Sweden's choice even as they continue to mull whether such membership would in fact be a good idea.

**Sanctions.** Even though most sanctions imposed recently on Russia would be relaxed, then lifted, under this deal, Putin will have to accept that many western businesses will not choose to return to Russia for years to come, and western governments cannot force them to return. Such is the natural consequence of his military aggression, and he will have to live with it for some time to come. Still, such a prospect is far better for him than the kind of economic pain that will ensue if the war continues. With a deal, Russia will be able to resume most energy trade and most access to the international financial system.

Perhaps China and the U.S., often at each other's throats on the Ukraine issue and many others these days, can even collaborate on how to pursue and support this kind of peace process. President Xi Jinping may be best able to persuade Putin of the logic of this kind of approach—a framework that is ideal for no one, but the “least bad” of the realistic paths forward for most.

There is little further time to waste, before what is already a horribly tragic war becomes absolutely catastrophic.

*O'Hanlon holds the Philip H. Knight Chair in Defense and Strategy at the Brookings Institution; his latest book is *The Art of War in an Age of Peace: U.S. Grand Strategy and Resolute Restraint*.*

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**48. Ukraine's government is willing to make big concessions to end the war, but it doubts that Russia is negotiating in good faith**

The Economist, 23 Mar 22

At a secret location in a blacked-out high-rise in the suburbs of Kyiv, a senior Ukrainian intelligence officer shared what he claimed was Russia's invasion blueprint. The classified document, supposedly compiled before Russian troops crossed the border, envisages the complete takeover of Ukraine: seizing private property and taking over banks, transport, ports and elected institutions. There are provisions for a federation of puppet "peoples' republics" and perhaps their annexation into Russia if needed. There is a line about "denazifying" the Ukrainian education system, whatever that means.

Compared with this totalitarian wish list, peace negotiations with Russia appear to be headed to a more reasonable place. Russia is making four main demands: a declaration of Ukrainian neutrality; Ukraine's formal acceptance that Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014, is Russian territory and that the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, which is controlled by separatists backed by Russia, is independent; the demilitarization of Ukraine; and relief for Russia from Western sanctions. Ukraine, for its part, appears ready to agree to several of these demands, including giving up on the prospect of NATO membership and accepting some sort of compromise on the occupied territories. Turkish and Israeli interlocutors are hailing what they describe as progress bringing the two sides together.

But there are two big sticking-points. The first is Russia's maximalist definition of demilitarization. It wants Ukraine to reduce its army to 50,000, a fifth of its current size. After a month of bloody sacrifice, few in Ukraine are anywhere near ready to agree to such a cut. The second is the Ukrainian belief that Vladimir Putin will not pull his forces from areas of eastern and southern Ukraine they have conquered, or are about to conquer. There is bitter experience here: Russian troops remained in Donbas despite being required to withdraw under the Minsk agreements of 2014-15.

Secondary discussions relate to the scope of new security guarantees for Ukraine. The talk has been of a formula involving the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Turkey; yet it is far from clear that the Western members (America, Britain and France) are ready to provide the unconditional guarantees that Ukraine is seeking. Both sides have agreed to keep the details of the talks secret. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has already indicated that any proposed settlement would be subject to a referendum. The Kremlin's immediate response to this idea was to say that progress had become "slower and less substantive than needed". Russian approval for any deal would no doubt come more quickly, dependent as it is on the will of just one person. But it remains to be seen whether Mr Putin is really ready to compromise, or indeed whether his negotiators have a genuine mandate.

With a revealing pause and nervous laugh, the intelligence official said it was Russia's questionable sincerity that made him pessimistic about the prospects of the negotiations. They might offer the best opportunity to avoid the "nightmarish" scenario of a protracted conflict and "Syriaisation", or division of Ukraine into warring regions, he said. But Mr Putin did not appear to be taking the talks anywhere near as seriously as Ukraine is. That was clear in the "second tier" negotiation team he sent. "Moscow has always used peace talks to manipulate the agenda. Just like they have accused us of bombing our own people and homes." The official predicted

that Russia would continue an offensive to secure gains in the south and east of the country, completing its brutal siege of the port of Mariupol, before attempting to deny Ukraine access to the sea altogether with a renewed assault on Odessa.

Ukraine's negotiating position has been strengthened by Russia's surprisingly mediocre military performance. The level of professionalism has varied greatly: better in units facing Ukraine's elite forces in the south-east, much worse in the north and north-east and around Kyiv. There, Russian planners appear to have badly miscalculated, adopting a military posture that assumed minimal resistance. What is more, they failed to prepare adequately even for that rosy scenario. The intelligence officer said that Russia had gone ahead with its attack without even elementary co-ordination of its military units. It was a "miraculous" display of negligence, or sabotage, he said, which has had predictable consequences in the numbers of dead and injured.

Ukraine says Russia has lost more than 15,000 soldiers since the start of the conflict, a claim that many assume to be a wild exaggeration. But on March 21st a report in Komsomolskaya Pravda, a reliably pro-government Russian newspaper, suggested that as many as 9,861 Russian soldiers had died so far, with a further 16,153 wounded. That would put roughly 13% of the original invasion force out of action, and compares badly with the total losses endured by the Soviet Union during a decade of war in Afghanistan, when some 15,000 died. The Russian tabloid later claimed that it had been hacked and removed the numbers. But even if the report was not correct, the rate of attrition seems high enough to give the Kremlin an incentive to seek a negotiated peace.

Mr Zelensky has once again called for a face-to-face meeting with Mr Putin, who has so far turned down the chance to talk. Negotiations had to succeed, Mr Zelensky said, because the alternative was a "third world war". His intelligence officer was less optimistic, predicting that war would continue until Russian forces were "completely exhausted". Did Ukraine have the resources to bring that about? "We have to have them," he said. "Because we don't have an option. We want to stay alive."

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#### **49. Ukraine can win with enough help**

Wall Street Journal, 23 Mar 22, Editorial Board

The public message out of Thursday's meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels is sure to be heavy on unity and resolve in support of Ukraine. But the unfortunate reality is that the democratic alliance confronting Vladimir Putin still isn't doing enough to ensure the Russian's defeat. And behind the scenes, some leaders would prefer if Volodymyr Zelensky agreed to a peace settlement sooner rather than later.

The stunning fact of this war is that the Ukrainians have rescued Europe and the U.S. as much as NATO is assisting Ukraine. Kyiv's stalwart resistance, at great human cost, has given the West a chance to stop the advance of Russian imperialism before it imperils NATO. The war has exposed the Russian military as weaker than our intelligence services and the Pentagon thought. Against all expectations, Ukraine may be winning.

Most surprising, the Ukrainian resistance has renewed a sense among the people of the West that their countries stand for something more than welfare-state ease and individual indulgence. Ukrainians are showing that freedom has a price, often a fearsome one.

Yet Western leaders still seem worried of what would happen if Ukraine won. That's especially true in the Biden Administration, which has taken many good steps—but typically under pressure from Congress or Europe, and typically late. President Biden is rightly outraged by Mr. Putin's brutality, and he calls him a war criminal, but he still seems afraid of doing what it takes to defeat him.

At the White House on Tuesday, national security adviser Jake Sullivan was asked twice if he and the President thought Ukraine could win. The best he could offer was the assurance that Russia is “never going to be able to subjugate the Ukrainian people” and a boilerplate commitment to Kyiv's sovereignty.

This cautious commitment extends to the slow pace of weapons delivery. Slovakia has offered its S-300 missile-defense system, which Ukraine says it needs, but it isn't clear when it will be delivered. News leaked on March 16 that the U.S. would finally deliver Switchblade loitering drones to counter an invasion that began on Feb. 24. But on Monday the Pentagon conceded the Switchblades still weren't on the ground in Ukraine. The U.S. should be emptying and restocking its weapons stockpiles on an emergency basis.

The same goes for assisting Western Europe as it copes with 3.5 million refugees and tries to wean itself from Russian oil and gas. The U.S. can accept many more Ukrainians for temporary protected status.

Europeans now understand the mistake they made on energy and are changing their policies. But Mr. Biden refuses to set aside his climate-change obsessions to address this world-changing crisis. His regulators are still targeting U.S. oil and gas production for slow extinction. He will have little credibility in persuading Germans and Italians to make sacrifices if he won't help them meet their energy needs now and next winter.

It's hard to resist the conclusion that Mr. Putin has succeeded in intimidating Mr. Biden and other leaders with his threats of nuclear escalation. This concern may justify the decision not to assist Ukraine with a NATO no-fly zone, which could require U.S. planes to attack Russian radars and missile defenses inside Russian territory.

But it shouldn't be an excuse for caution in doing everything short of that to help Ukrainians defeat Mr. Putin. If the nuclear threat works to stop NATO support now, the Russian will use it in the future against NATO proper. The essence of deterrence is credibility, which means persuading Mr. Putin that his resort to nuclear weapons in Ukraine will be met with a requisite response. The same goes for chemical or biological weapons.

Our fear is that Mr. Biden, and perhaps other NATO leaders, will lean on Mr. Zelensky to agree to let Ukraine become one more “frozen conflict” like Georgia. Russia would be able to keep the Ukrainian territory it occupies in return for no more bombing. Mr. Putin would be able to

consolidate control over those areas and rearm to threaten Ukraine again in the future. The NATO leaders could put that fear to rest if they said publicly that sanctions against Russia won't be lifted until its troops leave Ukraine.

We've said before that a country goes to war, hot or cold, with the President it has. We want Mr. Biden to lead and succeed in Ukraine. But he needs to lead more decisively—and with a goal not merely of military stalemate but of Ukrainian victory.

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **50. Jordan King to visit Ramallah to ease tension ahead of Ramadan**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 23 Mar 22, Kifah Zboun

Jordan's King Abdullah II will visit Ramallah soon to meet Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in an attempt to contain a possible escalation during Ramadan month, according to the official Kan Channel.

Kan said that the monarch plans to come to Ramallah on the eve of Ramadan and meet Abbas, who will have returned from a visit to Germany.

The last time the Jordanian king visited Ramallah was five years ago.

The report stated that Amman fears new escalations and tensions during Ramadan, especially in Jerusalem.

The issue was a top priority on King Abdullah's agenda when he hosted Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid last week in Amman.

"We agreed that we must work together to calm tensions and promote understanding, particularly in the lead-up to the month of Ramadan and Passover," Lapid said in a statement after the meeting.

A PA official asserted that the Authority has no interest in escalation, but Israel is pushing for it. He noted that Tel Aviv said it was trying to ensure calm, but nothing has been implemented on the ground.

The official stated that if Israel wanted to prevent any escalation, it must prevent Jews from entering the Temple Mount throughout Ramadan month, even though it will coincide with the Jewish Passover.

Israel tends to allow settlers to storm al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan month.

## **55. Different photos, same wounds: Images from Ukraine, Syria mirror war**

Anadolu Agency, 23 Mar 22, Ethem Emre Özcan and Seda Sevenscan

It has been 11 years since the civil war in Syria started, and images have now been reflecting same wounds and grief from the Russian war in Ukraine for a month. Besides military attacks, bombing and destruction, war is pain, tears and loss.

Anadolu Agency correspondents have compared similar photos from the two wars, revealing rescue of civilians from under rubble, destruction and migration, and the suffering of the elderly, children and women.

### **Destruction**

The images have drawn parallels between the destruction caused by Russian attacks targeting civilian settlements in Ukraine and devastation resulting from attacks by the Assad regime and its supporter Russia on the opposition-held cities in Syria.

Photos by Anadolu Agency photojournalist Andrea Carrubba capturing the destruction after the bombing of several settlements near the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv show similarity with the images shot by his colleague Salih Mahmud Leyla, who documented the ruin in Aleppo after an Assad regime attack.

### **Color of pain: Blood**

Covered by blood in her face after Russian airstrikes hit Kharkiv, the picture of Olena Kurilo has become the symbol of the Russia-Ukraine war. Her photo, shot by Anadolu Agency photojournalist Wolfgang Schwan, bears a great resemblance to the picture taken by Muhammed Said, another Anadolu Agency photojournalist, which shows a woman injured in an attack on civilians picking olives in a garden in Idlib.

After Russia declared a temporary cease-fire in five Ukrainian cities, civilians evacuated the city of Irpin, near the capital Kyiv.

An Anadolu Agency image of a Ukrainian soldier who holds a child in his lap to help him during the evacuation has attracted great attention. A similar photo was shot by Anadolu Agency in June 2015 during the Syrian civil war.

Fleeing the air bombardment of the Tel Abyad region by the US-led coalition forces in 2015 and the conflicts in the region, scores of Syrians migrated to Turkiye. An Anadolu Agency photo, which features an injured child during the escape who was taken to the Turkish side of the border immediately and given water by a Turkish soldier, made a splash.

Civilians, who wanted to leave the Ukrainian capital amid Russia's attacks, headed to the Kyiv Train Station. A photo by Anadolu Agency photojournalist Aytac Unal, which depicts a Ukrainian father's show of affection when he throws his baby in the air, brought to mind the story of a Syrian father and his baby whose life changed after Anadolu Agency covered their story.

The Syrian baby, Mohammad, born with congenital amputation, was brought to Turkiye as instructed by Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, and returned to Idlib with prosthetic legs. The picture was taken by Muhammed Said.

### **Mothers flee war with babies**

While millions of civilians have left their countries and migrated to neighboring countries due to the war in Ukraine, millions of Syrians have taken refuge in neighboring countries, mainly in Turkiye, due to the civil war in Syria.

Anadolu Agency photo captured a photo of a helpless Ukrainian mother taking refuge in Poland with her baby in her arms. A similar picture was taken years ago when a mother with her baby in her arms reached the border crossing in Turkiye's southeastern Sanliurfa province as the war escalated in Syria.

### **Elders could not escape attacks**

After the war erupted in Ukraine, most of the civilians living in cities under the Russian attacks could not leave their homes. While some settlements were destroyed by Russia's attacks, many civilians escaped from being trapped under the rubble at the last moment.

When an apartment in Kharkiv was damaged in a Russian attack, an old man was taken from the damaged area with the help of two security guards, which Anadolu Agency documented.

A similar shot of this scene was taken years ago after Russia's attack on a neighborhood in Aleppo. An elderly citizen, who was injured in the attack of the Russian warplanes, was rescued from the rubble with the help of the locals.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **56. Outcry raised as Afghan girls over grade 6 barred from school**

TOLOnews, 23 Mar 22

International organizations and diplomatic missions called to reopen all girls' schools across the country.

According to a previous announcement by the Ministry of Education and statements from a number of officials of the Islamic Emirate, all schools--for both boys and girls--were supposed to reopen on Wednesday, the first day of the school year in Afghanistan.

However, on Wednesday girls over grade 6 were not allowed to enter their classes. Only in Herat and Badghis provinces were all girls allowed to attend schools.

In some schools in Kabul, girls attended their classes for a few hours but later were told to return to their houses and wait until further notice.

**From:** CENTCOM Macdill AFB CENTCOM HQ Mailbox CCCI JOC Desk  
**Sent:** Fri, 25 Mar 2022 08:47:42 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)

**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 25 MAR 22  
**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 25 MAR 22.docx, smime.p7s

## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate  
March 25, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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1. The Associated Press led wire service reporting on Thursday's visit by China's foreign minister to Afghanistan. Wang Yi met with Taliban leaders "to discuss various issues including the extension of political relations, economic, and transit cooperation." The meeting was characterized by media as adding legitimacy to the Taliban government while western nations continue to press the group on its human rights record.
2. Foreign Policy magazine and Pakistan media focused on the beginning of a debate in Pakistan's Parliament today that will result in a no-confidence vote being taken concerning Prime Minister Khan. A protest against the debate is scheduled Sunday, and media expect violence between pro- and anti-Khan supporters.
3. ABC News quoted President Biden from a press briefing following NATO and EU meetings Thursday concerning Ukraine. The president said NATO would respond if he Russia uses chemical weapons, but the "nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use." Biden also discussed humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine and reaffirmed his support for NATO's Article 5 which states an attack on one member is an attack on all members.
4. The New York Times claimed a leaked document has revealed that China and the Solomon Islands are close to signing a security agreement that could lead to Chinese troops and warships stationed on the islands. If signed, the deal would give Prime Minister Sogavare of the Solomon Islands the ability to call on China for protection of his own government while granting China a base of operations between the United States and Australia that could be used to block shipping traffic across the South Pacific.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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TOP NEWS

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### **1. China's foreign minister makes surprise stop in Afghanistan**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Kathy Gannon

China's foreign minister made a surprise stop in Kabul on Thursday to meet Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, even as the international community fumes over the hard-line movement's broken promise a day earlier to open schools to girls beyond the sixth grade.

### **2. Imran Khan faces his biggest political test yet**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Michael Kugelman

Galvanized by rising public discontent over skyrocketing inflation and economic malaise, Pakistan's opposition is bringing a no-confidence vote to parliament to try to oust Khan. Although the special parliamentary session is scheduled to begin Friday, the vote will likely take place in the following days.

### **3. US, NATO 'would respond' if Putin used chemical weapons in Ukraine, Biden says**

ABC News, 24 Mar 22, Libby Cathey

President Joe Biden took questions at a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels, addressing warnings of a possible chemical weapons attack by Russia in Ukraine, after meeting with European leaders Thursday and following Ukraine's President Zelenskyy pleading with them to do more to help.

### **4. China and Solomon Islands draft secret security pact, raising alarm in the Pacific**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Damien Cave

A leaked document has revealed that China and the Solomon Islands are close to signing a security agreement that could open the door to Chinese troops and naval warships flowing into a Pacific Island nation that played a pivotal role in World War II.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**President Biden; @POTUS (24 Mar):** Today, I participated in a European Council meeting in Brussels. We committed to providing further humanitarian assistance to those fleeing violence in Ukraine and to continue imposing economic costs on Russia for its actions.

**Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III; @SecDef (24 Mar):** Today, I spoke with my Ukrainian counterpart @oleksiirezniukov to reiterate our unwavering support for Ukraine's Armed Forces & our commitment to continue providing defensive lethal assistance to Ukraine, including the \$1B in security assistance recently announced by @POTUS Biden.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (24 Mar):** Today, we are announcing sanctions against six persons located in Russia, the DPRK, and the PRC for supporting missile and proliferation programs in the DPRK and Syria. The world must remain vigilant of efforts by the DPRK and Syria to advance their proliferation programs.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (24 Mar):** Putin was hoping that @NATO would be split or fail to maintain our cohesion, but NATO is more united today than ever. As

@POTUS said in his remarks, "Putin is getting exactly the opposite of what he intended to have as a consequence of going into Ukraine."

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## IRAN

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### **5. Iran's foreign minister says nuclear deal can be reached if U.S. is pragmatic**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

The revival of a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers can happen in the short term if the United States shows pragmatism in Vienna negotiations, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday.

### **6. Iran's foreign minister says Riyadh sending mixed messages on normalization**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

Iran has received contradictory statements from Saudi Arabia on the renewal of bilateral relations, the country's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday.

### **7. Iran blames US for delays in reaching nuclear deal**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22

Iran's foreign minister claimed Thursday that his country is ready to reach a lasting agreement with world powers, blaming the latest failure to revive Tehran's tattered nuclear deal on an allegedly "unrealistic vision" by the United States.

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## SYRIA

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### **8. Springtime for a pariah: Syria's outcast dictator returns to the Arab world**

The Economist, 26 Mar 22 Edition

Bashar al-Assad has few occasions to fish out his passport. The Syrian tyrant has been largely confined to his own country since 2011, when he set out to crush a string of peaceful protests calling for reform. As civic unrest turned into civil war, he became a pariah. His few foreign forays have been to Russia and Iran, wartime allies to whom he owes his survival.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **9. Chinese foreign minister, Russian envoy visit Taliban-ruled Afghanistan**

Voice of America, 24 Mar 2022, Ayaz Gul

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has made a surprise one-day visit to Afghanistan, where officials said he held wide-ranging talks with Taliban rulers and renewed China's opposition to international sanctions against the war-torn country.

### **10. U.S. slams Taliban u-turn on reopening high schools to girls**

Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Philip Heijmans

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken slammed the Taliban for ditching its commitment to reopen high schools to girls at the last minute, posing the latest setback for a regime struggling to build a footing in the international community.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **11. Four Pakistani soldiers killed in militant attack, military says**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

At least four Pakistani soldiers were killed in an attack by militants in northwestern Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan early on Thursday, the military said.

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## YEMEN

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### **12. Yemeni general's son died alongside father in Aden bombing**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Ahmed Al-Haj

A car bomb that rocked Yemen's southern port city of Aden this week and killed a major general also took the life of his son, a junior military officer, and three guards, a media spokesman said Thursday.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **13. Qatar will stand 'in solidarity' with European countries during energy crisis**

CNN, 24 Mar 22, Becky Anderson, Mostafa Salem and Adam Pourahmadi.

Qatar will stand "in solidarity with Europe" and will keep natural gas flowing there, even if other customers are willing to pay more, Qatari Energy Minister Saad Al Kaabi told CNN's Becky Anderson in an exclusive interview on Thursday.

### **14. Blinken to Mideast as Ukraine war complicates US diplomacy**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Matthew Lee

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to the Mideast and North Africa next week as the Biden administration strives to keep allies and partners united in opposition to Russia's war in Ukraine, the State Department said Thursday.

### **15. Court charges Lebanon's Geagea over Beirut violence**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

A Lebanese military court has charged Christian politician Samir Geagea over deadly clashes in Beirut last October, local media, as well as a judicial source, said, in a move that could stoke political tension two months before parliamentary elections.

### **16. Ukraine war could bring loss of aid, worsen food scarcity in Lebanon**

UPI, 24 Mar 22, Dalal Saoud

The Russian war in Ukraine has brought fears that food will become more scarce and life-saving humanitarian assistance could disappear from cash-strapped Lebanon, whose population is sinking deeper into poverty.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **17. Biden sticks with longstanding U.S. policy on use of nuclear weapons amid pressure from allies**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Michael R. Gordon

President Biden, stepping back from a campaign vow, has embraced a longstanding U.S. approach of using the threat of a potential nuclear response to deter conventional and other nonnuclear dangers in addition to nuclear ones, U.S. officials said Thursday.

### **18. U.S. charges 4 Russian government workers with hacking energy sector**

Washington Post, 24 Mar 22, Devlin Barrett

The U.S. Justice Department fired another legal salvo against Russia on Thursday, announcing indictments against four Russian government employees for an alleged hacking campaign targeting the energy sector that lasted for years and targeted computers in 135 countries.

### **19. US, allies working to provide anti-ship missiles to Ukraine**

The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Jordan Williams

The U.S. and allies are working to send anti-ship missiles to Ukraine as it scrambles to bolster up Kyiv's ability to defend itself against Russia's invasion.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **20. Up to 60% failure rate for some Russian missiles used in Ukraine, U.S. officials say**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22, Phil Stewart

The United States assesses that Russia is suffering failure rates as high as 60% for some of the precision-guided missiles it is using to attack Ukraine, three U.S. officials with knowledge of the intelligence told Reuters.

### **21. Ukraine's plea for Soviet-era anti-aircraft systems goes unanswered**

Financial Times (UK), 24 Mar 22, Felicia Schwartz, Andy Bounds and Eleni Varvitsioti

US president Joe Biden's promise to supply Ukraine with Soviet-era long-range missile systems has become bogged down in difficulties with sourcing and moving the equipment, according to US and western officials.

### **22. U.K. says Russian mercenary group aims to assassinate Ukraine's president**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Max Colchester

The U.K. government said that Russian mercenary company Wagner Group is being used by Russia to try to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

**23. China threat to Taiwan highlighted by Ukraine war, warns US admiral**

Financial Times (UK), 25 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underscored the serious threat that China poses to Taiwan as its military ratchets up pressure on the island, the top US military commander in the Indo-Pacific region has warned.

**24. China's push to isolate Taiwan demands U.S. action, report says**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Amy Qin

The United States should organize a diplomatic campaign among partner nations to push back against China's increasingly forceful efforts to shut Taiwan out of United Nations agencies and other international organizations, according to a new report.

**25. Shabaab kills dozens in twin suicide bombings targeting Somalia's election process**

Long War Journal, 24 Mar 22, Caleb Weiss and Andrew Tobin

On March 24, just one day after Al Shabaab launched an assault against the Halane military base in Mogadishu, the terrorist organization conducted two suicide bombings in the central Somali town of Beledweyne, the capital of Somalia's Hiraaan region. The twin blasts left at least 48 people dead, including two parliamentary candidates, and dozens more wounded.

**26. Ethiopia declares 'Humanitarian Truce' in war-ravaged Tigray region**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Abdi Latif Dahir and Simon Marks

Ethiopia's government on Thursday announced what it called an immediate "humanitarian truce" with forces it has been fighting for 17 months in the northern Tigray region, where millions are hungry and food aid has not been delivered since December.

**27. China foreign minister arrives in India for visit**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Ashok Sharma

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived in the Indian capital on Thursday for his visit in the past two years, after troops from the two countries engaged in a tense faceoff and occasional clashes along their disputed border, an Indian official said.

**28. Kim Jong Un oversees launch of new ICBM, urging defiance of U.S.**

Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Jessica Park

Kim Jong Un oversaw the launch of a new, larger intercontinental ballistic missile, state media confirmed, as the North Korean leader ordered the nation to prepare for further confrontation with the U.S.

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ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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**29. Russia's War has changed the Iran nuclear deal calculus**

Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Jonathan Tirone and Daniel Flatley

Russia's war on Ukraine is reshuffling Middle East diplomacy and forcing the U.S. to reassess the political costs of reviving the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran.

### **30. Why the U.S. was wrong about Ukraine and the Afghan War**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Julian E. Barnes

Ukrainian citizens learned to make Molotov cocktails from government public service announcements, then recorded themselves setting Russian armored vehicles on fire. Ukraine's soldiers waited in ambush and fired Western-provided missiles at Russian tanks. The country's president recorded messages from the streets of his capital, urging his country to fight back against the invaders.

### **31. Mohammed bin Salman has leverage on Biden—and is using it**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Anchal Vohra

The sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine caused havoc in global energy markets. Western capitals panicked over how to contain the price of oil as it climbed to nearly \$140 a barrel and how to wean themselves off Russian supplies. The United States and the United Kingdom, both of which announced bans on the purchase of Russian oil, rushed to convince their traditional allies to open their taps and reduce global oil prices.

### **32. Putin's Afghanistan: Ukraine and the lessons of the Soviets' Afghan War**

Foreign Affairs, 24 Mar 22, Milton Bearden

As Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has progressed, it is clear that almost nothing has gone according to plan. Far from being greeted as liberators, Russian forces have been treated as hated enemies; instead of quickly capitulating, the Ukrainians have shown they are determined to stop the Russian advance and fight at all costs.

### **33. How Russia is using tactics from the Syrian playbook in Ukraine**

The Guardian, 24 Mar 22, Emma Graham-Harrison and Joe Dyke

As Russian strikes reduce Ukrainian cities to ruin – killing, injuring and terrorizing thousands of civilians – comparisons have been made with the second world war, but there was a much more recent precedent. The tactics, and even some of Russia's soldiers, have come direct from the civil war in Syria – which Moscow joined in 2015 to support President Bashar al-Assad.

### **34. The West is rash to assume the world is on its side over Ukraine**

Financial Times, 24 Mar 22, Edward Luce

One of the most frequent lines heard in Washington is that Russia is now globally isolated with China being the key prevaricator. America risks being seduced by its own public relations. The world's reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is far more complex than that. Since February 24, the west has been galvanized into showing more unity than it has in years. Yet most of the world is on the sidelines waiting to see which way it goes.

### **35. The Arab World isn't just silent on China's crackdown on Uighurs. It's complicit**

TIME, 24 Mar 22, Bradley Jardine

As China deepens relations with Saudi Arabia in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Uighur diaspora finds itself in the crosshairs. Riyadh is preparing to deport two Uighurs back to China's western province of Xinjiang, where they will almost certainly be detained for "re-education" in its vast network of concentration camps for the region's Turkic inhabitants. Uighurs in Xinjiang face human rights violations ranging from arbitrary detention and torture to sexual assault and forced sterilization.

### **36. What US intelligence got wrong on Ukraine**

The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Michael O'Hanlon

U.S. intelligence agencies are rightly receiving considerable praise for correctly forecasting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Through a combination of satellite surveillance, monitoring of social media, and other sources, they read Russian President Vladimir Putin's mind several weeks before the conflict began on Feb. 24 — and prevented him from controlling the narrative about the true causes of the war.

### **37. How the Ukraine war could go nuclear**

Politico, 24 Mar 22, Bryan Bender

Not since the Cold War has the specter of nuclear war hung so heavily over a president's crisis diplomacy. As President Joe Biden meets with fellow NATO leaders, calls for a ceasefire in Ukraine are growing more urgent than ever — to alleviate the widespread human suffering but also to dial back what veterans of nuclear planning consider an alarming potential for it to spiral into a clash of atomic superpowers.

### **38. The naval response to the war in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Arthur Herman

Most proposals for military aid to Ukraine involve help from the air, such as establishing a Berlin-style airlift, flying in warplanes from Poland, and creating a no-fly zone over Ukrainian territory. But it would be a serious blunder to neglect the naval aspect of the conflict. Russia certainly hasn't. According to the Times of London, recent intelligence indicates that Russia has a fleet of warships ready to launch an amphibious assault on Odessa, the last major Ukrainian seaport not in Russian hands or under Russian siege.

### **39. Putin doesn't realize how much warfare has changed**

The Atlantic, 24 Mar 22, Antony Beevor

Otto von Bismarck once said that only a fool learns from his own mistakes. "I learn from other people's," the 19th-century German chancellor said. Astonishingly, the Russian army is repeating the past mistakes of its Soviet predecessor. In April 1945, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, under intense pressure from Stalin, sent his tank armies into Berlin without infantry support. Vladimir Putin's forces not only made the same error; they even copied the way their forebears had attached odd bits of iron—including bed frames—to their tanks' turrets in the hopes that the added metal would detonate anti-tank weapons prematurely. This did not save the Russian tanks. It simply increased their profile and attracted Ukrainian tank-hunting parties, just as the Soviet tanks in Berlin had drawn groups of Hitler Youth and SS, who attacked them with Panzerfausts.

#### **40. I'm the Prime Minister of Estonia. Putin Can't Think He's Won This War.**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Kaja Kallas

To anyone who lived under Soviet occupation, reports from Ukraine replay scenes we thought we would never see again. The bombing of civilians and the wanton destruction of buildings recall the carnage unleashed on the European continent by Hitler and Stalin. In Mariupol, a port city subjected to a brutal, horrifying siege, residents are reportedly being deported to faraway places in Russia where an uncertain fate awaits them.

#### **41. What is the thinking behind Israel's Ukraine balancing act?**

Daily Telegraph (UK), 24 Mar 22, Con Coughlin

The emergence of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as a key interlocutor in trying to resolve the Ukraine crisis has much to do with Israel's enduring concerns about Iran's malign activities in the Middle East.

#### **42. Abbas is destroying democracy to ensure his successor supports Israel**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Dalia Hatuqa

On Feb. 8, videos began to emerge on social media of an incident that had taken place earlier that day in Nablus, the second largest Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank. Shaky mobile phone footage showed a shared taxi and a gray van near a silver car, with bullet holes piercing the car's windshield. The driver of the silver car was slumped over, his bloodied passenger sitting lifelessly next to him as a third man lay across the back seat. All three Palestinian men were dead, their car riddled with more than 80 bullets.

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **MIDDLE EAST**

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#### **43. Blinken to visit Israel, West Bank, Morocco and Algeria**

Al Jazeera, 24 Mar 22

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel, the occupied West Bank, Morocco and Algeria in the coming days, the US Department of State has announced, to discuss regional issues as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

#### **44. Saudi Arabia, US conclude series of joint Air Force exercises**

Al Arabiya, 24 Mar 22

The Royal Saudi Air Force and its United States counterpart have concluded a series of joint exercises, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Wednesday.

#### **45. Outrage as Iran's Revolutionary Guards display weapons at Doha show**

Arab News, 24 Mar 22

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has caused outrage by displaying missile models and other weapons at a defense show in Qatar in which the US also took part.

**46. Blinken to meet Abu Dhabi Crown Prince during trip to Morocco: State Department**  
Al Arabiya, 24 Mar 22

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed next week as he makes stops in Israel, Palestine, Morocco and Algeria, the State Department said Thursday.

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IRAN

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**47. Iran considers joining Russian financial messaging system to bypass Swift**  
The National, 24 Mar 22

Iran is considering joining Russia's financial messaging system to bypass the Swift interbank system, after a number of Russian banks were cut off from the international payment messaging platform as part of western sanctions imposed on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine.

**48. BBC complains over Iran 'rape and death threats' to women journalists**  
The National, 24 Mar 22

The BBC has sent a new complaint about Iran to the United Nations after women journalists allegedly received death threats and were targeted with smears about their private lives.

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IRAQ

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**49. Iraq's Sadr forms 'save the nation' alliance to push for government formation**  
The National, 24 Mar 22

Iraqi cleric Moqtada Al Sadr announced a new parliamentary bloc on Thursday and nominated Rebar Ahmed Khalid for the presidency and Mohammed Jaafar Al Sadr for prime minister.

**50. All eyes on Saturday's parliamentary session as Iraqi presidential post deadline looms**  
Rudaw, 24 Mar 22, Julian Bechocha

Iraq's two biggest parliamentary alliances: Save the Homeland Alliance and the Coordination Framework are at loggerheads over the position of president of Iraq as Saturday is set as the date when parliament will convene to elect a new president. However, the Coordination Framework's threats of boycotting the session have cast a shadow of uncertainty over its success.

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SYRIA

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**51. Ukraine war allows UAE to bring Syria's Assad in from the cold**  
Al Jazeera, 24 Mar 22, Giorgio Cafiero

Since its military intervention in the Syrian civil war in September 2015, one of Russia's major foreign policy goals has been to convince Gulf Arab monarchies to come to terms with the survival of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, and the reacceptance of its "legitimacy".

### **52. Syrian opposition says UN must take firmer stance towards Syria to end stand-off**

The National, 24 Mar 22, Mina Aldroubi

The UN must take a "firmer stance" and become "less diplomatic" when dealing with the Syrian regime to end the crisis, an opposition spokesman told The National, as constitutional talks kicked off in Geneva this week.

### **53. Russia to "retreat" in Syria and the reason is Ukraine**

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 24 Mar 22

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights revealed, on Wednesday, the "regression" of Russian strikes in Syria, due to the war in Ukraine.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **54. 'US only now coming to terms with Afghan situation'**

Dawn, 24 Mar 22, Anwar Iqbal

There was 'surprise and frustration' in Washington when Kabul fell to the Taliban but gradually, they understood the situation, says Pakistan's US Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan.

### **55. Afghan Taliban deny replacing Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund**

Dawn, 24 Mar 22

Afghan Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on Thursday denied rumors that the group's Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund has been replaced by his deputy.

### **56. Taliban's schoolgirl ban condemned in the Middle East**

Middle East Eye, 24 Mar 22, Ali M Latifi

The Taliban's decision to once again delay the return of teenage girls to school has been met with condemnation and disappointment in the Middle East, with Qatar and Turkey urging the Afghan group to reconsider its decision.

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## YEMEN

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### **57. FSO Safer operation could cost 'tens of millions'**

The National, 24 Mar 22, Nada Al-Taher

Dutch ambassador to Yemen Peter-Derrek Hof has told The National a deal struck with the Houthis concerning Yemen's leaky FSO Safer could run "into tens of millions of dollars".

### **58. International bodies reject Houthi militias in Yemen, tighten noose on their leaders**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 24 Mar 22, Abdulhadi Habor

Seven years after terrorist Houthis waged a coup in Yemen and took over the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, on September 21, 2014, the group is facing military and political pressures, after the world became aware of its criminal behavior both locally and abroad.

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## EGYPT

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### **59. Egypt, Saudi Arabia Agree to Boost Cooperation, Relations**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 24 Mar 22

Egypt and Saudi Arabia have agreed to work on boosting the mutual economic, social, humanitarian, and cultural relations during the coming period.

### **60. Egypt in talks with Argentina, India and US on wheat imports**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 24 Mar 22

Egypt is in talks with Argentina, India, France and the United States for future wheat imports but is in no rush to buy at the moment, the supply minister said on Thursday.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **61. What caused the Taliban's cruel U-turn on girls' education?**

The National, 24 Mar 22, Editorial Board

In November 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, UNICEF, the UN children's fund, warned that prolonged school closures and other disruptions to daily life put "the future of an entire generation at risk". The rest of the world's children are back at school, with the exception of schoolgirls in Afghanistan, whose futures are put at risk not by a global pandemic, but by the parochialism of their new leaders at home.

### **62. Why is Iran's foreign minister in Syria?**

Jerusalem Post, 24 Mar 22, Seth J. Frantzman

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian left for Damascus, the capital of Syria, at the head of a delegation of Foreign Ministry officials this week. Iranian media reported on the trip. It was therefore not some kind of secret. It comes after the Syrian regime leader Bashar Assad visited the United Arab Emirates.

### **63. The Iraq crisis, an opportunity for change**

Asharq al-Awsat, 24 Mar 22, Rebar Ahmed

The presidential elections in Iraq come following a difficult reform path, which was undertaken by the political and social actors since the start of the largest protest movement in the country, the early parliamentary elections, and the convening of Parliament.

V/R Mal

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 25, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Associated Press led wire service reporting on Thursday's visit by China's foreign minister to Afghanistan. Wang Yi met with Taliban leaders "to discuss various issues including the extension of political relations, economic, and transit cooperation." The meeting was characterized by media as adding legitimacy to the Taliban government while western nations continue to press the group on its human rights record.
- 2) Foreign Policy magazine and Pakistan media focused on the beginning of a debate in Pakistan's Parliament today that will result in a no-confidence vote being taken concerning Prime Minister Khan. A protest against the debate is scheduled Sunday, and media expect violence between pro- and anti-Khan supporters.
- 3) ABC News quoted President Biden from a press briefing following NATO and EU meetings Thursday concerning Ukraine. The president said NATO would respond if he Russia uses chemical weapons, but the "nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use." Biden also discussed humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine and reaffirmed his support for NATO's Article 5 which states an attack on one member is an attack on all members.
- 4) The New York Times claimed a leaked document has revealed that China and the Solomon Islands are close to signing a security agreement that could lead to Chinese troops and warships stationed on the islands. If signed, the deal would give Prime Minister Sogavare of the Solomon Islands the ability to call on China for protection of his own government while granting China a base of operations between the United States and Australia that could be used to block shipping traffic across the South Pacific.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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##### **1. China's foreign minister makes surprise stop in Afghanistan**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Kathy Gannon

China's foreign minister made a surprise stop in Kabul on Thursday to meet Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, even as the international community fumes over the hard-line movement's broken promise a day earlier to open schools to girls beyond the sixth grade.

## **2. Imran Khan faces his biggest political test yet**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Michael Kugelman

Galvanized by rising public discontent over skyrocketing inflation and economic malaise, Pakistan's opposition is bringing a no-confidence vote to parliament to try to oust Khan. Although the special parliamentary session is scheduled to begin Friday, the vote will likely take place in the following days.

## **3. US, NATO 'would respond' if Putin used chemical weapons in Ukraine, Biden says**

ABC News, 24 Mar 22, Libby Cathey

President Joe Biden took questions at a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels, addressing warnings of a possible chemical weapons attack by Russia in Ukraine, after meeting with European leaders Thursday and following Ukraine's President Zelenskyy pleading with them to do more to help.

## **4. China and Solomon Islands draft secret security pact, raising alarm in the Pacific**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Damien Cave

A leaked document has revealed that China and the Solomon Islands are close to signing a security agreement that could open the door to Chinese troops and naval warships flowing into a Pacific Island nation that played a pivotal role in World War II.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**President Biden; @POTUS (24 Mar):** Today, I participated in a European Council meeting in Brussels. We committed to providing further humanitarian assistance to those fleeing violence in Ukraine and to continue imposing economic costs on Russia for its actions.

**Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III; @SecDef (24 Mar):** Today, I spoke with my Ukrainian counterpart @oleksiirezniukov to reiterate our unwavering support for Ukraine's Armed Forces & our commitment to continue providing defensive lethal assistance to Ukraine, including the \$1B in security assistance recently announced by @POTUS Biden.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (24 Mar):** Today, we are announcing sanctions against six persons located in Russia, the DPRK, and the PRC for supporting missile and proliferation programs in the DPRK and Syria. The world must remain vigilant of efforts by the DPRK and Syria to advance their proliferation programs.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (24 Mar):** Putin was hoping that @NATO would be split or fail to maintain our cohesion, but NATO is more united today than ever. As

@POTUS said in his remarks, "Putin is getting exactly the opposite of what he intended to have as a consequence of going into Ukraine."

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## IRAN

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### **5. Iran's foreign minister says nuclear deal can be reached if U.S. is pragmatic**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

The revival of a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers can happen in the short term if the United States shows pragmatism in Vienna negotiations, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday.

### **6. Iran's foreign minister says Riyadh sending mixed messages on normalization**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

Iran has received contradictory statements from Saudi Arabia on the renewal of bilateral relations, the country's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday.

### **7. Iran blames US for delays in reaching nuclear deal**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22

Iran's foreign minister claimed Thursday that his country is ready to reach a lasting agreement with world powers, blaming the latest failure to revive Tehran's tattered nuclear deal on an allegedly "unrealistic vision" by the United States.

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## SYRIA

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### **8. Springtime for a pariah: Syria's outcast dictator returns to the Arab world**

The Economist, 26 Mar 22 Edition

Bashar al-Assad has few occasions to fish out his passport. The Syrian tyrant has been largely confined to his own country since 2011, when he set out to crush a string of peaceful protests calling for reform. As civic unrest turned into civil war, he became a pariah. His few foreign forays have been to Russia and Iran, wartime allies to whom he owes his survival.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **9. Chinese foreign minister, Russian envoy visit Taliban-ruled Afghanistan**

Voice of America, 24 Mar 2022, Ayaz Gul

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has made a surprise one-day visit to Afghanistan, where officials said he held wide-ranging talks with Taliban rulers and renewed China's opposition to international sanctions against the war-torn country.

### **10. U.S. slams Taliban u-turn on reopening high schools to girls**

Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Philip Heijmans

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken slammed the Taliban for ditching its commitment to reopen high schools to girls at the last minute, posing the latest setback for a regime struggling to build a footing in the international community.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **11. Four Pakistani soldiers killed in militant attack, military says**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

At least four Pakistani soldiers were killed in an attack by militants in northwestern Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan early on Thursday, the military said.

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## YEMEN

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### **12. Yemeni general's son died alongside father in Aden bombing**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Ahmed Al-Haj

A car bomb that rocked Yemen's southern port city of Aden this week and killed a major general also took the life of his son, a junior military officer, and three guards, a media spokesman said Thursday.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **13. Qatar will stand 'in solidarity' with European countries during energy crisis**

CNN, 24 Mar 22, Becky Anderson, Mostafa Salem and Adam Pourahmadi.

Qatar will stand "in solidarity with Europe" and will keep natural gas flowing there, even if other customers are willing to pay more, Qatari Energy Minister Saad Al Kaabi told CNN's Becky Anderson in an exclusive interview on Thursday.

### **14. Blinken to Mideast as Ukraine war complicates US diplomacy**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Matthew Lee

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to the Mideast and North Africa next week as the Biden administration strives to keep allies and partners united in opposition to Russia's war in Ukraine, the State Department said Thursday.

### **15. Court charges Lebanon's Geagea over Beirut violence**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

A Lebanese military court has charged Christian politician Samir Geagea over deadly clashes in Beirut last October, local media, as well as a judicial source, said, in a move that could stoke political tension two months before parliamentary elections.

### **16. Ukraine war could bring loss of aid, worsen food scarcity in Lebanon**

UPI, 24 Mar 22, Dalal Saoud

The Russian war in Ukraine has brought fears that food will become more scarce and life-saving humanitarian assistance could disappear from cash-strapped Lebanon, whose population is sinking deeper into poverty.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **17. Biden sticks with longstanding U.S. policy on use of nuclear weapons amid pressure from allies**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Michael R. Gordon

President Biden, stepping back from a campaign vow, has embraced a longstanding U.S. approach of using the threat of a potential nuclear response to deter conventional and other nonnuclear dangers in addition to nuclear ones, U.S. officials said Thursday.

### **18. U.S. charges 4 Russian government workers with hacking energy sector**

Washington Post, 24 Mar 22, Devlin Barrett

The U.S. Justice Department fired another legal salvo against Russia on Thursday, announcing indictments against four Russian government employees for an alleged hacking campaign targeting the energy sector that lasted for years and targeted computers in 135 countries.

### **19. US, allies working to provide anti-ship missiles to Ukraine**

The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Jordan Williams

The U.S. and allies are working to send anti-ship missiles to Ukraine as it scrambles to bolster up Kyiv's ability to defend itself against Russia's invasion.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **20. Up to 60% failure rate for some Russian missiles used in Ukraine, U.S. officials say**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22, Phil Stewart

The United States assesses that Russia is suffering failure rates as high as 60% for some of the precision-guided missiles it is using to attack Ukraine, three U.S. officials with knowledge of the intelligence told Reuters.

### **21. Ukraine's plea for Soviet-era anti-aircraft systems goes unanswered**

Financial Times (UK), 24 Mar 22, Felicia Schwartz, Andy Bounds and Eleni Varvitsioti

US president Joe Biden's promise to supply Ukraine with Soviet-era long-range missile systems has become bogged down in difficulties with sourcing and moving the equipment, according to US and western officials.

### **22. U.K. says Russian mercenary group aims to assassinate Ukraine's president**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Max Colchester

The U.K. government said that Russian mercenary company Wagner Group is being used by Russia to try to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

**23. China threat to Taiwan highlighted by Ukraine war, warns US admiral**

Financial Times (UK), 25 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underscored the serious threat that China poses to Taiwan as its military ratchets up pressure on the island, the top US military commander in the Indo-Pacific region has warned.

**24. China's push to isolate Taiwan demands U.S. action, report says**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Amy Qin

The United States should organize a diplomatic campaign among partner nations to push back against China's increasingly forceful efforts to shut Taiwan out of United Nations agencies and other international organizations, according to a new report.

**25. Shabaab kills dozens in twin suicide bombings targeting Somalia's election process**

Long War Journal, 24 Mar 22, Caleb Weiss and Andrew Tobin

On March 24, just one day after Al Shabaab launched an assault against the Halane military base in Mogadishu, the terrorist organization conducted two suicide bombings in the central Somali town of Beledweyne, the capital of Somalia's Hiraa region. The twin blasts left at least 48 people dead, including two parliamentary candidates, and dozens more wounded.

**26. Ethiopia declares 'Humanitarian Truce' in war-ravaged Tigray region**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Abdi Latif Dahir and Simon Marks

Ethiopia's government on Thursday announced what it called an immediate "humanitarian truce" with forces it has been fighting for 17 months in the northern Tigray region, where millions are hungry and food aid has not been delivered since December.

**27. China foreign minister arrives in India for visit**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Ashok Sharma

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived in the Indian capital on Thursday for his visit in the past two years, after troops from the two countries engaged in a tense faceoff and occasional clashes along their disputed border, an Indian official said.

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Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Jessica Park

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TIME, 24 Mar 22, Bradley Jardine

As China deepens relations with Saudi Arabia in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Uighur diaspora finds itself in the crosshairs. Riyadh is preparing to deport two Uighurs back to China's western province of Xinjiang, where they will almost certainly be detained for "re-education" in its vast network of concentration camps for the region's Turkic inhabitants. Uighurs in Xinjiang face human rights violations ranging from arbitrary detention and torture to sexual assault and forced sterilization.

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The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Michael O'Hanlon

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The Atlantic, 24 Mar 22, Antony Beevor

Otto von Bismarck once said that only a fool learns from his own mistakes. "I learn from other people's," the 19th-century German chancellor said. Astonishingly, the Russian army is repeating the past mistakes of its Soviet predecessor. In April 1945, Marshal Georgy Zhukov,

under intense pressure from Stalin, sent his tank armies into Berlin without infantry support. Vladimir Putin's forces not only made the same error; they even copied the way their forebears had attached odd bits of iron – including bed frames – to their tanks' turrets in the hopes that the added metal would detonate anti-tank weapons prematurely. This did not save the Russian tanks. It simply increased their profile and attracted Ukrainian tank-hunting parties, just as the Soviet tanks in Berlin had drawn groups of Hitler Youth and SS, who attacked them with Panzerfausts.

**40. I'm the Prime Minister of Estonia. Putin can't think he's won this war.**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Kaja Kallas

To anyone who lived under Soviet occupation, reports from Ukraine replay scenes we thought we would never see again. The bombing of civilians and the wanton destruction of buildings recall the carnage unleashed on the European continent by Hitler and Stalin. In Mariupol, a port city subjected to a brutal, horrifying siege, residents are reportedly being deported to faraway places in Russia where an uncertain fate awaits them.

**41. What is the thinking behind Israel's Ukraine balancing act?**

Daily Telegraph (UK), 24 Mar 22, Con Coughlin

The emergence of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as a key interlocutor in trying to resolve the Ukraine crisis has much to do with Israel's enduring concerns about Iran's malign activities in the Middle East.

**42. Abbas is destroying democracy to ensure his successor supports Israel**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Dalia Hatuqa

On Feb. 8, videos began to emerge on social media of an incident that had taken place earlier that day in Nablus, the second largest Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank. Shaky mobile phone footage showed a shared taxi and a gray van near a silver car, with bullet holes piercing the car's windshield. The driver of the silver car was slumped over, his bloodied passenger sitting lifelessly next to him as a third man lay across the back seat. All three Palestinian men were dead, their car riddled with more than 80 bullets.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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**43. Blinken to visit Israel, West Bank, Morocco and Algeria**

Al Jazeera, 24 Mar 22

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel, the occupied West Bank, Morocco and Algeria in the coming days, the US Department of State has announced, to discuss regional issues as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

**44. Saudi Arabia, US conclude series of joint Air Force exercises**

Al Arabiya, 24 Mar 22

won't vote against the motion. PTI coalition partners have also signaled they are leaning toward the opposition's side. Khan will once again need to fight like a cornered tiger.

The prime minister also faces challenges from Pakistan's most powerful political actor: the military. Civil-military relations have been relatively smooth during Khan's nearly four years in office. However, Khan had a spat last year with Pakistan Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa over the process to appoint the next intelligence chief, Nadeem Anjum. Khan had a warm relationship with Anjum's predecessor, Faiz Hameed, whom Khan would like to see become army chief when Bajwa's term expires in November.

This issue is likely one reason why the opposition acted when it did—to prevent Khan from sticking around and appointing his ally as the next army chief, strengthening his position ahead of national elections in 2023. Some political insiders see the military's silence during the current crisis as a tacit endorsement of the no-confidence vote.

Yet Khan could still survive this test. He may even receive help from Pakistan's Supreme Court. This week, a justice issued an opinion—not a final ruling—that Pakistani lawyers say would uphold a constitutional clause that could disqualify ruling party lawmakers who vote against their own prime minister in a no-confidence vote. The disqualification issue may remain unsettled up to the moment of the vote; PTI dissidents unwilling to risk an end to their political careers may reconsider their stance.

Khan will also engage in intense politicking to convince these dissident PTI members, other members of his coalition, and even the opposition to side with him. Furthermore, the ruling party plans to host a massive rally in Islamabad on March 27 to showcase Khan's support, hoping this will prompt some lawmakers to honor the public will and vote in his favor.

If Khan wins the no-confidence vote, he will emerge more emboldened than ever. If he loses, the opposition will try to cobble together a new coalition. If that fails, the PTI is unlikely to put together a new government without Khan, who has no logical successor; early elections would be likely. The opposition has a strong incentive to support early polls because it seeks to avoid becoming the new target of public ire over Pakistan's economic crisis.

The least likely outcome is a military takeover, despite Pakistan's history of coups. The military would prefer that the civilians take the fall for Pakistan's economic stress.

Regardless of the outcome of the no-confidence vote, violence is a very real possibility. Pakistan's political environment is especially charged; Khan recently warned that "my gun is now aimed at Asif Zardari," an opposition leader. There have been several violent clashes in recent weeks, and if Khan is ousted, passionate partisans could react with unrest. No one would benefit from such violence, not least Pakistanis who want politicians to focus on the economic crisis.

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**3. US, NATO 'would respond' if Putin used chemical weapons in Ukraine, Biden says**  
ABC News, 24 Mar 22, Libby Cathey

President Joe Biden took questions at a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels, addressing warnings of a possible chemical weapons attack by Russia in Ukraine, after meeting with European leaders Thursday and following Ukraine's President Zelenskyy pleading with them to do more to help.

Noting Biden has warned there's a "real threat" in Russia using chemical weapons in Ukraine, the first question to him was on whether the U.S. has gathered specific intelligence that suggests that Russian President Vladimir Putin is considering deploying chemical weapons and whether the U.S. or NATO respond with military action if he did use them.

"I'm not going to give you intelligence data, number one," Biden said. "Number two, we would respond. We would respond if he uses it, and the nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use."

ABC News Chief White House Correspondent Cecilia Vega followed up, and asked, "If chemical weapons were used in Ukraine could that trigger a military response from NATO?"

"It would trigger a response in kind," Biden replied. "Whether or not -- you're asking whether NATO would cross -- we'd make that decision at the time."

But Biden did not lay out what that response might look like and whether it would involve sending U.S. troops to Ukraine, which Biden has vowed not to do.

As he began, Biden announced a range of new sanctions against Russia targeting the majority of the Duma and Russian elites, that the U.S. will welcome up to 100,000 refugees from Ukraine and provide \$1 billion in new humanitarian aid, as he faces pressure from Zelenskyy to provide more deliverables to Ukraine.

"Putin is getting exactly the opposite of what he intended to have as a consequence of going into Ukraine," Biden said, adding later on that he was "banking on NATO being split."

Biden also described his call last week with China's President Xi Jinping as "very straightforward" and said that, while "I made no threats," he did make clear Xi would be "putting himself in significant jeopardy" if China helped Russia with its invasion of Ukraine.

The president made the foreign trip to attend an extraordinary summit of all 30 NATO leaders to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO allies, participate in a pre-scheduled meeting of the European Council -- the political body of the European Union -- and meet with leaders of the Group of Seven, or G-7, major industrial nations.

Biden also answered a definitive "yes," when asked he believes that Russia should be removed from the G20, but noted that it "would depend on the G20" to make that decision.

He said that point was raised today by G20 leaders and that he raised the possibility that if removing Russia can't be done because of "Indonesia and others" not in agreement, Ukraine should be able to attend future G20 meetings.

And when he was asked if Zelenskyy needs to cede any Ukrainian territory in order to gain a cease-fire with Russia, Biden said, "that is a total judgment based on Ukraine."

According to senior U.S. administration officials, the mood at NATO's emergency summit has been "sober" and "resolute" so far.

"There was a very strong sense that we are facing a significant historical moment, and very strong support from all the leaders who spoke about the need to defend our democracy," one of the officials told reporters during a telephone briefing Thursday.

The officials said Zelesnkyy, who addressed NATO leaders remotely, spoke "very eloquently" and "repeated his requests for continued and increased Western security assistance."

"But notably, there was not a request for a no-fly zone," an official added. "There was also not a request for NATO membership."

Zelesnkyy did ask for NATO to give 1% of all its tanks and said he hasn't been given an answer.

"I have been repeating the same thing for a month now: To save people and our cities, Ukraine needs military assistance without restrictions, as Russia uses without restrictions its entire arsenal against us," he continued. "Ukraine asked for your planes so that we do not lose so many people. And you have thousands of fighter jets, but we haven't been given any yet."

"We asked for tanks so that we can unblock our cities that are now dying," he added. "You have at least 20,000 tanks. Ukraine asked for a percent -- 1% -- of all your tanks to be given or sold to us. But we do not have a clear answer yet."

Speaking after Zelenskyy's speech, Biden that Thursday marks one month since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. He discussed the sanctions that have already been imposed and expressed strong support for Ukraine as well as humanitarian and military aid and reaffirmed his support for Article 5, which is the cornerstone of NATO and states that an attack on one member is an attack on all members.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin launches his invasion one month ago, 3.5 million Ukrainians have fled the country and millions more have become internally displaced.

Biden is scheduled to travel to Poland on Friday.

As the fighting continues, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on Wednesday that the State Department has made a formal assessment that Russian forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine.

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#### **4. China and Solomon Islands draft secret security pact, raising alarm in the Pacific**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Damien Cave

production and imports of biomethane and renewable hydrogen, and upgrading buildings to reduce consumption.

Earlier this week, German officials including economy minister Robert Habeck visited Qatar for talks on supplying gas to Europe in the midst of Russian energy uncertainty.

“We have not agreed a long term agreement with Germany yet, but we’re willing to discuss with the companies that we have been discussing to put a long term agreement in place potentially,” Al Kaabi said.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last week in an attempt to sway both nations into increasing oil supply. The two countries have spare production capacity but both have so far remained committed to the OPEC+ deal with Russia to only gradually increase output.

By 2028 Qatar hopes its gas volumes will be evenly split east and west of the Suez canal. Currently, about 80% of Qatar’s gas goes east and just 20% is shipped to west.

Qatar, which withdrew from OPEC in 2019 after a diplomatic rift with its neighboring countries, said they are not planning on returning to the organization. Al Kaabi, however, still supported supply moves by the group, calling their plan “very sensible”.

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#### **14. Blinken to Mideast as Ukraine war complicates US diplomacy**

Associated Press, 24 Mar 22, Matthew Lee

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to the Mideast and North Africa next week as the Biden administration strives to keep allies and partners united in opposition to Russia’s war in Ukraine, the State Department said Thursday.

With U.S. diplomacy facing serious tests on Ukraine and a range of Middle East regional issues, the department said that Blinken will visit Israel, the West Bank, Morocco and Algeria starting this weekend.

In Israel, Blinken plans to press Israeli officials on support for the Ukrainian government, seek their thoughts on potential mediation with Russia to end the conflict and update them on the status of the Iran nuclear talks in Vienna. The administration’s efforts to promote an Israeli-Palestinian peace dialogue will also be on the agenda.

In Morocco and Algeria, Blinken will discuss the importance of the role that smaller states can play in backing Ukraine’s sovereignty, as well as the U.S. interest in Arab nations continuing to normalize and expand their relations with Israel. While in Rabat, Blinken will also meet with the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, a longtime U.S. partner in the Gulf that recently attracted Washington’s ire by hosting a visit by Syrian President Bashar Assad.

“The secretary will emphasize to all of the foreign leaders he meets that the United States stands in solidarity with the government and people of Ukraine in the face of the Kremlin’s aggression,” the State Department said in a statement.

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## **15. Court charges Lebanon’s Geagea over Beirut violence**

Reuters, 24 Mar 22

A Lebanese military court has charged Christian politician Samir Geagea over deadly clashes in Beirut last October, local media, as well as a judicial source, said, in a move that could stoke political tension two months before parliamentary elections.

An official in Geagea’s Lebanese Forces (LF) party said the charge against him, as well as the investigation into the violence, had political motives.

Judge Fadi Akiki told Al-Jadeed TV on Thursday that he had charged Geagea two days ago, based on “new information” relating to the Tayouneh events, a reference to Beirut’s deadliest street violence in a decade.

Seven people, all of them followers of the Iran-backed Shia Muslim group Hezbollah and its Shia ally the Amal Movement, were killed in the October 14 clashes near an old front line of the 1975-90 civil war.

Any attempt to arrest Geagea would likely be resisted by his party, creating the potential for trouble just two months before the parliamentary election, said Mohanad Hage Ali of the Carnegie Middle East Center.

Geagea was summoned to a hearing at military intelligence last October over the violence, but did not attend.

The October 14 violence began as people were gathering for a protest called by Hezbollah against the judge investigating the 2020 Beirut port blast.

Hezbollah, which is heavily armed and backed by Iran, accused the LF of mounting an ambush and perpetrating the killing to try to drag the country into a civil war.

Geagea, a strong critic of Hezbollah who has good ties with Saudi Arabia, has emphatically denied this, along with Hezbollah accusations that the LF – which had a powerful militia in the civil war – had established one again.

Geagea has said the trouble began when supporters of the Shia parties entered the Christian neighborhood of Ain al-Remmaneh where they vandalized cars, and that four residents were wounded before a shot was fired.

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## **16. Ukraine war could bring loss of aid, worsen food scarcity in Lebanon**

UPI, 24 Mar 22, Dalal Saoud

The Russian war in Ukraine has brought fears that food will become more scarce and life-saving humanitarian assistance could disappear from cash-strapped Lebanon, whose population is sinking deeper into poverty.

Lebanon imports 66% of its wheat from Ukraine and 12% from Russia and relies on both countries to import cooking oil.

The disruption in the food supply comes as Lebanon deals with the worst financial crisis in its history, with the Lebanese pound losing more than 90% of its value since October 2019. Unemployment is soaring.

A growing number of Lebanese have been able to survive so far due to international aid and local charity initiatives that started to pour in, especially after an explosion at the Beirut port devastated much of the city and destroyed its grain silos, leaving the country without storage facilities.

Losing international humanitarian assistance as the world's attention shifts to Ukraine would be life-threatening to a large segment of the Lebanese population.

"As if the Lebanese didn't have enough problems, now [they are facing the impact of] the war in Ukraine," Bujar Hoxha, country director of CARE International in Lebanon, told UPI. "The situation is much worse and keeps on worsening."

Hoxha said that according to "scary" figures released in November, some 2.2 million Lebanese were facing food shortages, noting that their numbers have undoubtedly increased since then.

About 3.2 million to 3.7 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are also suffering food shortages, although "they are a bit better than the Lebanese" because they get assistance from the United Nations agencies, respectively the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

What worries him most is a possible "shift in attention to other crises," with most grants to Lebanon -- whose population is moving from below poverty to extreme poverty -- coming to an end in the coming months.

Most of the grants his organization and other NGOs are implementing are short-term, ranging between "six months and one year in the best-case scenarios."

"If we stop now the current short-term assistance, the needs will double or triple as the situation will become much worse," Hoxha said. "So the fear is whether international assistance will continue, but if it is short-term, that won't solve the problem."

The need for the international community to keep supporting Lebanon is widely illustrated by heart-breaking stories about increasing food insecurity in the crisis-ridden country.

A mother with three children in Tripoli, Lebanon's poorest city in the north and the most impoverished along the entire Mediterranean coast, has to choose every day who to feed first.

"The one who is hungrier will have breakfast and the less hungry will have to wait for lunch or dinner with the little food the mother is able to put on the table," said Patricia Khodr, communication and media manager at Care International.

For another mother, feeding her infant baby is a painful mission. "Instead of the regular five spoons of baby milk, she only put one in her baby's bottle."

In another family, one of the children works the whole day just to be able to buy 1 kilo of bananas at 10,000 Lebanese pounds (40 cents) that would be wrapped in sandwiches for dinner.

"We haven't seen such poverty before. The people are going poorer by the day, with growing cases of malnutrition, especially among children and women. Many can't even afford one meal per day," Khodr told UPI.

Concerns about malnutrition and cases of anemia among children were also voiced by Etienne Careme, acting representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Lebanon.

"Access to healthy food is really a problem. When you have children who don't have access to healthy food, the next generation will have a problem," Careme told UPI, referring to a survey in December showing that 46% of the Lebanese population were found to be food insecure.

With uncertainty surrounding the Ukraine-Russia war, its duration and impact, shifting to local production, diversifying the Lebanese diet and importing substitutes could be a solution, Careme said.

With a real possibility that 6 million tons of wheat Ukraine was planning to export globally before the end of June 2022 will not materialize, Lebanon, which required between 35,000 and 40,000 tons of wheat per month for domestic milling before the port explosion, will have to rely on alternative suppliers to satisfy its domestic food needs.

"The most critical period to secure imports will likely be between now and the end of June, when trading of fresh supplies from the harvest in the northern hemisphere will start," Careme said.

With only one month's wheat reserves left, Lebanon is doubling efforts to find alternative import sources.

"For sure, we are in a crisis, but we haven't reached the catastrophe," Hani Bohsali, president of the Syndicate of Importers of Foodstuffs in Lebanon, told UPI.

Luckily, food importers have imported enough food supplies for two months ahead of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan that starts April 2.

"But some of the imports from Ukraine were stopped because of the war," said Bohsali, who like other food importers, started to contact other suppliers in China, the United States, South America, Malaysia, Thailand, Poland and Hungary for the post-Ramadan period.

"We are searching for any source to secure food supplies, even at a higher cost. Let's not talk about the worst-case scenario. Let's see how today we can secure the basic commodities: wheat, oil and sugar," he said.

He noted that some of Lebanon's regular suppliers, like Turkey, Egypt and Algeria, have stopped exports for three months because of the Ukraine conflict but asked "would they be able to do that for a year? Their economies could collapse."

However, securing food supplies won't necessarily mean that it could be affordable to many, especially with the country's hyperinflation, skyrocketing food, fuel and fertilizer prices globally and in the absence of international aid and financial assistance.

"We are heading toward another humanitarian catastrophe for sure and the only solution to avoid this is to combine the humanitarian with the development funds," Hoxha said

Fighting over the available resources is another big concern.

"Tension between Syrians and Lebanese is increasing because of humanitarian assistance: who gets what and how much... This is really worrying," he said.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **17. Biden sticks with longstanding U.S. policy on use of nuclear weapons amid pressure from allies**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Michael R. Gordon

President Biden, stepping back from a campaign vow, has embraced a longstanding U.S. approach of using the threat of a potential nuclear response to deter conventional and other nonnuclear dangers in addition to nuclear ones, U.S. officials said Thursday.

During the 2020 campaign Mr. Biden promised to work toward a policy in which the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal would be to deter an enemy nuclear attack.

Mr. Biden's new decision, made earlier this week under pressure from allies, holds that the "fundamental role" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal will be to deter nuclear attacks.

That carefully worded formulation, however, leaves open the possibility that nuclear weapons could also be used in extreme circumstances to deter enemy conventional, biological, chemical and possibly cyber attacks, said the officials.

The decision comes as Mr. Biden is meeting with allies in Europe in an effort to maintain a unified Western stance against Russia President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and allied concerns that the Kremlin might resort to nuclear or chemical weapons.

A spokeswoman for the president's National Security Council declined to comment.

Mr. Biden's nuclear policy follows an extensive Nuclear Posture Review, in which administration officials examined U.S. nuclear strategy and programs.

U.S. officials said the administration's review is also expected to lead to cuts in two nuclear systems that were embraced by the Trump administration. If Congress agrees, this would mean canceling the program to develop a nuclear sea-launched cruise missile and retiring the B83 thermonuclear bomb.

The review, however, supports the extensive modernization of the U.S. nuclear triad of land-based missiles, submarine-based missiles and bombers, which is projected to cost over \$1 trillion.

During the Cold War, the U.S. reserved the right to use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack to offset the Soviet bloc's numerical advantage in conventional forces. After giving up its chemical and biological weapons in accordance with arms-control treaties, the U.S. later said it was reserving the right to use nuclear weapons to deter attacks with poison gas and germ weapons in some circumstances.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies have been particularly nervous about shifting to a "sole purpose" doctrine, fearing it could weaken deterrence against a conventional Russian attack on the alliance.

Congressional Republicans had criticized Mr. Biden for considering a "sole purpose" doctrine.

In January, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma and Rep. Mike Rogers of Alabama, the ranking Republican members on the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, urged Mr. Biden to stay with the U.S. nuclear doctrine that they said had deterred major wars and the use of nuclear weapons for more than 70 years.

In contrast, a number of Democratic arms-control supporters had urged Mr. Biden to minimize the role of nuclear weapons in the Pentagon's strategy and stipulate that the U.S. would never make the first use of nuclear weapons in a conflict.

"Allies were concerned that moving too far away from current posture would leave them vulnerable in theory or in practice to Russian threats," said Jon Wolfstahl, who served as the senior arms control and nonproliferation official on President Obama's National Security Council.

Mr. Wolfstahl, who served as an adviser to Mr. Biden when he was vice president, said it would be disappointing but not surprising if the president shelved his "sole purpose" initiative.

Some Biden administration officials say, however, that his decision doesn't diminish his long-term goal to reduce the U.S. dependence on nuclear weapons and reflects the need to consolidate allied support in the face of Russian threats and a rising China.

Mr. Biden, these officials also note, has supported other arms-control moves, including prolonging the New START treaty limiting U.S. and Russian long-range arms, which he extended for five years.

During the 2020 campaign, Mr. Biden wrote in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that he believed "the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack."

Mr. Biden added that as president he would move "to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies." Mr. Biden had also staked out a similar position before leaving his post of vice president in 2017.

"Given our nonnuclear capabilities and the nature of today's threats, it's hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary," Mr. Biden said at the time.

The reason for his "sole purpose" proposal was to narrow the circumstances in which the U.S. would consider using nuclear weapons by excluding the possibility that they could be employed in response to a conventional attack or other nonnuclear threats.

Mr. Biden's plan to overhaul U.S. doctrine and strategy, however, ran into firm opposition from allied nations, who were concerned that it might weaken the U.S. and allies' ability to deter a conventional Russian or Chinese military offensive, according to foreign diplomats and U.S. officials.

The Biden administration "fundamental role" phrase harks back to the Nuclear Posture Review conducted in 2010 during the Obama administration.

But it differs somewhat from the more specific language in the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review, which underscored the role of nuclear weapons to "hedge against an uncertain future."

That review spelled out that the threat of nuclear weapons could be used to deter what the Trump administration called "nonnuclear strategic attacks" against U.S. or allied populations or infrastructure. That suggested that a major cyberattack, germ weapon or chemical attack that killed thousands of people could trigger a nuclear response.

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## **18. U.S. charges 4 Russian government workers with hacking energy sector**

Washington Post, 24 Mar 22, Devlin Barrett

The U.S. Justice Department fired another legal salvo against Russia on Thursday, announcing indictments against four Russian government employees for an alleged hacking campaign targeting the energy sector that lasted for years and targeted computers in 135 countries.

An indictment in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia charges that Evgeny Viktorovich Gladkikh, who worked at a Russian Ministry of Defense research institute, conspired with others to damage critical infrastructure outside the United States, causing emergency shutdowns at one foreign facility. Those charged in the indictment, under seal since June 2021, also allegedly tried to hack the computers of a U.S. firm that managed similar facilities in the United States.

A separate indictment filed in Kansas alleges that a hacking campaign launched by Russian's federal security service, or FSB, targeted computers at hundreds of energy-related entities around the world. That indictment was also filed under seal last summer.

The hacking activity took place between 2012 and 2018, U.S. officials said. The decision to reveal the indictments underscores the concern U.S. and European officials have about Russia unleashing a wave of cyberattacks on the West in response to a new wave of sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco said there is an "urgent ongoing need for American businesses to harden their defenses and remain vigilant." She said Russian state-sponsored hackers "pose a serious and persistent threat to critical infrastructure both in the United States and around the world."

U.S. officials said one of their concerns regarding possible Russian hacking is that in the past, some Russian malware has been poorly controlled, spreading wildly around the world far beyond the intended targets. The 2017 case dubbed NotPetya, which targeted computers in Ukraine but also affected Denmark, India and the United States, is one example.

In a coordinated statement on Thursday, British officials also blamed the hacking on the Russian government.

"Russia's targeting of critical national infrastructure is calculated and dangerous, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said. "We are sending a clear message to the Kremlin by sanctioning those who target people, businesses and infrastructure. We will not tolerate it."

The Russian Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the indictments Thursday.

Russia does not extradite its citizens to the United States, so there is little chance that the four individuals charged will ever be brought to trial. U.S. officials sometimes make such indictments public in the hopes of deterring future, similar attacks.

John Hultquist, vice president of intelligence analysis at the cybersecurity firm Mandiant, said the indictments are an important gambit amid ongoing tensions between Russia and the West, and a "warning shot" for Russian government hackers. "These actions are personal and are

meant to signal to anyone working for these programs that they won't be able to leave Russia anytime soon," he said.

Much of the hacking activity was previously reported, with U.S. security officials expressing alarm at the degree to which the hackers appeared to be deliberately trying to cause damage to sensitive chemical processes at energy plants that could result in serious harm or danger to people.

The indictment alleges that Gladkikh carried out the hacking as part of his job at the Central Scientific Research Institute of Chemistry and Mechanics in Moscow, launching an extremely dangerous form of malware called Triton, sometimes referred to as "Trisis" or "Hatman."

Gladkikh allegedly conspired to hack a Saudi Arabian oil refiner's sulfur recovery systems which, depending on the severity of the malfunction, could have caused explosions or released toxic gases, officials said. Hackers also compromised computer systems tied to U.S. energy sites, according to the charging papers.

The Kansas indictment names Pavel Akulov, Mikhail Gavrilov and Marat Tyukov as members of the FSB's Military Unit 71330, sometimes referred to as "Center 16," where they allegedly carried out the attacks.

In one instance, the hackers were able to breach the business network for the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant outside Burlington, Kan., according to that indictment. The business network is separate from the plant's operational system. Other U.S.-based victims included the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Westar Energy and Kansas Electric Power Cooperative.

The Kansas indictment charges the FSB hackers placed malware on more than 17,000 different devices "to establish and maintain surreptitious, unauthorized access ... Such accesses enabled the Russian government to disrupt and damage such systems, if it wished."

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## **19. US, allies working to provide anti-ship missiles to Ukraine**

The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Jordan Williams

The U.S. and allies are working to send anti-ship missiles to Ukraine as it scrambles to bolster up Kyiv's ability to defend itself against Russia's invasion.

"We have started consulting with Allies on providing anti-ship missiles to Ukraine," a senior administration official told reporters after President Biden attended a NATO summit.

"There may be some technical challenges with making that happen, but that is something that we are consulting with Allies and starting to work on," the official said.

News of the anti-ship missiles comes as the U.S. scrambles to send as much military equipment to Ukraine as it can as Russia's invasion of the country enters its second month.

Last week alone, Washington provided over \$1 billion in military assistance in Ukraine, the bulk of which comes from an \$800 million weapons package of anti-aircraft defenses, drones, and other weapons that Biden announced last Wednesday.

Biden attended a NATO summit on Thursday, and is also scheduled to meet with G7 leaders and a European Union summit

In a statement on the NATO meeting, Biden said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the summit.

“We will continue to support him and his government with significant, and increasing, amounts of security assistance to fight Russian aggression and uphold their right to self-defense,” the president said.

“I welcome the steps by many other Allies to provide defensive support to Ukraine and together, we are committed to identifying additional equipment, including air defense systems, to help Ukraine,” he added.

A senior administration official told reporters that Zelensky repeated his request for security aid to Ukraine, but notably did not push the alliance to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine. The Ukrainian president and other government officials repeatedly asked for such help, and that the alliance has rejected those pleas.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **20. Up to 60% failure rate for some Russian missiles used in Ukraine, U.S. officials say** Reuters, 24 Mar 22, Phil Stewart

The United States assesses that Russia is suffering failure rates as high as 60% for some of the precision-guided missiles it is using to attack Ukraine, three U.S. officials with knowledge of the intelligence told Reuters.

The disclosure could help explain why Russia has failed to achieve what most could consider basic objectives since its invasion a month ago, such as neutralizing Ukraine's air force, despite the apparent strength of its military against Ukraine's much smaller armed forces.

The U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information, did not provide evidence to support the assessment and did not disclose what precisely was driving high Russian missile failure rates.

Reuters was unable to independently verify the figures.

The Kremlin and Russia's defense ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Such a high failure rate can include anything from launch failures to a missile failing to explode on impact.

U.S. defense officials told reporters this week that the Pentagon assesses that Russia has launched more than 1,100 missiles of all kinds since the war began. The U.S. officials have so far not said how many of those hit their targets and how many failed to do so.

Citing U.S. intelligence, three U.S. officials said the United States estimated that Russia's failure rate varied day-to-day, depended on the type of missile being launched, and could sometimes exceed 50%. Two of them said it reached as high as 60%.

One of the officials said the intelligence showed that Russia's air-launched cruise missiles had a failure rate in the 20 to 60% range, depending on the day.

Russia has been seen fielding two types of air-launched cruise missiles in Ukraine, the Kh-555 and Kh-101, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank's Missile Defense Project.

Reuters could not determine what a standard failure rate would be for air-launched cruise missiles. Two experts interviewed by Reuters said any failure rate of 20% and above would be considered high.

The United States believes Russia fired air-launched cruise missiles from Russian airspace earlier this month when it attacked a Ukrainian military base near the Polish border, and one of the U.S. officials told Reuters there was a particularly high failure rate during this attack. The strike killed 35 people, according to Ukrainian authorities.

Missile attacks have been a feature of Russia's invasion, with Russia announcing strikes against military targets including weapons depots.

The invasion has killed thousands and driven a quarter of Ukraine's 44 million people from their homes. The bombardment has hit residential areas, schools and hospitals in Ukrainian cities including Kharkiv and the besieged port of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov.

Russia, which says its military is engaged in a "special operation" in Ukraine, denies targeting civilians.

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## **21. Ukraine's plea for Soviet-era anti-aircraft systems goes unanswered**

Financial Times (UK), 24 Mar 22, Felicia Schwartz, Andy Bounds and Eleni Varvitsioti

US president Joe Biden's promise to supply Ukraine with Soviet-era long-range missile systems has become bogged down in difficulties with sourcing and moving the equipment, according to US and western officials.

Even as the US and its allies prepare to announce fresh sanctions on Moscow and additional lethal and humanitarian aid for Ukraine this week, the provision of the anti-aircraft ordnance seen by Kyiv as crucial to its ability to halt Russia's advance is set to take more time.

The effort is running into similar issues as the now-abandoned plan to transfer Polish fighter jets to Ukraine, a move that descended into a diplomatic fiasco. The countries that have the equipment — Slovakia, Greece and Bulgaria — have either balked at the plan or want new systems as a substitute. They also fear that Moscow will interpret any transfer as an aggressive act.

Defense experts say Ukraine needs the anti-aircraft systems to repel aerial strikes by Russian fighter jets.

“They’re using these systems to shoot down both Russian aircraft and Russian missiles,” said Frederick Kagan from the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think-tank in Washington. “The Ukrainians are regularly intercepting Russian missiles. There are not that many systems in the world that can do that reliably.”

Tom Malinowski, a Democratic lawmaker on the House foreign affairs committee, said: “Russia seems to be increasing the number of air strikes as their ground forces are held back effectively by the Ukrainians. There is increasing urgency in getting these kinds of systems into the country.”

Of the 30 Nato countries, only Slovakia, Greece and Bulgaria have supplies of the S-300 missile system that was initially developed by the Soviet Union, and which the Ukrainian military is trained to use.

Last week, Slovakia said it would send the S-300 if it could source a suitable substitute but on Wednesday it announced that it was not ready to do so. Bulgaria and Greece have also ruled out transferring their systems for now.

Slovakia has started to receive components of the American-made Patriot missile defense system that Germany is temporarily deploying as part of NATO's response to the war in Ukraine. The Netherlands is also sending a Patriot system to Slovakia.

But Slovakia wants to see more permanent contributions. A Slovak official said on Wednesday that the German system would only be in Slovakia for six months. Slovakia cannot afford to buy its own Patriot system and it would cost several billion dollars to have enough batteries for reasonable defense cover, the official said.

Another Slovakian official pointed to remarks on Wednesday from Jaroslav Nad, the country's defense minister, indicating that its military would need a permanent alternative if it was to donate its own system.

Slovakia also fears Moscow would regard the transfer of the anti-aircraft munitions as an aggressive act and subsequently attack the country, according to someone briefed on the discussions.

The US and Greece have had informal discussions about Greece transferring its S-300 system but Athens has decided against because of the missiles' importance to its own security, a Greek diplomat said. Greece has already sent Kalashnikov rifles and rocket launchers but has ruled out sending air-defense systems, a second diplomat said.

After meeting with Lloyd Austin, US defense secretary, last week, Bulgarian prime minister Kiril Petkov would only offer humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

"Being so close to the conflict, just right now I have to say that currently, we will not be able to send military assistance to Ukraine," he said on Saturday.

Despite the reluctance of the three countries with S-300s, the Biden administration is not giving up on the plan for now. "We feel good about the progress we are making with respect to air-defense systems," US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday ahead of Biden's meetings in Brussels on Thursday.

A US official said Washington has delivered nearly \$350mn of security assistance to Ukraine over the last three weeks and has committed \$1bn more, including deliveries that have already begun arriving.

The official said the US is helping Ukraine acquire longer range anti-aircraft systems and munitions its forces are trained to use, at the request of Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president.

Indeed, the Biden administration wants the transfers done urgently, according to US officials. "We're all mindful of the clock, and that Russia is intensifying their bombardment and long-range fires on cities and population centers throughout the country," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said earlier this week.

The reluctance has echoes of the ill-fated fighter jet plan that was scrapped this month when the US rejected a Polish proposal for the US to take possession of Soviet-era fighter jets and transfer them to Ukraine. Washington feared that doing so might trigger a Russian response, while the Pentagon concluded that the jets would not significantly change the Ukrainian air force's effectiveness.

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## **22. U.K. says Russian mercenary group aims to assassinate Ukraine's president**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Max Colchester

The U.K. government said that Russian mercenary company Wagner Group is being used by Russia to try to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The group of hired soldiers was "reportedly tasked" with killing Mr. Zelensky, the U.K. government said, as it announced sanctions against Wagner Group. It didn't provide evidence or further details.

Wagner emerged from Russia's covert interventions in eastern Ukraine in 2014, where the Kremlin worked with armed groups funded by politically connected Russian businessmen. Wagner was financed in part by multimillion-dollar catering and construction contracts for the Russian armed forces awarded to companies linked with Yevgeny Prigozhin, a former restaurateur, according to European officials.

A representative of Mr. Prigozhin called into question the existence of Wagner Group and said questions about the U.K.'s claim represented "a severe psychosis of Western media," without commenting on the claim itself. The company couldn't be reached for comment.

The Wagner Group has already been sanctioned by the European Union, which accuses it of being a proxy force for Russia's Defense Ministry. The Kremlin has in the past denied any formal connections with the group.

U.K. officials have in recent weeks spoken of their worry about Mr. Zelensky's safety amid the war in Ukraine and numerous reports of attempts on his life.

The U.K., EU and the U.S. have already imposed sanctions on Mr. Prigozhin. The U.K. has also sanctioned his mother and daughter.

Wagner Group arrived in Syria shortly after Russia entered the conflict on behalf of the Assad regime and conducted support operations such as seizing oil and gas fields and securing other government infrastructure, such as airports.

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### **23. China threat to Taiwan highlighted by Ukraine war, warns US admiral**

Financial Times (UK), 25 Mar 22, Demetri Sevastopulo

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underscored the serious threat that China poses to Taiwan as its military ratchets up pressure on the island, the top US military commander in the Indo-Pacific region has warned.

Admiral John Aquilino, head of Indo-Pacific Command, said China had displayed a "boldness" over the past year that ranged from its increasingly assertive military activity near Taiwan and other parts of the South China Sea to its rapid nuclear expansion and a hypersonic weapon test in July.

"I don't think anyone five months ago would have predicted an invasion of the Ukraine. So I think the number one lesson is: 'Hey, this could really happen,'" Aquilino told the Financial Times during his first visit to Australia as head of US forces in the Indo-Pacific. "Number two, don't be complacent . . . We have to be prepared at all times."

China has flown increasing numbers of warplanes into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, raising tensions and sparking fear about future military action against the country over which Beijing claims sovereignty.

“Their operations have certainly changed specifically as it applies to their operations around Taiwan — increased maritime and air operations that are designed as a pressure campaign against the people of Taiwan,” Aquilino said in his first wide-ranging interview since assuming command at Indo-PACOM last April.

“I wouldn’t say I’m more concerned, but I do see increased pressure, and we have to make sure we are prepared should any actions get taken,” added Aquilino, who commanded the US Pacific Fleet before Indo-PACOM.

The former Navy “Top Gun” fighter pilot also expressed concern about China’s development of hypersonic weapons. The FT reported last year that China tested a hypersonic weapon that flew around the earth and fired a projectile over the South China Sea as it sped back towards China.

Asked whether the hypersonic weapon was designed to target the US or facilitate an attack on Taiwan, Aquilino said it was an “offensive capability” — not a defensive weapon — that had “many applications”.

“I don’t think it was built for a specific one, but it certainly destabilizes the region,” he said. “That capability that could be applied against any partner in the region.”

Aquilino said he was also paying close attention to a “very steep increase” in China’s nuclear arsenal, which the Pentagon projects will surpass 1,000 warheads this decade. He said Indo-PACOM was working with Strategic Command, which oversees US nuclear forces, to provide an “integrated deterrence” against the threat.

The admiral was speaking during a six-day visit to Australia aimed at further solidifying the US-Australia alliance to boost military interoperability and co-operation to deter threats from China to North Korea.

Before arriving in Canberra, Aquilino visited a base in Darwin hosting US Marines as part of the Pentagon’s effort to be more “forward deployed” in the Indo-Pacific region. He later flew to Amberly, an air force base near Brisbane, to greet the crew of a B-2 stealth bomber that had flown in from the US to demonstrate American long-range military power to potential adversaries.

“We’re synchronizing more and more with our allies and partners,” said Aquilino, pointing to a recent military exercise that involved seven countries and four aircraft carriers. “Bringing that credible combat deterrent force and operating forward with our allies and partners is one of the key focus areas.”

Asked what role Australia and Japan would play in any Taiwan conflict, he said they would have to decide for themselves but said the US wanted to be ready to operate with its allies.

“What we want to continue to do is to operate together, train together . . . so that whatever decisions those policymakers choose, we’re ready to be able to respond as tasked.”

Ahead of Australia, Aquilino flew to Indonesia for talks. In a rare move, he also flew in a P-8 surveillance aircraft over three contested reefs in the South China Sea that China has militarized in recent years.

His trip comes as the US is focused on helping Ukraine repel the Russian invasion, which has triggered concern among some experts that Washington will lose its focus on China at a critical time. But he stressed the US posture in Asia had not changed and that “everyone understands the security challenge” in the region.

“They understand that credible combat power forward, combined with our allies and partners, is an extremely strong deterrent factor . . . I have not had any of my forces taken and sent to the other part of the world,” said Aquilino. “That said, the adversary gets a vote, so there’s no telling what might happen.”

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#### **24. China’s push to isolate Taiwan demands U.S. action, report says**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Edward Wong and Amy Qin

The United States should organize a diplomatic campaign among partner nations to push back against China’s increasingly forceful efforts to shut Taiwan out of United Nations agencies and other international organizations, according to a new report.

The report from the German Marshall Fund of the United States recommends that U.S. officials go on the offensive against China’s pervasive presence across top ranks of the United Nations and its “growing coercive and corrupting influence as well as its efforts to promote and legitimize its agenda across the U.N. system.”

Among other things, the United States should carry out “a sustained effort to lobby against the appointments and elections” of Chinese officials in high positions in U.N. agencies, the authors wrote. The New York Times saw a final draft of the report before its scheduled release on Thursday.

The assessment comes as concerns that the Chinese Communist Party might take measures against Taiwan and its 23 million people have grown in Washington and Taipei because of the invasion of Ukraine by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

On Feb. 4, two weeks before the invasion, Mr. Putin met with President Xi Jinping of China in Beijing, and the two announced a “no limits” partnership. They released a 5,000-word statement covering broad geopolitical issues in which Russia reaffirmed its support for Beijing’s “One China” principle, which asserts the self-governing, democratic island of Taiwan is a part of China.

U.S. and Taiwanese officials have been trying to gauge whether Mr. Putin’s war in Ukraine will have any effect on the long-running goal of the Chinese Communist Party to bring Taiwan under its rule. Mr. Xi could see Mr. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine as a parallel to military actions he could take to seize Taiwan. At the same time, the harsh economic sanctions imposed on Russia

by the United States and its European and Asian allies and the fierce resistance of Ukrainians to the Russian military could serve as deterrents.

President Biden and Mr. Xi discussed Taiwan in a video call last Friday. Taiwan is the most sensitive and intractable issue between the United States and China. The United States provides defensive equipment to Taiwan and maintains “strategic ambiguity,” meaning it leaves open whether it would send armed forces to defend Taiwan if China tries to invade. And while the United States does not recognize Taiwan as an independent nation, it also does not state a position on the territory’s sovereign status relative to China.

China insists Taiwan is part of its territory and cannot exist as a sovereign nation. Taiwan’s full diplomatic status is recognized by 14 sovereign states — including 13 member states of the United Nations — a number that has fallen over the years as China has pressed nations to drop the recognition and normalize diplomatic ties with Beijing. Last December, Nicaragua switched recognition to China from Taiwan, following similar moves from 2017 to 2019 by Panama, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and the Solomon Islands.

Last August, Lithuania allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in its capital, Vilnius, prompting China to recall its ambassador and sever trade ties.

The report from the German Marshall Fund, a research group that promotes democracy, laid out similar examples of coercive diplomacy by China in the constellation of United Nations agencies and associated groups. (The authors, Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, both Taiwan experts, said they had received funding from the Taiwanese government for the research but that the views in the report were their own. Separately, Laura Rosenberger, senior director for China and Taiwan at the White House National Security Council, was a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund.)

In some cases, Chinese diplomats worked to ensure that Taiwan could not participate in the groups. In other cases, Chinese officials pushed U.N. personnel to ensure that Taiwan was labeled a “province of China” in documents. The U.S. has a policy of promoting Taiwan’s participation in international organizations and venues.

A United Nations spokesperson did not reply to a request for comment.

A State Department official said that U.S. officials consistently highlighted the value of Taiwan’s “meaningful participation” in U.N. activities and associated groups, especially ones related to public health and safety. In a statement, the official said “this is in the best interest of all U.N. member states, given the transnational nature of the challenges we face.” U.S. officials regularly have private conversations with U.N. leaders on the issue.

China’s efforts in the United Nations context are part of a campaign to shift the understanding of that body’s Resolution 2758, passed in 1971. The resolution says the People’s Republic of China would be the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations, meaning it would take the seat held by the government of Taiwan. The resolution does not say anything about the sovereign status of Taiwan, but China has been trying for years to change people’s understanding

of the language so they think the text says Taiwan is part of China, Ms. Drun and Ms. Glaser wrote.

China has “used U.N. Resolution 2758 and bilateral normalization agreements with other member states to falsely claim that its ‘One China’ principle is a universally accepted norm,” they wrote, adding that China gets support for its views partly “through economic pressure on governments.”

Those efforts allow China to more easily argue that Taiwan should be shut out of international organizations.

“They have lots of reasons to solidify the ‘One China’ principle, as they put it, in the minds of the leadership of the United Nations,” said Thomas Christensen, the interim dean at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs and a former State Department official.

China pressures private companies and nongovernment groups too. Marriott, Delta Air Lines, Qantas, Zara and Medtronic all changed their website language in recent years after Chinese officials criticized the companies for listing Taiwan as a separate country. Last year, Chinese officials at the United Nations forced a Colorado high school to change language on its website before the school’s students were allowed to visit a U.N. organization. The school had to add “province of China” to text about Taiwan.

The German Marshall Fund report highlights an agreement between China and the World Health Organization as an egregious instance of a move to shut Taiwan out of an international group. The ban on Taiwan was especially harmful in the early months of the pandemic, when Taiwan had accumulated information on Covid-19 but could not share it with the W.H.O., the authors wrote. In May 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other U.S. officials tried to lead a coalition of countries to get Taiwan observer status at an assembly convened by the W.H.O., but failed.

China also quashed a similar effort last year.

“Beijing is setting the table for a war to annex Taiwan, and its insistence on these linguistic changes are designed to absolve Beijing of its commitments under the U.N. Charter and to head off international sanctions and condemnation,” said Matthew Pottinger, a deputy national security adviser in the Trump administration and the chairman of the China program at Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. “It won’t work, because the world won’t abide Beijing slaughtering its peaceful neighbors irrespective of whether Taiwan is viewed as a sovereign country or part of ‘one China.’”

Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy, said that participation by the “Taiwan region” in activities of international organizations, including the W.H.O., “must be handled in accordance with the ‘One China’ principle.”

China's efforts have fueled a growing sense of resentment toward the mainland among Taiwanese. More than ever, many of the island's residents identify as solely Taiwanese, and not Chinese.

The issue of Taiwan's representation on the international stage has been a source of rare bipartisan consensus between the island's two main political parties: the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, which tries to bolster Taiwanese identity, and the Kuomintang opposition party.

Taiwan has consistently pushed for meaningful participation in the United Nations. But China, which is a permanent member of the Security Council, has closed off almost any possibility of that happening.

"It is very high on China's agenda to stop Taiwan's visibility in the world," said Su Chi, a former official in the Kuomintang who served as the chairman of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council.

"Even the KMT resents that," he added. "We have the aspiration for dignity."

But China's influence in the United Nations and related agencies is growing.

"Due to China's powerful interests in the U.N., it's very difficult for these agencies to let Taiwan enter into these organizations," said Eugene Kuan, an associate professor of international politics at National Taiwan Normal University. "They don't want to cause any disputes or any conflict with China, so it's better for them not to take care of this issue."

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## **25. Shabaab kills dozens in twin suicide bombings targeting Somalia's election process**

Long War Journal, 24 Mar 22, Caleb Weiss and Andrew Tobin

On March 24, just one day after Al Shabaab launched an assault against the Halane military base in Mogadishu, the terrorist organization conducted two suicide bombings in the central Somali town of Beledweyne, the capital of Somalia's Hiraaan region. The twin blasts left at least 48 people dead, including two parliamentary candidates, and dozens more wounded.

The initial blast occurred within the Lama-Galay military base in Beledweyne, which houses the Hirshabelle regional presidential residence (Hirshabelle refers to the federal member state that combines Somalia's Hiraaan and Middle Shabelle regions) and the site of ongoing parliamentary elections in the region.

Among the victims of the attack was Somali legislator Amina Mohamed Abdi, who was campaigning for re-election at the polling site at the time of the attack.

Mohamed was described as a fearless critic of incumbent president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (popularly known as Farmaajo) and advocate for a female intelligence officer, Ikran Tahlil, whose disappearance in 2021 sparked disputes within the Somali federal government.

signs of an ICBM launch. The country also appears to be undertaking construction work at its main nuclear weapons test site for the first time in about four years.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **29. Russia's War has changed the Iran nuclear deal calculus**

Bloomberg, 24 Mar 22, Jonathan Tirone and Daniel Flatley

Russia's war on Ukraine is reshuffling Middle East diplomacy and forcing the U.S. to reassess the political costs of reviving the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran.

Clinching the deal after a year of negotiations now hangs on a sticking point that people familiar with the talks say has emerged as the most politically explosive for the Biden administration -- whether to remove Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from the U.S. list of terrorist organizations.

The designation isn't directly linked to the original pact, which curbed Tehran's atomic activity in return for sanctions relief, but Iran's insisted all along that it be scrapped.

The issue's galvanized U.S. lawmakers in an election year and united erstwhile Middle East foes in an unprecedented bid to nix a pact they fear will hand Iran an oil windfall. They include Gulf Arab nations that face regular attack from Iran-backed groups and have rebuffed requests to top up stricken oil markets unless their security needs are met.

The stakes are higher for President Joe Biden than they've been since he came to office in January 2021. Iran now has stockpiles of highly-enriched uranium, sanctions have failed to halt its progress and no deal means potentially living with the risk it could develop nuclear weapons and set off a regional arms race.

Lifting the IRGC's terror designation, however, would alienate Gulf Arab leaders just as Biden works to rally allies against Moscow and curb soaring gasoline prices. It also risks upending a decades-old alliance that extended U.S. influence in a strategic region that exports more energy than any other and straddles three shipping choke points.

#### **High stakes**

Two weeks after talks to revive the agreement were suspended, diplomats say it's not clear when negotiators might return to Vienna. Russia's decision to drop its 11th hour condition to a deal and the release last week of two British-Iranians detained for years by Tehran have yet to imbue new momentum.

Reflecting the souring mood as Ukraine redraws the political landscape, U.S. senators emerged discouraged from a classified briefing on the talks Tuesday.

“Russia was initially interested in getting the U.S. back into the deal,” said Democratic Senator Ben Cardin, who attended the briefing in Washington. “Now they have only concern about Ukraine. Their attention isn’t there anymore.”

After suggesting for weeks that a deal was close and remaining hurdles could be cleared within days, State Department spokesman Ned Price said Monday “that an agreement is neither imminent nor is it certain.”

### **Symbolic sanctions**

The deal’s proponents argue that the IRGC’s terrorism designation was a symbolic measure taken by then-President Donald Trump after he abandoned the agreement in 2018 and launched a “maximum pressure” campaign. Iran has said from the start it wants all the additional Trump-era penalties removed.

Even if the designation is scrapped, the military organization that’s armed and trained proxy groups around the region and launched attacks on the U.S. and its allies in Iraq and on tankers in the Persian Gulf would remain subject to a slew of other sanctions.

Plus, reinstating the pact would incentivize Iran to reduce tension, potentially breaking the tit-for-tat cycle of violence that’s shaken the Gulf since Trump exited the agreement.

Opponents of the deal, and even administration members who had been supportive, calculate that backing down would project weakness and carry political costs ahead of November elections in which Biden’s Democrats stand to lose control of Congress.

They’re also concerned about pushing Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which face regular attacks from Iranian-backed Yemeni fighters, further into Russia and China’s embrace, accelerating an erosion of American power already underway.

The senate briefing came hours after Israel, the UAE and Egypt held a rare summit -- unthinkable just a few years ago -- aimed at presenting a joint front against the Iran pact and shielding themselves from the more immediate economic turmoil triggered by the Kremlin’s month-old war.

And the debate’s prompted an unusual public objection from Israel. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid issued a joint statement Friday urging the U.S. not to “abandon its closest allies in exchange for empty promises from terrorists.”

Another challenge to a deal could come from within Biden’s own party once he submits the text for Congressional oversight as required by a 2015 law. As well as broad Republican opposition it could meet resistance from some influential Democrats including Robert Menendez, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and has warned the administration not to accept a bad deal or interim agreement.

“I have no question in my mind that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is a terrorist organization,” said Menendez. “We have acknowledged that their actions are such, so it would have to be explained.”

A nuclear deal that offers \$90-\$130B in sanctions relief, relieves sanctions against #Iran’s worst #humanrights offenders, & delists the #IRGC doesn’t support our nat’l security interests. Worse, this deal could enable #Putin to build his nuclear arsenal. Biden should walk away.

In the absence of an agreement, Iran’s enriched uranium stockpile looks likely to grow unabated while its government solidifies trading ties with China and Russia. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian spoke with his Chinese counterpart following talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow only last week.

China disclosed this week that it continued importing Iranian crude in January. Security analysts have warned for months that China could provide Iran an economic escape route if nuclear talks collapse. Beijing has consistently criticized U.S. secondary sanctions that target its trading partners. The list of sanctioned companies has only grown in the wake of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

While Biden’s trying to discourage China from helping sanctioned entities, he’s been slow to address the depth of anger among Gulf Arab allies over the Iran deal, damaging efforts to isolate Moscow.

No Middle Eastern government, including Israel, has signed on to support the crushing sanctions the U.S. has imposed on Russia.

The State Department says it’s now in constant touch with Middle East allies to provide assurances. Having shunned Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler and neglected for years to appoint ambassadors to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, U.S. officials say they’re trying to schedule high-level diplomatic meetings in the region in the days and weeks ahead.

And the differences over a symbolic designation aren’t insurmountable, say people familiar with the talks, if both sides decide the agreement’s worth it.

“Both the U.S. and Iran want a deal,” Eurasia wrote last week. “There may yet be some theatrics, with Iran trying to leverage high oil prices to win several additional concessions.”

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### **30. Why the U.S. was wrong about Ukraine and the Afghan War**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Julian E. Barnes

Ukrainian citizens learned to make Molotov cocktails from government public service announcements, then recorded themselves setting Russian armored vehicles on fire. Ukraine’s soldiers waited in ambush and fired Western-provided missiles at Russian tanks. The country’s president recorded messages from the streets of his capital, urging his country to fight back against the invaders.

It was a stark contrast from a different set of images, just seven months ago, when the Taliban rolled into Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, unopposed. Most Afghan troops abandoned their uniforms and weapons. The president fled to the United Arab Emirates, leaving his country to the Taliban militants it had fought for some two decades.

The intelligence community and American military appear to have misjudged both countries' will to fight, according to lawmakers. In Afghanistan, intelligence agencies had predicted the government and its forces could hold on for at least six months after the U.S. withdrawal. In Ukraine, intelligence officials thought the Russian army would take Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, in two days. Both estimates proved wrong.

Assessing how well and how fiercely a military, and a nation, will defend itself is extraordinarily difficult. There are many factors to consider, including its leadership, the supplies at its disposal, the strength of the enemy and whether an opposing force is seen as an invader.

The miscalculations demonstrate that even in an age of electronic intercepts and analysis assisted by vast data collection, human relationships still matter in accurately assessing the morale of a country or military. Former intelligence officials say that is why it is critically important that the perspectives of people working directly with partner forces reach policymakers in Washington.

Had the U.S. view of Afghanistan been more realistic, efforts to evacuate Afghans who had assisted the American war effort could have begun earlier — or perhaps some of the billions of dollars put toward training Kabul's military could have been spent in other ways.

With Ukraine, according to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, if the United States had had a better sense of how strong and effective the Ukrainian resistance would be against a Russian invasion, it might have sent more weapons to the country sooner.

“Assessing the will to fight in advance of a conflict like this is difficult. However the lesson of the last year is we have to figure out how to do that,” said Senator Angus King, a Maine independent and a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. “If we had known in advance how strong the Ukrainians would be and how weak the Russians would be, we might have been able to preposition more equipment and had aid to the Ukrainians flow in faster, based on the assumption they had a real chance.”

How badly the intelligence agencies got it wrong is subject to debate. Ahead of the invasion, Ukraine experts “clearly and repeatedly” told policymakers in the White House and Congress that Ukraine's government and people “probably would resist a Russian invasion,” a U.S. official said.

But intelligence reports are usually hedged. And under questioning from Senator Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas, Lt. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said this month that, before the invasion, he had thought the Ukrainians were not as ready for an attack as they needed to be.

“Therefore, I questioned their will to fight. That was a bad assessment on my part because they have fought bravely and honorably,” General Berrier said.

In an interview, Mr. Cotton said the intelligence agencies were at their best assessing Russia in the lead-up to the invasion. Once the invasion began, the assessments of Ukraine's capabilities and Russia's military were "less than stellar." Still, he said, judging how effective a country's defenses will be ahead of a potential attack is tricky.

"Will to fight is not a discrete area of intelligence you can go out and collect on it," Mr. Cotton said. "It's not like how many working fighters did an air force have? There's a lot of subjectivity."

Recent counteroffensives by the Ukrainian military suggest that the country's leaders are resolved to do more than simply defend Ukraine against the Russian invasion. Over the last week, Ukrainian forces have used tanks and fighter jets to attack Russian positions outside Kyiv and other cities in a way that demonstrates that their objective is not to take back territory, but to destroy Russian forces. It is a sign of not only savvy strategy but a clear intent by Ukraine to defeat the Russian military and win the war.

Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California and the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said it was easy to overstate what the intelligence community got wrong, both in Ukraine and Afghanistan. Last summer, intelligence agencies repeatedly warned that the Afghan government would collapse and that military leaders were surrendering to the Taliban, Mr. Schiff said.

Mr. Schiff said that he had asked during intelligence briefings if Ukraine would fight a Russian invasion and was told by officials that, yes, they would, but that it was difficult to know what that would mean in concrete terms.

"If there was a blind spot, I think it was less in believing Ukrainians wouldn't fight and more about believing the Russian military was more capable than they turned out to be," Mr. Schiff said.

Russia believed that it would face little effective resistance from the Ukrainian military, and that it could quickly march to Kyiv, rather than having to engage in a slow grinding war, according to U.S. intelligence agencies.

That misjudgment was amplified by the Russian military's struggle with complex maneuver warfare, supply problems, broken-down vehicles and lack of secure communications, former U.S. intelligence officials said.

"No one doubted the will of the Ukrainians, but given the small size of their army, analysts assessed there were limits to their capability to fight a war on a modern battlefield," said Douglas H. Wise, a retired senior C.I.A. officer and a former deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. "With the scale of the Russian military dwarfing Ukraine's much smaller size, analysts ran the numbers and assessed they would not prevail."

Intelligence officials also had no way of predicting the leadership abilities of Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, which have proven key in rallying the country to the fight. One

reason for the misjudgment was that the Ukrainian government, including Mr. Zelensky, was initially skeptical of American intelligence that Russia was going to invade.

Two weeks before the invasion, Mr. King asked intelligence officials how Mr. Zelensky would handle the attack. Mr. King had argued that had President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan not fled in the face of an advancing enemy force, Kabul might have lasted longer, and he wanted to know what Mr. Zelensky would do.

“Will he be Churchill or Ghani?” Mr. King asked.

The officials replied that Mr. Zelensky had publicly played down the likelihood of an invasion, but they simply did not know how he would respond.

“But boy, when the chips were down,” Mr. King said in an interview this week, “he channeled his inner Churchill.”

The United States has a bad track record of assessing its partner forces stretching back to Vietnam, when U.S. officials thought the South Vietnamese army would be able to hold off the north after the American withdrawal. Indeed, the more the United States has invested in training partner forces, the less clear-eyed officials have been on their prowess.

In Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, American officials believed the units they had trained would fight longer and harder than they did. It is nearly impossible to make an objective analysis of the fighting spirit of a partner force in those situations, former intelligence officers said.

“To get the data you have to become close to your partner and the minute you do that, lack of bias goes out the window,” Mr. Wise said.

Other former intelligence officials argue it is often the officers who train and work with partner forces who can accurately assess the will to fight. But that information is sometimes overlooked as it is passed up to analysts in Washington, said Marc E. Polymeropoulos, a former senior C.I.A. official who oversaw operations in Europe and the Middle East and served several times in Afghanistan.

“If you ask operations officers about will to fight, they will tell you the truth based on their being on the ground with a partner,” he said. “I think any operations officer would have told you that the Afghan regular army did not have that will to fight on their own, if we left, and consistently would have said that over and over again.”

Whether the United States is prepared to handle such assessments better in the future is unclear. It is already confronted with a similar issue as it tries to help Taiwan deter a possible attack from China.

“The question is whether the Taiwanese would exhibit the same fighting spirit as the Ukrainians,” said Rep. Mike Gallagher, Republican of Wisconsin and a member of the House Intelligence Committee. “The answer matters. Because if we suspect not, then we need to be

moving more aggressively to help the Taiwan military reform and fix their reservists, the infrastructure and make them a more lethal and more difficult target before it's too late.”

Intelligence officials believe the Russian war in Ukraine is failing. But they think President Vladimir V. Putin will adjust his tactics, doubling down on the hard-line attacks he has employed in recent weeks or looking to escalate the situation in a bid to force the West to end its support for Ukraine.

The idea that Ukraine is certain to lose may no longer be universally accepted, but some lawmakers think the Biden administration is still underestimating the Ukrainian military.

“Zelensky’s endgame may be victory, it may be getting Russian troops off his soil,” Mr. Cotton said. “Even if you didn’t think that a month ago, you have to concede it is certainly a possibility now.”

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### **31. Mohammed bin Salman has leverage on Biden—and is using it**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Anchal Vohra

The sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine caused havoc in global energy markets. Western capitals panicked over how to contain the price of oil as it climbed to nearly \$140 a barrel—and how to wean themselves off Russian supplies. The United States and the United Kingdom, both of which announced bans on the purchase of Russian oil, rushed to convince their traditional allies to open their taps and reduce global oil prices.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two of the biggest producers of oil, however, did not oblige, instead seeing an opportunity for themselves in the crisis. The message to the United States and the West more generally was unmistakable: The Saudis have too much leverage to be taken for granted in geopolitics or to be treated as an object of continuous criticism for violating human rights.

Even more than the Emiratis, the Saudis hold the key to oil wells and expect big concessions from the United States before opening their taps and reversing their pro-Russia oil policy. Activists fear that human rights will be sacrificed at the altar of energy security once again. Neither the United States nor the U.K. publicly criticized Saudi Arabia’s mass executions of 81 people in mid-March. The West’s policy toward Saudi Arabia has consisted mostly of cajoling to ease the pressure on consumers’ wallets.

The Saudis and Emiratis have a spare capacity of more than 3 million barrels a day and could reduce oil prices even if they released a part of it. Moreover, since Russia exports about 5 million barrels a day and nearly 80 percent to Europe, an assurance of support from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi could go a long way in assuaging the concerns of European countries and encouraging them to reduce dependence on Russia.

But the two Gulf states have held back, citing commitment to the OPEC+1—the expanded version of the oil cartel that includes Russia. Their rationale is that the war in Ukraine has not so

far resulted in a massive disruption of oil supplies; hence, there is no need to max out production. But experts believe it to be a political decision that reflects a major shift in world politics. The choice to keep the prices up, which also benefits Russia's war machine, displays how dictatorships in the Gulf no longer feel the need to be on the right side of the United States and are embracing newer alliances with like-minded authoritarians. On several occasions in the past, Saudi rulers increased or reduced the output to please their U.S. allies.

This time, however, the de facto ruler of the kingdom, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, sees a chance to get even with U.S. President Joe Biden for what he believes have been gratuitous insults and less than favorable treatment. While still a candidate in the U.S. presidential election, Biden described Saudi Arabia as a pariah and when in office made public an intelligence report that implicated the crown prince in the assassination of the Saudi dissident and Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Moreover, both the Saudis and Emiratis felt their concerns over the possible resumption of the Iran nuclear deal were sidelined and that the United States failed in its duty as a military ally when it refused to take action against the Houthis in Yemen for attacking their ships and cities. Lately, even their pleas to keep the Houthi movement on the list of designated terrorists were ignored by Washington.

As fuel prices rose in the wake of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war, the White House scrambled to organize a phone call between Biden and the jilted crown prince but was rebuffed. However, the Saudi heir was not at all anxious about being seen as a closer ally of Putin, who stood by him through the allegations of ordering Khashoggi's killing and didn't so much as whisper condemnation when women's rights activists were arrested and prisoners executed en masse.

The Saudi tilt toward a fellow authoritarian began back in 2015, when relations soured with then-U.S. President Barack Obama. A year later, Russia was included in OPEC. Riyadh's relationship with Moscow has since strengthened, while ties with the United States have waxed and waned, improving during the tenure of U.S. President Donald Trump, who withdrew from the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran, and plummeting again as Biden took charge and restarted talks to revive the agreement. During the Trump administration, Mohammed bin Salman was portrayed as a reformer, but under Biden he was once again criticized widely for Saudi strikes in Yemen that killed civilians and for human rights violations inside his own kingdom.

Trita Parsi, a co-founder and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, said Saudi Arabia supports Russia because the crown prince is certain of the continuation of Putin as Russian president and a change of government in the United States.

"The Saudi crown prince is making a bet on Putin," he said. "Not only does he believe but he also hopes that the Republicans will win the midterm elections, turning Biden into a lame duck. By 2025, [Mohammed bin Salman] likely believes that Biden and the Democrats will be out of power, while Putin will remain president of Russia."

The crisis has forced the United States to assess its claims of energy independence. It must either come up with a more coherent long-term plan to better manage its domestic energy industry,

which has suffered extensive losses during the pandemic, or seal its lips and tolerate the authoritarians.

Energy experts believe in any case it would take months for U.S. fracking companies to dig new wells. Even if sanctions against Iran and Venezuela are lifted, it will still take time before they can supply their oil to the global market. Last weekend, Germany signed a long-term deal with Qatar to import liquefied natural gas (LNG); Qatar holds the third-largest gas reserves after Russia and Iran. Under the agreement, Germany will fast-track construction of two LNG terminals to be able to import Qatari gas, but even then, it would take years before that gas is supplied to German homes. Until now, Germany had banked on cheaper Russian gas transported through pipelines.

Saudi Aramco, currently the world's largest oil producer, reported record profits in 2021, earning \$110 billion, a net income increase of 124 percent from \$49 billion the year before. The company announced a general investment in increasing oil production but nothing to increase the supply in the short term. "We recognize energy security is paramount for billions of people around the world, which is why we continue to make progress on increasing our crude oil production capacity," said Amin Nasser, CEO of Saudi Aramco.

The International Energy Agency has said that by the end of this year, at least 1.5 million barrels of oil a day are likely to be lost from Russia. It will undoubtedly lead to a further price rise. OPEC+ is next meeting at the end of this month and is expected to take stock of the situation to decide on oil output. But a lot depends on how much the Saudis and Emiratis feel heard by the United States.

They are certain the United States will not change its position on the nuclear deal, but could it back the Gulf countries in their war against the Houthis in Yemen and cut down on criticism on human rights violations? The lowest hanging fruit in the world of hard national interests is individual liberties. Saudi activists may end up paying the price for global oil stability and a reduction in prices once again. Mohammed bin Salman, however, might want even more than that from Biden.

*Anchal Vohra is a columnist for Foreign Policy and a freelance TV correspondent and commentator on the Middle East based in Beirut.*

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### **32. Putin's Afghanistan: Ukraine and the lessons of the Soviets' Afghan War** Foreign Affairs, 24 Mar 22, Milton Bearden

As Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has progressed, it is clear that almost nothing has gone according to plan. Far from being greeted as liberators, Russian forces have been treated as hated enemies; instead of quickly capitulating, the Ukrainians have shown they are determined to stop the Russian advance and fight at all costs. Even at this point, a month into what will undoubtedly become a much longer engagement than Putin estimated, reports abound that the Russian campaign has been plagued by supply issues and low morale. Already, the war

shows signs of becoming what the Institute for the Study of War has described as a “stalemate.” Perhaps most striking, U.S. intelligence officials estimate that the Russian military lost more than 7000 soldiers in the first 20 days of the war alone, as well as five Russian generals in the past month. By all indications, there is no clear path to victory for Russia absent a massive escalation, and the war has already proved perilously costly to the Kremlin—and especially to Putin himself.

For those who remember late Soviet history, there is a familiar analog to these events: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. As with the war in Ukraine, the invasion of Afghanistan was driven by the fear that Moscow was losing a crucial piece of its sphere of influence. With Afghanistan, the Soviet leadership believed, as Putin apparently did about Ukraine, that the war would be quick and easy, that its troops would have no problem handling whatever resistance they might encounter, and that the United States and its allies, distracted by other events, would not mount an effective response. And like Putin, the Soviets assumed that it would be easy to install a puppet government in the newly conquered territory.

None of this turned out to be true. Instead, Afghanistan quickly turned into the most disastrous Russian foreign military engagement of the postwar era. Afghan insurgents quickly organized into effective guerrilla forces and created safe havens in Pakistan, where they were armed and trained by Pakistani intelligence officers. Within weeks of the Soviet invasion, U.S. President Jimmy Carter formed an alliance with Pakistan—an effort that was soon joined by China, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia—to support the Afghan resistance. Deeply unprepared for what would be arrayed against them, Soviet forces dug their heels into what turned into a grinding decadelong war that undermined morale at home, drained Soviet coffers, and eventually precipitated the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Of course, Russia in 2022 is not the Soviet Union of 1979. But given the striking similarities that have already emerged between Putin’s Ukraine adventure and the Soviet war in Afghanistan, it is worth examining the defining features of that earlier conflict and its far-reaching consequences. If the Ukraine invasion continues to unfold as it has so far and becomes Russia’s bleeding wound of the twenty-first century, it could, as the Afghan war did for the Soviets, threaten the survival of Putin’s regime—and Putin himself.

### **Learning the wrong lessons**

Unlike Putin’s clumsy preparations for the invasion of Ukraine—botched in part because of U.S. intelligence revelations exposing Moscow’s intent to attack—the Soviet plans for Afghanistan unfolded in secret. In late 1979, KGB intelligence analyses had wrongly concluded that Afghanistan was sliding into the West’s orbit and that a U.S. military base in the country would allow the United States to completely encircle the USSR with nuclear missiles. Soviet leaders also feared that if Afghanistan were pulled into Washington’s sphere of influence, it could trigger a domino effect among the nations of the Warsaw Pact. According to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which proclaimed that a threat to socialist rule in any Soviet bloc country was a threat to all socialist states, these fears justified military intervention. Thus, on December 12, 1979, Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, KGB Chair Yuri Andropov, and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko drafted a proposal to dispatch a “limited contingent” of the Soviet

army to Afghanistan with a short and targeted intervention in mind. A dozen days later, the Soviet invasion began.

In its initial phase, the Soviet invasion was far more successful than Putin's in Ukraine. On a snowy Christmas Eve, Soviet airborne troops—along with special units of the OMON, the militia division of the Soviet Interior Ministry—quickly seized strategic targets in Kabul, assassinated Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin and key members of his ruling team, and replaced him with their handpicked man, the pro-Soviet Babrak Karmal, who rode into Kabul on the tanks of the Soviet invaders. They moved occupation forces into Afghanistan's major cities—Jalalabad in the east, Kandahar in the south, Herat in the west, and Mazar-e Sharif in the north. Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul, quickly became a Soviet Air Force base. Within a few weeks, the Soviet Union had brought Afghanistan under the semblance of control.

As with Putin in Ukraine, however, the Soviets badly underestimated the Western response. At the time the decision to attack Afghanistan was made, the KGB assessments had indicated that the United States would be unlikely to seriously challenge the invasion. The Americans had withdrawn from Vietnam just a few years earlier, and the presumably weak U.S. president, Jimmy Carter, was preoccupied with the American hostage crisis in Iran. But the West was on a much higher alert than the Russians anticipated. Fearing that failure to respond could embolden the USSR's international ambitions, President Carter swiftly moved to cancel new consular agreements and major wheat sales with the Soviet Union and issued a boycott of the upcoming 1980 Moscow Olympics. Behind the scenes, he also ordered the CIA to covertly begin supplying the Afghan resistance movement with equipment, including lethal materials. Within weeks, the CIA had delivered thousands of Enfield .303 rifles to Pakistan for distribution to the mujahideen, and was soon sending rockets, mortars, and rifles, as well. Total U.S. funding for the Afghan resistance grew from about \$100 million in the first year to \$500 million in the fourth year; in the last two years of the war, it would top \$1 billion.

The failure of the Soviet Union to anticipate both the strength of the resistance and the extent of Western support had devastating consequences. What Soviet leaders had assumed would be a quick and easy military intervention turned into a bloody decadelong struggle. The human devastation of the conflict reverberated throughout the region: around a million Afghans were killed, a million and a half were wounded, three million sought refuge in Iran and Pakistan, and an unknown number were internally displaced—all out of a population of fewer than 20 million people. The Soviet Union itself eventually admitted to having lost more than 15,000 soldiers in the conflict, although that number is probably much closer to 25,000. By the time Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the Soviet leaders who had launched the Red Army into Afghanistan had passed from the scene, but the USSR was continuing to pour blood, treasure, and its international reputation into the war. Eventually, with the U.S.-armed Afghan resistance increasingly on the march, Gorbachev gave his commanders a year to turn around the situation, but they could not. On February 15, 1989, the Soviets finally withdrew.

Signaling the Soviets' defeat, the withdrawal from Afghanistan set in motion a stunning series of events that would change the world. Countries within the Soviet bloc and the Warsaw Pact saw an exhausted Soviet Union leave Afghanistan, and rightly concluded that the new Soviet premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, would have little stomach for new military adventures. Thus, in

May 1989, the Hungarian government, perhaps the most cerebral of the Soviet partners, cut the barbed wire fences on its border with Austria, allowing hundreds of East Germans to escape to West Germany. The following month, in the first free elections in over six decades, the people of Poland cast their ballots for the Polish dissident and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lech Walesa, effectively voting out over four decades of communism. That summer, East Germany's antigovernment Monday demonstrations grew in numbers and sheer force until the night of November 9, 1989, when crowds of East German protesters breached the Berlin Wall. Less than a year later, Czechoslovakia and Romania had followed suit in breaking with Moscow, East and West Germany were reunified—as a member of NATO—and in 1991, Ukraine declared independence. On Boxing Day of 1991, a small group of Russian soldiers marched out on the Kremlin wall, lowered the red and gold hammer and sickle for the last time, and hoisted the Russian white, blue, and red tricolor.

It was these traumatic events—precipitated at least in part by the Afghan disaster—that Putin witnessed as a young KGB officer stationed in East Germany. The memory of the Soviet collapse has driven him to declare it “the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century,” but he appears to have taken the wrong lesson from those events. Paradoxically, in an effort to reconstruct his vision of the lost Russian empire and reclaim Ukraine from what he takes to be Washington's sphere of influence, he has launched his own Afghan-like invasion. In setting out to reverse history, he may instead be repeating it.

### **Replicating disaster**

If anything, Putin's invasion of Ukraine looks even shakier than the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The televised meetings of Russia's Security Council indicate that Putin's closest advisers, unlike Brezhnev's Politburo, were not entirely briefed on the invasion plans and may have had their own misgivings. And in contrast to the Soviets' initial success, Putin's invasion has been poorly executed from the start, with failure to seize or control major cities and casualty counts in the first few weeks that would take the Soviets years to amass in Afghanistan.

Moreover, Putin has met far more resistance in Ukraine than Soviet forces initially met in Afghanistan, which may lead him to resort to more violent tactics. Already, Russian attacks on hospitals, residential buildings, and a crowded theater have caused President Biden to brand Putin a “war criminal,” to which he has responded by petulantly declared that he might break off all diplomatic relations with the United States. If Putin follows the pattern that he has shown in his previous wars in Grozny and Syria, he will likely use tactics the Soviets employed in their failed Afghan enterprise that resulted in an estimated one-third of the Afghan population killed, wounded, or displaced internally or into Iran and Pakistan.

At this stage, unless there is a negotiated settlement—an unlikely event—it seems that Putin will seek to seize and occupy Kyiv after a bitter and violent fight with its heavily armed civilian population. This task alone may prove extremely difficult and could take weeks or months of costly fighting. It is far from certain that Putin could take Kyiv with conventional tactics. But even if he is successful in taking Kyiv—removing the Zelensky government and replacing it with handpicked pro-Russian quislings—Moscow's troubles could be just beginning. As in Afghanistan forty-odd years ago, Putin would likely face a relentless, heavily armed insurgency,

covertly backed by a Western coalition similar to the one that pushed the Soviets out of Afghanistan.

Ukraine's size alone will present formidable problems to any Russian occupation. As large as Texas, it has a population of over 40 million people—twice as many as Afghanistan's in 1979—and is not isolated, landlocked, mountainous, and forbidding like Afghanistan, where mules and all-terrain vehicles were required to deliver arms to the Afghan resistance. Ukraine is also a reasonably modern country with decent roads and transportation networks. It has 850 miles of land and maritime borders with Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania: all NATO countries. And although it lacks the rugged, mountainous terrain that helped the Afghan insurgents effectively counter a heavily armed Soviet Army, Ukraine's vast geography, strong communication networks, and proximity to Western powers give its insurgents a great advantage.

As with the Afghan resistance in the 1980s, with its safe havens in Pakistan, a Ukrainian insurgency could also benefit from staging areas in neighboring countries. Already, millions of Ukrainian refugees crossing into these bordering NATO countries are being met with sympathy and support. In the coming days and weeks, as the war moves toward engulfing the entire country, these refugees are likely to be joined by growing numbers of fighting-age Ukrainians. These fighters will be seeking not refuge but safe havens, where they will begin to organize, train, and arm themselves as a roughly coherent resistance force against the Russian occupation of their country. With the United States and its NATO allies already funding and arming the budding insurgency against Russia, it will not be long before Putin finds himself pitted against a well-armed resistance movement that could make the occupation simply too politically, socially, and economically costly to sustain. As in Afghanistan, supply problems and morale issues among the occupying forces could reach a level that cannot be sustained.

The record of recent insurgencies suggests that the odds will be sharply against Putin in any prolonged occupation. In the decades since the end of World War II, nationalist-based insurgencies against foreign invading forces have almost always prevailed, as Afghan resistance fighters did against the Soviet Union. This puts Putin in a vulnerable position: either he wins and quickly pacifies Ukraine—a most unlikely outcome—or he orders a withdrawal of his troops from the country after he declares his “special military operation” successfully completed. The personal humiliation of such a move would likely be too much for Putin. He is approaching his 23rd year as Russia's leader, about seven years short of his personal goal of exceeding Joseph Stalin's 30 years at the helm. The options open to him are narrowing by the day, and further complicating any assessment of his likely actions is the growing suggestion that he is unhinged and capable of taking the unthinkable step of using nuclear weapons, as he has repeatedly threatened to do. The nagging suspicions regarding Putin's state of mind can only serve to force the United States and its NATO allies to place themselves, quietly and without public pronouncement, on their own highest levels of alert, including regarding the nuclear option.

If Putin is to be taken out of the game before he escalates to the unthinkable, it will most certainly take his own military or intelligence people to accomplish the task. As the war in Ukraine drags on day by day and the international media reports on Russian atrocities and civilian casualties, the world continues to turn on Moscow. Although Putin may have started this

war to remedy what he sees as the tragedy of the Soviet dissolution, he may well be replicating the disastrous war that precipitated that collapse in the first place and jeopardizing his own future in the process.

*Milton Bearden served as CIA Chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, where he was responsible for the agency's Covert Action program in support of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet occupation.*

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### **33. How Russia is using tactics from the Syrian playbook in Ukraine**

The Guardian, 24 Mar 22, Emma Graham-Harrison and Joe Dyke

The woman in labor stared out from the stretcher, as medics rushed her over a wasteland left by a Russian attack on a maternity hospital. In a different hospital and feeling her baby slipping away, she begged doctors: “Kill me now.” Hours later, both she and her child were dead.

The horror of the attack on a maternity hospital in the besieged Ukrainian port city of Mariupol stunned the world. But it was not the first time Russian bombs had fallen on women as they gave birth.

As Russian strikes reduce Ukrainian cities to ruin – killing, injuring and terrorizing thousands of civilians – comparisons have been made with the second world war, but there was a much more recent precedent. The tactics, and even some of Russia’s soldiers, have come direct from the civil war in Syria which Moscow joined in 2015 to support President Bashar al-Assad.

Since then it has carried out a brutal but ultimately successful campaign – helping Assad seize back nearly all of the country from rebel hands. In the process, entire cities have been devastated and up to 24,743 civilians allegedly killed by Russian strikes, according to the civilian harm monitor Airwars.

From the Damascus suburb of Ghouta, to the great cultural and economic powerhouse of Aleppo, Russian bombs hit hospitals, schools, markets and queues of people waiting for bread. Its planes helped enforce Syrian sieges on the ground, reducing people to desperate skeletal bodies. And when Russia and the Syrian army promised exit routes, they sometimes bombed and shot the civilians trying to flee.

Some observers predicted Putin would not import the tactics of Syria to Ukraine because close ties of family and friendship straddle the border. While Syrians were distant, anonymous victims to most in Russia, the people of Mariupol include relatives, classmates and former colleagues.

But over the past month, the targets have been the same: hospitals, schools, markets, bread queues, a theatre. Russian troops have promised escapes and then attacked civilians on the roads.

Below is an examination of five key elements of the “Syria playbook”, looking at how the tactics from one war have been imported to devastating effect into another.

## **Cutting off rebellious areas**

Syrian and Russian forces besieged multiple cities in Syria to starve them into submission, effectively holding civilians hostage as forces moved in on rebel fighters.

Perhaps the most notorious was the siege of Aleppo in 2016. Syrian rebels were first cut off from their supply lines and then squeezed, street by street, over more than six months, while indiscriminate bombing took place.

By 2017, 4.9 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance were living in besieged or hard-to-reach areas.

Now the same is happening in Mariupol, where Russian forces are closing in on Ukrainian forces trapped between their frontlines and the sea. As the fighting rages civilians are barred from leaving, civilian infrastructure is being targeted, and life has become a daily gamble.

Russian forces appeared to be attempting a similar blockade of the capital, Kyiv, and the key eastern city of Kharkiv, but so far Ukrainian forces have been able to keep supply lines open.

## **Civilian infrastructure**

In both Syria and Ukraine, Russia and its allies have made military targets out of the civilian heart of communities – places ordinary people go for medical care, education, and food and other necessities.

Deliberately targeting civilians is illegal under international law, but it can also be effective. It spreads terror, saps the will of fighters, and destroys the community they rely on for practical and moral support.

During the eight-month battle of Aleppo, civilians were reportedly harmed in at least 16 attacks on hospitals, accounting for up to 143 alleged deaths, according to Airwars. Across the rest of Syria, dozens of strikes on healthcare facilities have been documented, including multiple attacks that have been tied directly to Russian forces.

“We documented numerous attacks on hospitals by precision Russian weapons demonstrating a clear desire to target hospitals – which are protected under international humanitarian law,” said Marc Garlasco, a war crimes investigator who analyzed Russian activity in Syria for the United Nations. “It was shocking.”

The World Health Organization has documented at least 43 attacks on healthcare in Ukraine since the war began, with at least 12 people killed. Countless other patients have had their healthcare disrupted by siege, including children on a cancer ward who are trapped in Chernihiv and running out of painkillers.

Simply feeding your family becomes unsafe under Russian assault. Since 2015, civilians in Syria have been killed or injured in 204 reported attacks on market places by Russian or government

forces, according to Airwars data. This was five times the number of such allegations about the US-led coalition against Islamic State during the same period.

Schools too have been attacked; in Syria children were killed while studying. In Ukraine, because education has been halted, no students were at their desks when bombs hit, but there have been casualties. In Mariupol a missile hit an art school sheltering at least 400 people.

And even when there are no deaths, damaging or destroying schools rips out the heart of a community and its future; in eastern Kharkiv alone, the mayor said, 48 schools had been destroyed. Nationwide, hundreds have been hit.

Water, gas and power supplies were hit in Syria. In Ukraine, a power station in the east was attacked even before Russia launched its full invasion, and utility supplies have been disrupted around the country. This is particularly devastating in the bitter Ukrainian winter.

### **Widespread use of indiscriminate weapons**

In Ukraine, Russian forces have deployed indiscriminate weapons when targeting residential areas of towns and villages, reducing entire settlements to rubble.

The largest-scale devastation has taken place in districts of Mariupol, where fires extended the work of bombing. But other towns have been attacked in this way, including eastern Volnovakha and Schastia which were targeted early in the war. Residents say 90% of Volnavakha has been razed or damaged.

The civilian toll of this kind of attack is high. Many people are killed, bodies cannot be buried and surviving residents are spending days sheltering in freezing basements without water, their food supplies dwindling, and hopes of an evacuation repeatedly dashed.

Again the echoes of Syria are clear – with videos of the ruins reminiscent of footage from Aleppo. In Syria, Russian forces allegedly used “vacuum missiles” – a particularly deadly explosive that can suck the oxygen from the air – hundreds of times in heavily populated neighborhoods.

Russia has also used other inherently indiscriminate weapons in both countries, including cluster bombs, which scatter from a delivery case, and grad rockets – indiscriminate and unguided weapons designed for open battlefields.

Civilian harm allegations have resulted from cluster munitions reported 567 times in Syria, with at least 2,000 civilians killed. They have also been widely used in Ukraine, from Kharkiv in the north-east to Mykolaiv in the south. There, one man told the Guardian a neighbor had been killed and another badly injured by cluster bombs that landed in his village.

“What Russia did in Syria was almost indescribable – intensive attacks destroying whole areas,” said Fadel Abdul Ghany, the head of the Syrian Network for Human Rights. He pointed to the 2018 siege of the rebel-held suburb of eastern Ghouta. “They had at least 12 airplanes shelling a civilian area and when they finished another 12 would return in their place.”

Russia also used its wars to develop tactics and test new weaponry. The country's defense minister boasted of testing more than 300 new weapon types in Syria, and in Ukraine they claim to have used new hypersonic missiles for the first time.

### **Humanitarian corridors**

A fourth part of the “playbook” is the announcing of humanitarian corridors. In both Syria and Ukraine, Russia has appeared to offer escape routes from areas under siege or intense shelling and then at the last minute snatched away the chance of safe passage for civilians to areas beyond the conflict.

The sight of buses lined up for a rescue mission, then forced to wait as bombardment continued became familiar in Syria and has been repeated in Ukraine.

Perhaps the most notorious in Ukraine is Mariupol. After weeks of attack and false hopes, tens of thousands fled in ad-hoc convoys of private cars once word got out in the city that Russian checkpoints were letting civilians through. Those without cars had a brutal choice of walking for several miles, or staying in the ruined city.

In Syria, Russia sometimes announced the corridors unilaterally without coordinating with international organizations such as the United Nations – meaning they were unable to monitor them, said Emma Beals, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington. The corridors were sometimes open too briefly to be useful, were unworkable or even took civilians to areas under the control of military forces they were hiding from.

“The important lesson from Syria is when military and political victory is their explicit ambition there is pretty much nothing that will cause them to stop except achieving that. And the humanitarian corridors were used as part of those goals,” Beals said.

At least seven times in Syria, Russia and its allies were accused of killing or injuring civilians while targeting humanitarian convoys, including those carrying food, resulting in the deaths of at least 44 people, according to Airwars data.

The opening of corridors, even if they are not functional, can also presage an intensified attack. “Russia then usually argues that having given this chance for departure, anyone left is a “terrorist” and as such a legitimate military target. This was the pattern most infamously in Aleppo,” said Kyle Orton, a Syria analyst.

### **Disinformation**

Another trademark of the “Syria playbook” is consistent denial of, and disinformation about, civilian casualties and war crimes. To date, Russia has not accepted killing a single civilian in Syria and has no known mechanism to measure the civilian impact of its actions.

Since invading Ukraine its domestic propaganda machine has gone into overdrive, banning even the simple truth of calling the invasion a war. Instead it is a special operation. Putin claims that his soldiers are fighting to “denazify” a country whose president is Jewish.

Internationally, Russia has attempted to deny some of its worst atrocities in Ukraine. Even the pregnant woman killed in Mariupol was not left to die in dignity – the Russian embassy in London claimed images of her final agonizing moments were “fake”.

That echoed attacks on the White Helmet civilian rescue group, the Syrian victims of Russia’s most aggressive and successful disinformation campaigns. They gained worldwide fame for filming their rescues following bombings, but were regularly accused of faking the carnage they captured.

The chief spokesperson for the Russian defense ministry, Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov, even alleged, without evidence, that Ukrainian forces were planning to make “staged videos” of fake civilian deaths, in campaigns “based on patterns used by the White Helmets”.

Sara Kayyali, a Syria researcher at Human Rights Watch, said over several years the campaign in Syria succeeded in casting doubt among many over any allegation of civilian harm.

“What we came up against was the sophisticated disinformation campaign that the Russian media, in particular, launched against people like the White Helmets. Unfortunately, in many circles, this was quite successful.”

### **Fears over the next step?**

One potential further step that Russia could take to echo the war in Syria would be using chemical weapons. Russia did not use chemical weapons in Syria, but Putin’s ally Assad illegally deployed them against civilians multiple times. Syria has either denied these attacks or claimed they were “false flag” operations by rebels, but the UN-aligned body that oversees chemical weapons has confirmed the Syrian regime deployed chemical agents, including the nerve gas sarin.

Western leaders have warned that Russia may be planning a similar attack in Ukraine. The Russian state has already used a nerve agent and a radioactive poison in attacks on British soil.

Moscow’s false accusation that Ukraine has biological and chemical weapons is a “clear sign” that a desperate Vladimir Putin is considering using them himself, the US president, Joe Biden, has said. Putin has also made a veiled nuclear threat by ordering nuclear deterrence forces on to high alert.

That threat, if carried out, would take Putin beyond even his own brutal Syrian playbook. The western world, which has stepped back from intervention in either war even as civilians were trapped, starved and bombed, has not yet decided how it would respond.

*Joe Dyke heads the investigation team at the civilian harm monitoring organization Airwars.*

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### **34. The West is rash to assume the world is on its side over Ukraine**

Financial Times (UK), 24 Mar 22, Edward Luce

One of the most frequent lines heard in Washington is that Russia is now globally isolated — with China being the key prevaricator. America risks being seduced by its own public relations. The world's reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is far more complex than that. Since February 24, the west has been galvanized into showing more unity than it has in years. Yet most of the world is on the sidelines waiting to see which way it goes.

Not for the first time, the west is mistaking its own unity for a global consensus. One misleading measure is at the UN. In the organization's last tally earlier this month, 141 of 193 member states condemned Vladimir Putin's blatant violation of international law. But the 35 that abstained account for almost half the world's population. That includes China, India, Vietnam, Iraq and South Africa. If you add those that voted with Russia, it comes to more than half.

Moreover, many of those nominally against Russia are hedging their bets. Saudi Arabia is considering China's request to be paid in yuan for its oil. That would help undercut the power of the dollar. Both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates refused to take Joe Biden's calls this month when he wanted them to step-up oil production — a rare snub to a US president.

Last week the UAE hosted an official visit from Bashar al-Assad, Syria's dictator, and Putin's close ally, who the US rightly sees as a pariah. One of the UAE's motives for rehabilitating Assad is that Biden is pushing to revive the nuclear deal with the regionally dreaded Iran that would release more oil on to the global market. Even Israel, arguably America's closest friend, is keeping an open mind. Its prime minister, Naftali Bennett, who is auditioning as a Russia-Ukraine mediator, has been conspicuously even-handed.

All this may look academic in a few months if Ukraine continues to humiliate Russia and the west can sustain its unity. Everybody loves a winner and the hedging countries would probably tilt back towards the west. The bigger abstainers, such as India, which has quadrupled its oil imports from Russia at a discount compared to this time last year, would adjust their stance, which is causing anguish in Washington. But the world's ambivalence should give Biden and Europe food for thought.

One red flag is the west's habitual tendency to claim moral leadership. This creates three problems. First, it is hypocritical. US public opinion paid little attention to the horrific carnage in Syria, for which Assad is primarily culpable. Though Germany took in 1mn refugees in 2015, most of the rest of the west did not follow suit. Britain and the US admitted fewer than 50,000 Syrians between them. What Russia is doing to Ukraine is barbaric. But there is plenty to go round. Many in the Muslim world, in particular, think America practices double standards. Thousands of civilians died in Iraq and Afghanistan from US munitions, though they were not deliberately targeted (unlike in Ukraine).

A second point is that the west is rash to assume its values are universal. The US this week designated what Myanmar did to its Rohingya minority as genocide. Though Myanmar, unlike Ukraine, is in India's neighborhood, Narendra Modi, India's Hindu nationalist prime minister, made only token protests. The fact that the Rohingya are Muslim undoubtedly influenced him. India took only a tiny fraction of the refugees. This is in spite of the fact that India, unlike China, is a democracy.

A third is that much of the world resents western sanctions. With the exception of fuel exports to Europe, the west has largely decoupled from Russia in a month. The execution has been astonishing. But it has also reminded others of the west's capacity to punish those with whom it disagrees. In this instance, it is very hard to argue the west is wrong. Putin not only poses a mortal threat to democratic values; he is also extolling the law of the jungle. No wonder so many small countries condemned Russia at the UN.

The western public's response to Putin's barbarism has been admirable. But it is inevitably selective. The more western governments grasp how large parts of the world see them, the better able they will be to practice effective diplomacy.

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### **35. The Arab World isn't just silent on China's crackdown on Uighurs. It's complicit** TIME, 24 Mar 22, Bradley Jardine

As China deepens relations with Saudi Arabia in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Uighur diaspora finds itself in the crosshairs. Riyadh is preparing to deport two Uighurs back to China's western province of Xinjiang, where they will almost certainly be detained for "re-education" in its vast network of concentration camps for the region's Turkic inhabitants. Uighurs in Xinjiang face human rights violations ranging from arbitrary detention and torture to sexual assault and forced sterilization.

Saudi Arabia, a key ally of China in the Arab world, has shown support for Beijing's crackdown on Uighur culture in the past. During a 2019 visit to China, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto ruler, told his hosts: "We respect and support China's rights to take counter-terrorism and de-extremism measures to safeguard national security." Saudi Arabia further endorsed China's Xinjiang policies in two joint letters to the United Nations in 2019 and 2020.

But Arab states are not only lending rhetorical support to China, they are also actively assisting Beijing in its global campaign of abuse and reprisals against Uighurs. At least six governments in the Arab world—Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the UAE—have detained or extradited Uighurs at China's behest. According to our dataset at the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, around 292 Uighurs have been detained or deported from Arab states at China's behest since 2002.

The majority of these occurred in recent years. China's repressive practices against the Uighur diaspora have expanded dramatically since Chinese President Xi Jinping unleashed his "people's war on terror" in 2014. At least 1,327 individuals have been detained or rendered from 20 countries worldwide since then, according to our findings. The majority of these are from Muslim-majority countries. Today, links to the Arab world can result in immediate imprisonment for Uighurs, with algorithmic systems of surveillance flagging any individuals with ties to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or any of the other 26 countries blacklisted by Chinese police, for arrest.

To pursue Uighurs, China has abused international organizations such as Interpol, the world police agency, as well as bilateral extradition treaties. The recent case of Idris Hasan (also known as Aishan Yideresi), who was detained in Morocco in July 2021, is revealing. Hasan, a computer engineer, worked for a number of Uighur human rights organizations in Turkey before he fled to Morocco after Turkish authorities detained him. He was arrested on July 19 at Casablanca Airport and sent to a prison near Tiflet after China issued an Interpol Red Notice on false charges of terrorism against the Uighur activist. Interpol suspended the Red Notice on August 2021, but Moroccan courts proceeded to try Hasan according to an extradition treaty signed with China in 2016—part of a strategic partnership agreement between the two countries that included economic and financial investments. On December 16, 2021, the Court of Cassation in Morocco ordered his extradition but he remained in detention at the time of publication.

Hasan’s case is not the first or even most blatant example of China’s powerful reach in the Arab world. In July 2017, Egyptian police rounded up over 200 Uighur residents from their homes, restaurants, mosques, and even airports as they tried to flee the country. Most were students at al-Azhar University, an Islamic university that has stood in Cairo for over a thousand years. A large number were taken to Tora, the notorious “Scorpion Prison,” where Egyptian political prisoners are usually sent. Our interviews with detainees reveal that Chinese intelligence officers interrogated Uighurs within these facilities alongside their Egyptian counterparts.

According to our findings in the report “Beyond Silence: Collaboration Between Arab States and China in the Transnational Repression of Uyghurs,” published with the Oxus Society and Uighur Human Rights Project, at least 76 of these detained Uighurs were deported to China. In interviews with the authors, Uighurs who fled the crackdown in Egypt thought al-Azhar University would protect them, but were left “astonished” when police came for them. At least two Uighur students have been reported dead in police custody on their return to China.

Even the hajj, the pilgrimage required of all practicing Muslims, is no longer safe. The journey to the Saudi cities of Mecca and Medina for the Muslim faithful has become a snare to catch Uighurs from all over the world. Osman Ahmad Tohti, a Uighur with legal residency in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, was detained in 2018 while conducting the hajj and forcibly repatriated to China. He has not been heard from since. China’s intelligence services have also used the pilgrimage to bait Uighurs in safe European jurisdictions. Norway-based Uighur Omer Rozi said his mother was forcibly taken on the hajj by Chinese police and was forced to call Omer three times per day, urging him to join her.

Transnational technological linkages between Beijing and the Arab world have potentially dire consequences for Uighurs back in China. In 2019, a Uighur was reportedly stopped at mainland China’s border with Hong Kong and interrogated for three days because someone on his WeChat contact list had “checked in” at Mecca. In the past, Uighurs conducting the hajj have been given state-issued tracking devices in the form of “smartcards” attached to lanyards around their necks.

The United Arab Emirates, which enjoys one of the strongest relationships with China in the Arab world, has emerged as a regional intelligence hub for China’s security services. In August 2021, Jasur Abibula, a Netherlands-based Uighur and former husband of Asiye Abdulahed—who rose to prominence for leaking the “China Cables” about the mass incarceration program in

Xinjiang—said he was lured to Dubai where he met with two Chinese intelligence officers. The agents reportedly handed him a USB and instructed him to insert it into his ex-wife’s computer to infect it with spyware. Beijing has been using its leverage over the UAE to collect biometric data and other forms of ID from its Uighur residents. When Ahmad Talip was detained in the UAE in 2018, he told his wife Amannisa Abdullah that the Dubai police collected a blood sample at the request of the Chinese government. Shortly after Amannisa received the message, Talip disappeared. She was told he was deported to China and imprisoned. The collection of biometric data matches conversations I have conducted with Uighurs in the UAE who say they have received WeChat messages from Chinese officials requesting photographs and other identifying documents. Pressure is often applied to their families in Xinjiang to ensure their compliance.

If the Biden administration wants to take China to task on Xinjiang, it must use its leverage to unite its partners in the Arab world behind this mission. The U.S. has considerable authority to punish security officials engaged in illicit refoulement through its Magnitsky Act for targeted sanctions. As the long arm of China’s surveillance state reaches Uighurs residing in like-minded autocracies, it is more crucial than ever before that the U.S. offer safe haven to this oppressed group by granting Uighur refugees protected status and raising refugee quotas.

China’s campaign of repression against the Uighurs is not confined to Xinjiang. The efforts of the U.S. to prevent a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis should not stop there either.

*Jardine is a global fellow at the Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute and serves as director of research at the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs.*

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### **36. What US intelligence got wrong on Ukraine**

The Hill, 24 Mar 22, Michael O’Hanlon

U.S. intelligence agencies are rightly receiving considerable praise for correctly forecasting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Through a combination of satellite surveillance, monitoring of social media, and other sources, they read Russian President Vladimir Putin’s mind several weeks before the conflict began on Feb. 24 — and prevented him from controlling the narrative about the true causes of the war.

Putin was widely recognized as the clear, and duplicitous, aggressor. Their prescience probably helped President Biden, working with other Western leaders, to put together the coalition that since has solidified NATO’s eastern flank militarily, strengthened Ukraine’s own ability to resist the invasion, and punished Putin’s Russia economically. All that is to the good.

However, it appears that U.S. intelligence agencies — like Putin himself — expected a far quicker, easier fight than has ensued over the past month. If so, that constitutes a significant intelligence failure that may have compromised our response options. It also would reflect poor tradecraft in military analysis that the CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and other parts of the American intelligence community must fix before they do worse harm in a future crisis.

Consider what the commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, Gen. David Berger, said at a public conference in mid-March, according to Breaking Defense: “The computer models would have said Russia wins in 72 to 96 hours. [They] cannot explain why Ukraine is still hanging on.”

If U.S. military or intelligence organizations confidently predicted a rapid Russian win, they committed a cardinal mistake in military analysis.

As Pentagon “whiz kids” Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith argued a half-century ago in their classic book, “How Much Is Enough?” it is crucial to lay out plausible optimistic and pessimistic cases for any possible war when forecasting its duration, outcome and casualties. Anything else is to assume a degree of clairvoyance that we cannot have about most military encounters — past, present or future.

In this case, the models were not wrong to include a pessimistic scenario (pessimistic as Ukraine, and the United States would define it). Just as with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, there was indeed a credible path to quick victory. Russian airborne forces could have quickly grabbed Kyiv, or its government — and particularly President Volodymyr Zelensky — could have been successfully targeted in the war’s early hours by a missile attack or hit squad.

Indeed, it appears that Russia tried these tactics. Had any of them worked, the rest of the Ukrainian government and perhaps its armed forces might have collapsed as fast as the Afghan government did last summer. Actually, an estimate of 72 to 96 hours is very fast; it took us three weeks to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 2003, and it took the Taliban at least 10 days (after a campaign that had lasted months) to generate the rapid snowballing series of victories last August. But the spirit of this scenario is still credible.

Yet we know that in war, as Carl von Clausewitz wrote compellingly in the early 19th century, even the simple things are hard. A lot goes wrong, and “the enemy gets a vote.” There was always a chance that Ukraine could do well in this conflict — especially since the late winter start of the invasion meant that Russia would need to use a modest number of roads to mount its invasion, in the face of Ukrainian regular and irregular forces armed with plenty of anti-tank weapons. This outcome should not surprise us, even as we admire the tenacity and courage of the Ukrainian resistance. We should have known it was possible in advance.

Russia has an active-duty military that is 900,000 strong, more than quadruple Ukraine’s standing armed forces that number about 200,000. But Russia has brought only around 200,000 of its total forces to the fight so far; even rounding up to account for support from nearby Russian forces on home territory, its total strength probably does not exceed 300,000. Ukraine itself may have roughly that same aggregate total of fighters, counting various citizen resistance units on top of its uniformed military.

Simple military modeling tells you that, in a war of attrition between two forces of roughly comparable size, even if one side enjoys technological superiority and various other qualitative advantages, any resulting victory could take months. Across a large theater of combat, it is unusual to see daily loss rates approaching or exceeding 1 percent of total forces. Moreover, while by some measures Russian troops might be expected to be two to three times as good as

Ukrainians, the latter enjoy advantages in terrain and fighting position, as well as morale, that could largely or even wholly counter the better equipment and (somewhat) better training of the Russians.

Did this mistake matter? Perhaps not gravely — except that, if we had avoided it and recognized how tough the war could be, perhaps we all might have tried just a wee bit harder to avert it, rather than, in some quarters, to accept it largely as an inevitability.

But let's not make this mistake again. It would be tragic if, in some future crisis, overconfidence in our ability to predict the outcome of a possible war skewed the way in which we sought to prepare for it — and ideally, to deter it.

*Michael O'Hanlon is the Philip H. Knight Chair in Defense and Strategy, Brookings Institution, and author of "Defense 101: Understanding the Military of Today and Tomorrow."*

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### **37. How the Ukraine war could go nuclear**

Politico, 24 Mar 22, Bryan Bender

Not since the Cold War has the specter of nuclear war hung so heavily over a president's crisis diplomacy.

As President Joe Biden meets with fellow NATO leaders, calls for a ceasefire in Ukraine are growing more urgent than ever — to alleviate the widespread human suffering but also to dial back what veterans of nuclear planning consider an alarming potential for it to spiral into a clash of atomic superpowers.

The nuclear brinkmanship from Russian President Vladimir Putin in recent weeks is unprecedented: He ordered a snap nuclear war game before the invasion and days later put his nuclear forces on high alert. And the Kremlin has repeatedly signaled it could resort to nuclear weapons — an option explicitly reserved in Russian military doctrine — if it determines the West's intervention in the conflict goes too far.

Again on Tuesday, in an interview with CNN, Putin's chief spokesperson refused to rule out the use of nuclear arms in the conflict.

So far, Biden has sought to dial down the tensions. The Pentagon has not changed the alert status of U.S. nuclear forces and military leaders have publicly said they have not detected Russian actions suggesting they are preparing to use nuclear weapons. The Pentagon also took the unusual step early in the conflict of putting off a regularly scheduled test of an intercontinental ballistic missile to avoid fueling nuclear tensions.

Yet as the conflict drags on, and Russia's conventional forces suffer surprisingly heavy losses while its economy reels, the prospect that Putin might resort to using weapons of mass destruction is increasing. Moscow has already demonstrated that it's willing to use hypersonic missiles for the first time in a war.

With limited contact between the Kremlin and Western capitals, the risk that Moscow's intentions could be misread with catastrophic consequences will only grow more acute, according to numerous specialists.

"There has always been a chance of mistakes, but I think the chances are much higher," said former Sen. Sam Nunn, the longtime chair of the Armed Services Committee and now co-chair of the nonprofit Nuclear Threat Initiative. "I think we are in a different era in terms of blunders."

It is a high-wire act confronting Biden as he tries to stiffen the spines of NATO countries for what is expected to be a long struggle. Allies are helping Ukraine fend off its bigger aggressor — including sending more arms and U.S. troops to defend NATO's eastern borders — while not pushing Putin over the edge.

Russia invaded Ukraine as cooperation between Washington and Moscow on nuclear arms control has been unraveling in recent years. The two countries have walked away from several treaties to control the deadliest weapons, including one that outlawed intermediate-range nuclear missiles that could threaten Europe.

The only remaining nuclear pact between the two sides is the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which limits deployed strategic weapons to 1,550 each. Biden and Putin agreed last year to extend it until 2026.

But the treaty does not cover any of the thousands of smaller, or "battlefield," nuclear weapons in their respective arsenals, including at least 2,000 in Russian stockpiles, according to public estimates.

Two Defense Department officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, say they are vigilantly gathering intelligence on Russian military moves for any sign that it might be taking such weapons out of storage or preparing for deployment units trained in nuclear or chemical warfare.

### **Raising the ante**

Longtime observers of Russian nuclear policy have been startled at how reckless the Putin regime has been with its nuclear threats compared to leaders in Moscow during the Cold War.

"The communist party of the Soviet Union was incredibly disciplined about this," said Rose Gottemoeller, a former undersecretary of state for arms control who has negotiated treaties with Russians and served as NATO deputy secretary general from 2016 to 2019. "There were only a few Soviet leaders who were allowed to speak about nuclear doctrine and strategy, and they did so in a very carefully scripted way.

"We are in a more difficult crisis than anyone could have predicted with this constant nuclear saber-rattling that has been going on," she added. "We have to take what [Putin's] people say seriously, because he was serious about invading Ukraine when many of us hoped he would turn away at the last minute."

The dearth of diplomacy and growing distrust only fuels the risk of “mushroom clouds appearing on the battlefield,” Izumi Nakamitsu, United Nations high representative for disarmament affairs, warned on Tuesday.

She hearkened back to the numerous instances during the decades-long standoff between the United States and then-Soviet Union when the two sides nearly came to nuclear blows. But diplomacy and a good bit of luck prevailed.

“We are all aware of the close calls and near-misses,” she said at an event hosted by The Stimson Center. “Unfortunately, I fear we have forgotten many of those difficult lessons. A simple glance at a headline today can point to how acute nuclear risks have become.”

Those concerns are shared across the spectrum by advocates for nuclear disarmament and those who believe a more robust U.S. nuclear arsenal is needed to deter adversaries.

“I really am worried here that the war is going so badly for Putin ... it raises the possibility of Putin feeling like he needs to escalate to win his way out of this conflict,” said Tim Morrison, a former Trump White House nuclear policy adviser who is now a researcher at the Hudson Institute, a hawkish think tank.

That, he continued, “is right in the wheelhouse of Russian [military] doctrine for a low-yield nuclear or even chemical [weapons] use.”

Morrison added that he fears the situation could unravel to the point where Putin is “raising the ante, climbing the rungs of the escalation ladder to make the point to NATO ‘hey, you guys really need to knock it off with arming the Ukrainians, I will no longer tolerate this.’”

Russia has already ratcheted up the war with its hypersonic missile launch in Ukraine last week, and it has also been accused of dropping phosphorus bombs, which are banned under the Geneva Convention (though using the chemical to obscure troop movements or illuminate targets is not).

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday the alliance will be assisting Ukraine with specialized equipment in the event of a Russian attack with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Gottemoeller said she fears that Moscow’s use of a tactical nuclear weapon is a serious possibility. “Putin is capable of anything,” she said. “He could declare there is an existential threat from a NATO ally resupplying the Ukrainians.”

### **You’re not going to necessarily know**

Others worry less about Putin ordering a nuclear attack and more about a miscalculation leading to the use of nuclear weapons.

Nunn has been sounding the alarm about the threat of an accidental nuclear exchange as a result of a cyber attack on nuclear command-and-control systems including by malign actors not directly involved in the conflict who could be confused for a nuclear adversary.

“Third parties, third countries, might interfere in terms of command-and-control or warning systems,” he said of potential hackers. “Interference in command-and-control could be taken in this kind of atmosphere as probably a deliberate act.”

Nunn successfully lobbied Congress last year to require the Pentagon to conduct a “failsafe review” of the U.S. nuclear arsenal “to prevent cyber-related and other risks that could lead to the unauthorized or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons as the result of an accident, misinterpretation, miscalculation, terrorism, unexpected technological breakthrough, or deliberate act.”

Further complicating the task of U.S. and allied commanders to decipher Russian intentions, said Morrison, is the fact that so many Russian battlefield systems are also designed to unleash both conventional and nuclear or chemical warheads.

In other words, it could be exceedingly difficult to know when the Russian military has decided to pursue a nuclear option.

“One of the problems with Russian nuclear forces is how many of their systems are dual-capable,” Morrison said. “So you’re not going to necessarily know if the S-300 or that long-range [missile or artillery] battery is packing a conventional warhead or a nuclear one.”

If U.S. military leaders detected Russian nuclear maneuvers, Nunn said, Biden may have no choice but to act more aggressively to deter Moscow, including putting American nuclear forces on alert.

“If you’d seen bombers in the air, all sorts of activities in the nuclear forces, it would have been a different proposition,” Nunn said. “The risk of nuclear use is in my view higher through a mistake or blunder than through intent. But nevertheless blunders get more likely when nuclear weapons are put on alert.”

The Nuclear Threat Initiative last week outlined a hypothetical but horrific scenario to underscore how the war in Ukraine could go wrong. In a simulation based on historical examples, the current conflict escalated with the detonation of a nuclear weapon in Ukraine and quickly spiraled into a nuclear holocaust.

The scenario lays out a chain of events — the downing of an American spy plane by accident, the misreading of counter actions, cyber attacks that further sow confusion, and leaders with very little time to react — that result in the unthinkable: an all-out nuclear war between the United States and Russia.

“Over the course of the next hour,” it chillingly details, “82 million Americans are killed with allied countries faring similarly. Most die instantly, while more will die of radiation poisoning over the coming days and weeks.”

### **The most imperative arms control**

There is also nearly uniform agreement that any glimmers of hope that the Biden administration might reach further agreements with Putin to rein in nuclear armaments have been dashed.

“Prospects of renewed arms control are very low,” said Nikolai Sokov, a senior fellow at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation who worked on arms control agreements in the Soviet and Russian foreign ministries.

He said one reason is now very personal. He believes a renewal of nuclear talks would likely require a summit between Biden and Putin, or at least their top diplomats, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

“By calling Putin a war criminal,” Sokov said, “Biden closed off the prospect of a summit, whether in person or a call. Same for Blinken-Lavrov. These things will stand in the way and, at best, delay arms control.”

But some who support nuclear disarmament say the Ukraine crisis only strengthens their argument for why these weapons are destabilizing and steps must be pursued to eliminate them around the world.

“Advocates for nuclear weapons have long argued that they keep the peace, acting as a stabilizing force,” said Stephen Young, the senior Washington representative for the Union of Concerned Scientists. “Putin is turning that belief on its head, using the threat of nuclear war to deter others from intervening against his forces in Ukraine”

“In other words,” Young added, “Russia’s nuclear weapons are enabling this war.”

He lauded Biden’s efforts at nuclear deescalation in the face of Putin’s threats. “But it isn’t enough,” Young said. “The president should take nuclear weapons off the table, and make clear that the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter or respond to a nuclear attack on the United States or its allies.”

Such dramatic changes to undo decades of American nuclear policy, which the Biden administration was not expected to make even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are widely viewed as more remote than ever given the current crisis.

### **A serious confrontation**

For now, Nunn believes the most urgent task is to find a way to stop the shooting in Ukraine.

“The ceasefire is in my view the most imperative arms control right now,” he said in an interview. “If we do not have a ceasefire, escalation becomes more likely.”

He recently organized a joint declaration by former U.S. and European leaders, including one of Putin’s ex-foreign ministers, Igor Ivanov, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine.

They highlighted the recent firefight at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant as a reminder of “how nuclear catastrophe can quickly rise to the surface in the ‘fog of war.’”

“The first and most essential step toward reducing the risks of a consequential accident, mistake, or miscalculation is a ceasefire to end the unacceptable and unjustifiable loss of human lives, including innocent civilians,” they wrote.

But Sokov said he worries that even with an end to the current hostilities, the nuclear stakes will remain historically high, especially if Putin believes his regime is at stake.

“I expect the post-war settlement to be a more dangerous period than the war itself,” Sokov said in an email. “It is pretty clear that the U.S. will not remove sanctions. In that situation, Moscow may conclude that reliance on nuclear weapons is the only means of avoiding the fate of Iraq, post-Saddam.”

That is “all the more so,” he added, “since its conventional forces will have been depleted and not judged efficient after the war. I expect a serious confrontation with a strong nuclear component.”

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### **38. The naval response to the war in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar 22, Arthur Herman

Most proposals for military aid to Ukraine involve help from the air, such as establishing a Berlin-style airlift, flying in warplanes from Poland, and creating a no-fly zone over Ukrainian territory. But it would be a serious blunder to neglect the naval aspect of the conflict. Russia certainly hasn't. According to the Times of London, recent intelligence indicates that Russia has a fleet of warships ready to launch an amphibious assault on Odessa, the last major Ukrainian seaport not in Russian hands or under Russian siege.

It is vital to Europe's peace and security that Ukraine not lose what remains of its Black Sea coastline, and that Russia not consider that international body of water its private naval and maritime preserve. The U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization can protect this strategic flank of Europe and NATO while also relieving Russian pressure on Ukraine short of risking war.

The Black Sea's importance to Russia's economy and sovereignty dates from the 19th century. But then the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits, which allowed access to the Mediterranean and beyond, took on growing importance for Russia.

That was thanks to Russia's export trade in grain and industrial goods and its imperial designs in Southern Europe, including on the Turkish capital. The issue became so important that nations negotiated international agreements aiming to restrict the Russian navy's presence in the Black Sea and access to the Turkish Straits, the most recent being the Montreux Convention, which was signed in 1936 by the Soviet Union and nine other countries and is still in effect.

The Black Sea remains vital to Russia's national interest. One reason Vladimir Putin invaded Crimea in 2014 was to secure the former Soviet naval base at Sevastopol. It is crucial to confront

Russia in this region as part of a broader strategy to help Ukraine—and also as the centerpiece of a new NATO maritime strategy. Here are five steps the U.S. and NATO can take:

First, keep Ukrainian forces supplied with antiship missiles that can deter Russian naval forces and amphibious landings. The Norwegian-made Naval Strike Missile can be launched from either ship or shore. Poland and Romania have bought them from Norway's Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace. All three countries are NATO members; all three should be working together to build Ukraine's antiship-missile arsenal, especially after Ukraine's claim that it was able to destroy a Russian naval vessel near Mariupol using similar weaponry.

Second, make sure Turkey bans passage of Russian warships under Article 19 of the Montreux Convention, which governs access to the Black Sea through the straits, while allowing free passage of U.S. and NATO vessels. Under Article 19, Turkey can deny access to warships of war belligerents as long as Turkey isn't a party to the conflict. On Feb. 27, three days after Mr. Putin invaded, Ukraine asked Ankara to close the straits to Russian warships. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu acknowledged Mr. Putin's invasion as an act of war—a major step toward invoking Article 19. A day later, however, Turkey seemed to back away, with words suggesting it would close the straits to all warships, not only those from Russia and Ukraine. Under Article 19, however, Turkey isn't authorized to close the straits to neutral warships. Adherence to the article requires blocking passage only to Russian and Ukrainian vessels. Turkey's NATO partners should insist that Ankara carry out Article 19 to the letter.

This will come too late to interfere with the 30 or more Russian warships already blockading the Ukraine coastline. But closing the straits would hamper attempts to reinforce future large naval operations, and signal that the Russian navy can no longer act as if the Black Sea is its private lake.

Third, send a U.S.-led NATO flotilla to show the flag at ports of friendly countries on the Black Sea. Last July NATO conducted an important Black Sea exercise with some 30 vessels from 32 NATO members and other countries, including Ukraine. The NATO presence has since nearly vanished. It's time to revive a robust Western naval presence.

Fourth, organize a humanitarian sealift with a convoy of ships under NATO escort bringing food and medical supplies to Russian-occupied Kherson. This convoy can show Moscow that although Kherson is currently occupied by Russian troops, it is still Ukrainian sovereign territory.

Fifth, devise a naval strategy for the Black Sea region. A single French frigate visited the region in December 2021 and left the day after the New Year. No major NATO warship has made an appearance since, even as Russia ravages Ukraine. The war is "like a boa constrictor around Ukraine's neck," retired Adm. James Foggo, who commanded U.S. and NATO fleets in Europe for almost a decade until 2020, told Reuters. "NATO needs a maritime strategy."

The fate of NATO's southern flank may depend on how quickly its leaders, including President Biden, respond to this challenge—at sea as well as on land and in the air.

*Mr. Herman is senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.*

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### **39. Putin doesn't realize how much warfare has changed**

The Atlantic, 24 Mar 22, Antony Beevor

Otto von Bismarck once said that only a fool learns from his own mistakes. "I learn from other people's," the 19th-century German chancellor said. Astonishingly, the Russian army is repeating the past mistakes of its Soviet predecessor. In April 1945, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, under intense pressure from Stalin, sent his tank armies into Berlin without infantry support. Vladimir Putin's forces not only made the same error; they even copied the way their forebears had attached odd bits of iron—including bed frames—to their tanks' turrets in the hopes that the added metal would detonate anti-tank weapons prematurely. This did not save the Russian tanks. It simply increased their profile and attracted Ukrainian tank-hunting parties, just as the Soviet tanks in Berlin had drawn groups of Hitler Youth and SS, who attacked them with Panzerfausts.

The Russian president's distorted obsession with history, especially with the "Great Patriotic War" against Germany, has skewed his political rhetoric with bizarre self-contradictions. It has clearly affected his military approach. Tanks were a great symbol of strength during the Second World War. That Putin can still see them that way defies belief. The vehicles have proved to be profoundly vulnerable to drones and anti-tank weapons in recent conflicts in Libya and elsewhere; Azerbaijan's ability to destroy Armenian tanks easily was essential to its 2020 victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Yet Putin seems to have learned as little as he has forgotten. In August 1968, the Warsaw Pact forces entering Czechoslovakia were told by their political officers that they would be welcomed as liberators. They found themselves cursed, out of fuel, and hungry. Morale was shattered. Putin's control of domestic media can hide the truth from most of the Russian population, but his conscripts, forced now to sign new contracts to turn them into volunteers, are all too aware of the reality.

His treatment of his own people is as pitiless as his treatment of his enemies. The army even brought a mobile crematorium to Ukraine to dispose of Russian casualties in order to reduce the body-bag count going home. Putin's Soviet predecessors had a similar disregard for their troops' feelings. In 1945, the Red Army faced a number of mutinies. Frequently treated with contempt by officers and political departments, soldiers were ordered out at night into no-man's-land not to retrieve the bodies of fallen comrades, but to strip them of their uniforms for reuse by replacement troops.

Another old pattern repeating itself in Ukraine is the Russian army's reliance on heavy guns. In World War II, the Red Army bragged about the power of its artillery, which it called "the god of war." In the Berlin operation, Zhukov's artillery fired more than 3 million shells, destroying more of the city than the Allies' strategic air offensive had. The Soviets used Katyusha rocket launchers, which German troops nicknamed "Stalin's organ" for their howling sound, to kill any remaining defenders. While Putin's conventional artillery smashes Ukrainian buildings open in

the same old way to eliminate potential sniper positions, thermobaric ordnance—the devastating “vacuum bombs” that create a fireball that sucks the oxygen away from their targets—takes the place of the old Katyushas.

The Russians’ destruction of Grozny and Aleppo had already revealed how little their urban-conflict doctrine, unlike that of Western armed forces, has evolved since World War II. The international coalition that reclaimed the cities of Raqqa and Mosul from the Islamic State demonstrated a far more targeted approach, sealing off each city and then clearing it sector by sector.

Putin’s army is clearly not the Red Army, just as Putin’s Russia is not the Soviet Union. Institutional corruption across the government has affected everything, even with officers profiting off of the sale of spare parts and ignoring logistic support in favor of prestige projects. While Ukrainian defenders are destroying Cold War–era Russian T-72 tanks like ducks in a row, the Russian priority has been to reserve enough money to pay for the next generation of high-tech Armata tanks. Yet the Armata can still do little more than trundle across Red Square in Victory Day parades every May 9 to impress the crowds and foreign media. On the battlefield, it would suffer exactly the same fate as the T-72s.

Elite units, paratroopers, and Spetsnaz special forces still exist within the Russian military, but they can achieve little on their own in the chaos of bad command and control. The lack of foresight involved in the introduction of the Russian army’s new Era encrypted-communications system would have been much harder to believe in the more rigorous Soviet days, when such mistakes were severely punished. Supposedly secure, it relies on 3G towers—which Russia destroyed when it invaded Ukraine. Because the system is simply not working, Russian officers have to communicate in open speech by cellphone, as gleeful Ukrainian volunteers listen in.

The 2008 invasion of Georgia, which dealt a setback to the small former Soviet republic but revealed incompetence and weakness on Russia’s part, led to plans to reequip and reform Putin’s armed forces. Those efforts have manifestly failed. This says a good deal about the lack of idealism, probity, and sense of duty within his regime. How this can change at such a late and crucial stage in the Ukraine invasion is very hard to see.

At Stalingrad in late 1942, the Red Army surprised itself and the world with a sudden turnaround, and there are indications that Putin’s forces are adjusting their tactics and preparing two major strategic envelopments, around Kyiv and in eastern Ukraine. An almost Stalinist determination to right the Russian military—backed by the execution of deserters and failing officers—could well extend the conflict in a bloodbath of relentless, grinding destruction.

Against all prewar expectations, though, a Russian military collapse also looks possible. A complete disintegration of morale could lead to a humiliating withdrawal, a potentially devastating result of Putin’s inability to part with the Soviet past.

*Antony Beevor is the author of Stalingrad and other books on military history.*

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#### **40. I'm the Prime Minister of Estonia. Putin can't think he's won this war.**

New York Times, 24 Mar 22, Kaja Kallas

To anyone who lived under Soviet occupation, reports from Ukraine replay scenes we thought we would never see again. The bombing of civilians and the wanton destruction of buildings recall the carnage unleashed on the European continent by Hitler and Stalin. In Mariupol, a port city subjected to a brutal, horrifying siege, residents are reportedly being deported to faraway places in Russia where an uncertain fate awaits them.

My family knows what that's like. My mother was only a 6-month-old baby when, in 1949, the Soviets deported her, together with her mother and grandmother, to Siberia. My grandfather was sent to a Siberian prison camp. They were lucky to survive and return to Estonia, but many didn't. Today the Kremlin is reviving techniques of sheer barbarity. Those who have escaped Mariupol describe it as hell on earth.

To put an end to these horrors, the most optimistic observers have put their hope in a peace deal. But peace is not going to break out tomorrow. We must face up to the fact that the Kremlin's idea of European and global security is completely at odds with that of the free world. And Vladimir Putin is willing to kill and repress en masse for the sake of it.

At NATO, our focus should be simple: Mr. Putin cannot win this war. He cannot even think he has won, or his appetite will grow. We need to demonstrate the will and commit resources to defend NATO territory. To check Russia's aggression, we need to put in place a long-term policy of smart containment.

First, we must help Ukraine in every possible way. The people of Ukraine have not tired, and neither can we. True, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has galvanized us into action. Allies and partners have made decisions with remarkable determination and unity. But now is the time to go the extra mile.

Ukrainian soldiers are able fighters, but they need weapons and matériel, including longer-range air defense assets and anti-tank missiles to better protect their skies. Defensive military aid must be our top priority, and we must commit ourselves to it for the long haul.

In Estonia, a country of 1.3 million people, we have provided Ukraine with close to \$250 million worth of assistance so far. Much of that is military, but it extends to ambulances, blankets and baby food. The free world should redouble its efforts to support the people of Ukraine however possible through the delivery of arms, food and daily essentials.

Second, we must show the aggressor that we are ready to defend ourselves and, if need be, to fight. Sometimes the best way to achieve peace is to be willing to use military strength.

To do so, we need to strengthen our collective defense, especially on the alliance's eastern flank that borders Russia. That's why in Estonia we are increasing the amount we spend on defense. This year, we'll spend 2.3 percent of G.D.P.; in the coming years, that will rise to 2.5 percent. All NATO countries, irrespective of their location, should do the same: Two percent of G.D.P.

must become an absolute minimum requirement. By increasing our spending individually, we can ensure we are all collectively safer.

We at NATO have a solid basis to work from. Members are committed to the defense of the whole of NATO territory, and in recent years the alliance has taken some bold, necessary steps. Among them was the establishment in 2016 of an enhanced forward presence of allied troops — multinational, combat-ready battle groups — in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. On Wednesday the alliance announced that it will likely double the number of battle groups on its eastern flank.

But we need to go further. The forward presence needs to become forward defense, of land, air and sea. That would mean more combat-ready allied troops stationed permanently in the Baltic States, supported by long-range artillery, air defense and other enabling capabilities. It would mean more NATO fighters in our skies ready to switch from peacetime air policing to wartime air defense. And it would mean more NATO ships patrolling the Baltic Sea.

Third, we must paralyze the Kremlin's war machine. We must do so not only to end the bloodshed and occupation in Ukraine but also to disarm Russia economically, to prevent Mr. Putin from further expanding the war.

At the heart of the machine is oil and gas. Last year exports from hydrocarbons amounted to roughly 40 percent of the Russian state budget, and this year they're likely to turn into the biggest source. Our focus must be on drying up these revenues. The European Union has already announced plans to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds by the end of this year. But it can and should go further. We should also put some of the payments for Moscow's oil and gas in a special third-party account so that the revenue does not go toward financing the war. And we should direct a significant share of these funds to a future reconstruction plan for Ukraine.

None of this will be easy or cost-free. And the time will surely come when we hear calls for the easing of sanctions. But we — NATO, the European Union and individual countries — must be patient and remain firm. There will be no business as usual with Mr. Putin's Russia. In fact, there can be no business at all.

Fourth, we must help Ukrainians fleeing the war.

Moscow may think that forcing millions of Ukrainians to leave and seek shelter across Europe will destabilize our societies. This is also part of Mr. Putin's war aims, and one of the tools of his hybrid warfare. We must show him he's wrong.

Neighboring countries have already been extraordinarily welcoming in such a short period of time, and the European Union immediately gave Ukrainians the right to live and work in the bloc. In Estonia, we have welcomed many Ukrainian refugees, who now make up around 1.6 percent of our population. All countries should do as much as they can to provide a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees until they can return home.

Taken together, it's a tall order. Stopping the Kremlin's aggression will require time and a lot of effort. But as NATO members, Europeans and human beings, we cannot flinch from that task.

Kaja Kallas (@kajakallas) is the prime minister of Estonia.

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#### **41. What is the thinking behind Israel's Ukraine balancing act?**

Daily Telegraph (UK), 24 Mar 22, Con Coughlin

The emergence of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as a key interlocutor in trying to resolve the Ukraine crisis has much to do with Israel's enduring concerns about Iran's malign activities in the Middle East.

Israel and Russia may not be natural allies, but relations have improved in recent years as Israel has sought closer relations with the Kremlin. The main driving force this effort, which dates back to the premiership of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been to persuade Russia not to obstruct Israel's attempts to rein in the activities of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Apart from Israel's long-standing concerns about Iran's nuclear activities, it is also opposed to Tehran's attempts to establish military bases in southern Syria which can be used to launch attacks against Israelis.

Consequently, when Mr Bennett flew to Moscow two weeks ago for face-to-face talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin, the conversation focused as much on Israeli concerns over Iran's malign activities in the Middle East as they did on the Ukraine crisis.

"For Israel, the Ukraine crisis is an unwelcome distraction from issues that really concern Israelis, such as the nuclear deal and Iran's expansionist activities in Syria," a senior Israeli official with knowledge of the Putin-Bennett summit told me. "These were the issues that really dominated their conversation."

So far as Ukraine is concerned, Israel is attempting to adopt a nuanced position. While the Israelis voted alongside the US and other western countries at the UN General Assembly earlier this month to condemn the Russian invasion, Israel has so far declined Ukrainian requests to send military equipment, including defensive weapons such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.

Instead, the Israelis are concentrating their efforts on humanitarian relief, with around 100 tons of aid already having been flown to the region, including six generators sent to Lviv hospital. A field hospital, staffed by more than 80 Israeli medical personnel, has also been set up inside Ukraine near the Polish border.

Israel's lukewarm response to Ukraine has not been well-received by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is himself Jewish and has criticized Israel for not doing enough to support the Ukrainian people. In Tel Aviv, the Ukrainian ambassador to Israel, Yevgen Korniychuk, even donned a combat helmet at a press conference, and asked why Israel was proving reluctant to provide lifesaving supplies.

But Israeli officials insist their delicate balancing act is working, as it has enabled Mr Bennett to maintain a dialogue with Mr Putin, with the two leaders continuing to speak on a regular basis. In their latest call earlier this week, Mr Putin gave the Israeli premier his assessments on the current state of negotiations to end the conflict, as well as giving an update on what the Kremlin calls Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine.

But while Israel, in common with most other countries, is keen to see an end to the violence in Ukraine, the Israelis are also focused on safeguarding their own national interests, especially their ability to strike at Iranian targets inside Syria.

Of particular concern is the need to maintain the so-called "deconfliction mechanism" it has set up with Russia in Syria.

The arrangement, which has been in place since September 2015 when Russian forces first intervened in support of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad, allows Israeli military officers in Tel Aviv to alert their Russian counterparts in Syria's Hmeimim air base when they are planning to launch attacks against Iranian targets in Syria. This has enabled the Israelis to launch hundreds of air strikes against Iranian assets, allied militias and weapons shipments.

Israeli officials believe the attacks are vital for preventing Iran from consolidating its presence in Syria and strengthening its ability to attack it.

Mr Bennett has also taken advantage of his cordial ties with Mr Putin to raise the status of the Vienna nuclear talks between Iran and world powers aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

Russia has been supporting Iran's position in the nuclear talks, where Tehran wants to see punitive economic sanctions lifted in return for agreeing to limits on its nuclear activities. Hopes have been raised in recent weeks that a deal may be announced soon, but the Israelis have made the Kremlin well aware of their opposition to any such deal.

The prominent role Israel has been playing in diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukraine crisis reflects a deepening sense within the region that responsibility for resolving key regional issues, such as the threat posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions, lies with the region's leaders, not the West, as has traditionally been the case.

One of the big complaints of Arab leaders, especially in the Gulf, about the 2015 nuclear deal is that their concerns and security needs were excluded from the negotiating process, which was largely driven by former US President Barack Obama.

But as the UAE's Minister of State Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar said in an address to the UN Security Council earlier this week, there was a growing need for "Arab solutions to Arab issues", and that it is important that the global community listens to Arab leaders to "consider their views" when dealing with complex regional issues.

The desire of regional leaders, moreover, to forge closer co-operation was evident at this week's summit at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, when Mr Bennett joined Sheikh Mohamed bin

Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, to attend an historic regional summit hosted by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi.

The main topic of discussion at the summit was regional security.

At the very least, the summit demonstrated that, while the world's attention remains fixed on the Ukraine crisis, there are also other major issues that need to be tackled. And when they relate to the Middle East, the ability of regional leaders to find solutions will be crucial to maintaining peace and stability.

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#### **42. Abbas is destroying democracy to ensure his successor supports Israel**

Foreign Policy, 24 Mar 22, Dalia Hatuqa

On Feb. 8, videos began to emerge on social media of an incident that had taken place earlier that day in Nablus, the second largest Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank. Shaky mobile phone footage showed a shared taxi and a gray van near a silver car, with bullet holes piercing the car's windshield. The driver of the silver car was slumped over, his bloodied passenger sitting lifelessly next to him as a third man lay across the back seat. All three Palestinian men were dead, their car riddled with more than 80 bullets.

According to witnesses, their murder happened quickly and in broad daylight: Israeli special forces driving Palestinian-plated vehicles entered Nablus, cut off the silver car, and opened fire, killing the men inside immediately.

The assassinated men were later identified as members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the armed offshoot of Fatah, the ruling party of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which administers small parts of the West Bank. The PA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates called for an international probe into the killings, which the cabinet of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas described as a "heinous crime."

For its part, Israel said the three people were militants who had previously been involved in recent attacks across the West Bank against Israeli settlers and soldiers and were on the way to carry out another when they were intercepted. Shortly after the men were killed, local Fatah officials in Nablus called for a "response in the field" to what Palestinians viewed as an extrajudicial assassination—including a day of mourning with commercial closures and marches. At the men's funeral later that day, Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade's yellow flags flapped in the wind, masked gunmen carrying rifles sprayed extended volleys into the air, relatives wailed, and calls for revenge echoed among the marchers.

The killings come at a time when the PA is under intense criticism from Palestinians for maintaining security coordination with Israel. This relationship has repeatedly facilitated the capture and killing of Palestinian fighters, wanted for attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers. This might explain why Abbas made a rare recording that was played by a senior Fatah official at the mourners' gathering, in which he condemned the killings and vowed to not let the incident "go idly by." "We will not allow them to reoccur, nor will we remain quiet," Abbas said. However,

Plans of a united Kurdish front in Baghdad failed to come to fruition after the KDP made agreements with the Sadrists and the Sunni Taqadum coalition, a move that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) considers to be a disadvantage for Kurds.

Iraq held snap elections on October 10. The vote was called in response to mass protest in the country beginning in October 2019, caused by widespread dissatisfaction with Iraq's politicians and endemic corruption in the country.

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## SYRIA

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### **51. Ukraine war allows UAE to bring Syria's Assad in from the cold**

Al Jazeera, 24 Mar 22, Giorgio Cafiero

Since its military intervention in the Syrian civil war in September 2015, one of Russia's major foreign policy goals has been to convince Gulf Arab monarchies to come to terms with the survival of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, and the reacceptance of its "legitimacy".

A host of developments in Gulf-Syrian relations during the past few years, most recently al-Assad's visit to the United Arab Emirates, indicate that this Russian strategy has been quite successful.

The UAE, which reopened its embassy in Syria in December 2018, and sent its foreign minister to Damascus in November last year, is the main Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) actor working to accelerate the Syrian regime's reintegration into the Arab world's diplomatic fold, following years of relative isolation in the region.

The UAE's efforts to return Syria to the Arab League point to a growing alignment between Abu Dhabi and the Kremlin that is particularly unsettling to Washington, especially within the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, in which the West has failed to bring the UAE on board with international efforts to squeeze Russia.

The key to understanding this burgeoning relationship, and the UAE's openness to warmer relations with al-Assad, is a shared antipathy to political Islam and pro-democracy movements in the region.

"The UAE vision for the region, in opposing both Muslim populism and democracy, looks an awful lot more like Putin's vision than it does Washington's, so it is natural that the UAE is hedging its US entanglements by keeping on the good side of Russia and its clients," said Juan Cole, professor of history at the University of Michigan, in an interview with Al Jazeera.

For the UAE's de facto leader, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Arab Spring revolutions were a threat, and one that needed to be rolled back.

"Assad, as a strongman opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, looks in this context very much like Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, whom the UAE also supports ... Al-Assad's Baath Party

has taken the neoliberal road and does not pose an ideological threat to the Gulf any longer,” added Cole.

### **Emirati autonomy**

The UAE is now much further away from Washington and London’s orbits of geopolitical influence compared with previous points in modern history. The growth of relations between the UAE and Russia, as well as China and India, has been central to Abu Dhabi’s success in diversifying its global partnerships while gaining greater autonomy from its Western partners in an increasingly multipolar world.

The UAE has not been afraid to support Russia’s positions on issues it sees eye to eye with Moscow and disagrees with Washington. The UAE’s response to the war in Ukraine underscores how far Abu Dhabi has come in terms of gaining greater autonomy from the West.

Yet, for all the tensions that have been brewing between the UAE and the Biden administration, it would be incorrect to conclude that Abu Dhabi intends to walk away from its extremely close partnership with the US. Ultimately, Washington, not Moscow, is the UAE’s security guarantor, underscored by the US’s role in defending the Gulf Arab country from Houthi missile and drone attacks earlier this year.

“Abu Dhabi views Washington as a strategic priority, it’s an irreplaceable relationship,” explained Monica Marks, an assistant professor of Middle East politics at New York University, Abu Dhabi. “I don’t think [the Emiratis] are trying to replace it, but they are trying to diversify their portfolio as self-beneficially as possible to put forward what they see as their own interests.”

Thanks to the normalization of relations with Israel, among other factors, the UAE has a tremendous amount of leverage in Washington. That clout will likely enable it to continue closely aligning with Russia in relation to Syria, Libya, and other sensitive files in the Arab world, while also remaining a country where Russian oligarchs can park their wealth as Western sanctions bite, without worrying about major harm being done to US-Emirati relations.

US-UAE ties are deep enough that the Biden administration will most likely not attempt to seriously downgrade the two countries’ partnership, despite Abu Dhabi’s growing ties to al-Assad and Putin.

“If you listen closely to some past American government officials, they view the UAE as a model government that they’d like to see the rest of the Arab world reproduce,” Nader Hashemi, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver, told Al Jazeera.

“[The Emiratis] buy American arms and they have a peace treaty with Israel. They have this liberal veneer which keeps public opinion somewhat satisfied so that the relationship [with the US] can go forward. They have this Ministry of Tolerance [and Coexistence], which is a public relations exercise,” said Hashemi.

“When you put it all together there are so many overlapping interests, and so many influential voices within the United States that want this relationship to continue, so the possibility of any sanctions directed at the UAE over [al-Assad’s visit] is just inconceivable.”

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## **52. Syrian opposition says UN must take firmer stance towards Syria to end stand-off**

The National, 24 Mar 22, Mina Aldroubi

The UN must take a “firmer stance” and become “less diplomatic” when dealing with the Syrian regime to end the crisis, an opposition spokesman told The National, as constitutional talks kicked off in Geneva this week.

Syria's crisis, which has left half a million people dead, devastated cities and drawn in other countries and extremist groups, entered its twelfth year this month.

The regime's key supporters have been Russia and Iran while Turkey and other Arab states have backed the opposition to a certain degree during the conflict.

Previous rounds of UN-led talks have failed to make much progress, with President Bashar Al Assad refusing to step down and negotiate with the opposition.

Syrians stand on top of their gas canisters as they wait for a refill in front of a gas lorry provider in Kafranbel, Idlib province. Violence across Syria has resulted in shortages in gas, water and electricity.

Syrians stand on top of their gas canisters as they wait for a refill in front of a gas lorry provider in Kafranbel, Idlib province. Violence across Syria has resulted in shortages in gas, water and electricity.

Over the years, the fragmented opposition has insisted that Mr Al Assad leave his position as part of any political settlement.

However, last May, Mr Al Assad held presidential elections, which he won by a landslide, official figures showed.

The opposition believes that the UN Special Envoy to Syria Geir Pederson must be less diplomatic when addressing the UN Security Council and must put pressure the regime to make compromises to enable progression of the peace process.

“The UN is supposed to do more, be more active, call a spade a spade and at the same time come together in the General Assembly and not the Security Council because it’s been taken as a hostage by Russia and its use of the veto to protect the regime,” Yahya Al Aridi said during a phone call.

Previous UN Security Council sessions have failed to adopt resolutions condemning the use of chemical weapons and the regime’s brutality against civilians following vetoes by Russia.

The ball is in the UN's court to save Syria, Mr Al Aridi said, adding the international community rose against Russia's invasion of Ukraine so it must do the same for Syria.

"When [Mr Pederson] makes his briefs to the UN Security Council he doesn't dot the Is and cross the Ts, he doesn't specify who is hindering the process, who is trying to obstruct it and who is weaseling out and this is the regime," he added.

The Syrian opposition figure is insisting that Mr Pederson is not expressing his annoyance with the regime's lack of compliance to UN resolutions.

"However, the UN envoy does this out of being diplomatic because it seems that the main concern is to get the three teams together in Geneva and that's it," said the Syrian opposition spokesman.

He urged Mr Pederson to take the Syrian issue to the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution that would end the "brutality of the Syrian regime".

"They took Ukraine to UNGA and they got the vote where Russia and the Syrian regime said no to the resolution that condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine," he said.

"So for us it's harder and it's been going on for over a decade," he said.

The UN special envoy's office told The National they will not comment on Mr Al Aridi's remarks.

Talks on the constitution will be the seventh round between 15 members of each of Syria's three factions. The latest round in October ended with no agreement on how to move forward.

Those who are represented in the talks are members of the opposition, government and civil society.

Before the start of the negotiations, Mr Pedersen said the parties had agreed on a deal and decided to meet again with his help this week in Geneva.

"We do not have any expectations at all because the experience of the last six rounds was disappointing, as the special envoy has said in his own words," Mr Al Aridi said.

"We have two parties, with one side choosing the path to a military solution with no respect to the other part and no regard to what Syrians have been going through and their main concern is to focus on remaining in power and for the Syrian people to suffer," he said.

Mr Al Aridi has refused to go to Geneva and participate in the talks and has frozen his membership in the constitutional committee. He believes the regime is "playing games" and there needs to be a time plan put in place.

"The regime has never committed itself and has wasted time so the world would know that it's participating in the political process," he said.

Syria's opposition believes the only way out is to ensure that all sides “get together politically in a different way.”

The opposition must “stand tall and strong” to commit itself to what Syrians really want and to implement UN resolutions, he said.

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### **53. Russia to “retreat” in Syria and the reason is Ukraine**

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 24 Mar 22

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights revealed, on Wednesday, the “regression” of Russian strikes in Syria, due to the war in Ukraine.

The observatory said that “Syrian territories have witnessed a remarkable and noticeable decline in the activity of the Russian forces in various areas of their presence, since the start of the Russian war on Ukraine” on February 24.

And the observatory recorded, “a decrease in the Russian aerial bombardment on the desert, at a rate 4 times less than it was before the war in Ukraine.”

Documentation and statistics indicate that “298 air raids were carried out by Russian fighters on the areas of ISIS spread in the Syrian Badia, from February 24 to March 22,” that is, within about a month of the start of the war in Ukraine.

More than 1,250 Russian raids were monitored in separate areas in the Syrian desert, during about 30 days before the Russian war on Ukraine, i.e. from January 24 to February 23.

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## **AFGHANISTAN**

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### **54. ‘US only now coming to terms with Afghan situation’**

Dawn, 24 Mar 22, Anwar Iqbal

There was ‘surprise and frustration’ in Washington when Kabul fell to the Taliban but gradually, they understood the situation, says Pakistan’s US Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan.

“Obviously, it came as a surprise for everybody, contrary to the intelligence estimates here and earlier than anybody had expected,” said the outgoing ambassador, explaining why Washington reacted so strongly to the fall.

Ambassador Khan, the longest serving Pakistani diplomat in the US, leaves for Islamabad on Thursday from where he will head to Brussels as his country’s new envoy for the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg.

He served as Pakistan's ambassador in Washington from Jan 7, 2019, to March 24, 2022. He has also served in Washington as the deputy chief of mission for four years and spent six years in New York, including as a diplomat at Pakistan's UN Mission.

Asked to define the most difficult issue he handled in Washington, Mr Khan acknowledged that the Afghan issue was difficult but pointed out that "both sides have never shied away from addressing problems". And this (US-Pakistan) "has never been an easy relationship," he added. The United States and Pakistan, he said, have had a "clear convergence" in Afghanistan because "the US is as much interested in peace and stability in Afghanistan as we are".

Mr. Khan represented Pakistan in Washington during much of the Doha talks between the United States and the Taliban that were facilitated by Pakistan. The talks ended on a peace deal that led to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and consequently to Kabul's fall to the Taliban.

"Our job was to articulate and convey our national position to Washington and to listen to the concerns expressed here and explain how Islamabad looked at developments in Afghanistan," he said.

The embassy, however, was not involved in arranging the visits of Taliban officials to Doha as that was handled by Islamabad, he added.

Ambassador Khan said that Pakistan's key role in facilitating the evacuation of those wishing to leave Afghanistan also helped improve bilateral ties after the fall of Kabul.

"We saw appreciation for Pakistan's positive contribution during the peace process and dealing with the aftermath of the Taliban takeover," he said. "People understood that the international community must come together to stabilize Afghanistan as Pakistan alone cannot do this."

Ambassador Khan hoped that the Ukrainian crisis would not drive the world's attention away from the humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan.

Asked if the embassy was ever asked to arrange a telephone call between President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Imran Khan, Ambassador Khan said: "You don't make formal phone call requests. Leaders do get in touch on issues and such possibilities are explored. But it is dependent on the convenience of the leaders."

Mr Khan also said that telephone "calls should not be a yardstick for any relationship, and certainly not for US-Pakistan ties". The relationship, he noted, has been moving at its pace and there have been regular contact between the national security advisers, cabinet ministers and the military leaderships of the two countries.

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## **55. Afghan Taliban deny replacing Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund**

Dawn, 24 Mar 22



## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 2, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Washington Examiner was one of several media reporting on CENTCOM's Change of Command ceremony Friday in which GEN Kurilla assumed command from Gen McKenzie. Overall reporting was neutral, noting GEN Kurilla's previous assignment as CENTCOM's chief of staff and returning to Tampa after being the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps in Fort Bragg, N.C.
- 2) The Wall Street Journal led global media reports announcing that Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis agreed to a two-month cease-fire. UN Special Envoy Grundberg issued details on the truce, which includes the Houthis halting missile and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In return, the Saudi-led coalition agreed to stop its current air campaign, allow fuel ships to enter the Yemeni port of Hodeidah, and allow a small number of commercial flights in-and-out of Sanaa.
- 3) The Washington Post reported U.S.-Iran indirect JCPOA negotiations are at a standstill due to Tehran's demand that Washington lift its designation of the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization, and U.S. refusal to do so. At a Foreign Policy forum last weekend, U.S. negotiator Robert Malley said an agreement "is not just around the corner, and not inevitable."
- 4) The New York Times reported President Biden has agreed to work with allies to transfer Soviet-made tanks to the Ukraine military for its defense of the country's eastern Donbas region. A U.S. official told the Times that transfers of the tanks would begin "soon" but declined to say how many tanks would be sent, or from which countries. The decision comes as the U.S. has also agreed to send Ukraine \$300 million in additional military aid.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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##### **1. Kurilla assumes CENTCOM top spot as McKenzie retires**

Washington Examiner, 1 Apr 22, Mike Brest

Army Lt. Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla is now the head of U.S. Central Command, and Gen. Frank McKenzie has retired. Kurilla, who had been the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps

in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, assumed the position during a ceremony on Friday at the Tampa Convention Center, where McKenzie's 42 years of military service were also honored.

## **2. Yemen parties agree to two-month truce**

Wall Street Journal, 1 Apr 22, Dion Nissenbaum

Saudi Arabia and Iran-backed Houthi fighters agreed on Friday to a two-month truce, bringing a temporary halt to a seven-year-old war in Yemen that could create new momentum for a diplomatic end to the conflict.

## **3. Iran nuclear talks at stalemate over terrorism issue**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Karen DeYoung

Tehran's demand that the United States lift its designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, and U.S. refusal so far to do that, have brought the year-long negotiations over reviving the Iran nuclear deal to a halt, with no new meetings scheduled and little obvious room for compromise.

## **4. U.S. will help transfer Soviet-made tanks to Ukraine**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Helene Cooper

The Biden administration will work with allies to transfer Soviet-made tanks to bolster Ukrainian defenses in the country's eastern Donbas region, a U.S. official said on Friday. The decision to act as an intermediary to help transfer the Soviet-made tanks, which Ukrainian troops know how to use, comes in response to a request from President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, the official said. It marks the first time in the war that the United States has helped transfer tanks.

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## **CENTCOM CHANGE OF COMMAND**

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## **5. Tampa hosts military leaders for CENTCOM change of command**

WFLA-TV (News Channel 8, Tampa), 1 Apr 22, Jeff Patterson

Ranking officers from every branch of the U.S. Military and a number of foreign nations traveled to Tampa on Friday for the change of command ceremony for U.S. Central Command based at MacDill Air Force Base.

## **6. McKenzie retires, hands over command of CENTCOM**

The Hill, 1 Apr 22, Ellen Mitchell

The top general in charge of U.S. military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia on Friday relinquished his command in a ceremony in Florida. Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who had led U.S. Central Command (Centcom) since March 2019, handed over his position to Army Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla during a change of command ceremony in Tampa, Fla.

## **7. General Kurilla takes over at US Central Command**

Military.com, 1 Apr 22, Jonathan Lehrfeld

Army Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, who has earned two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star during his military career, took over leadership of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) on Friday during an event at the Tampa Convention Center, according to a press release from the command.

## **8. Change of leadership at United States Central Command**

WTSP-10 Tampa Bay News, 1 Apr 22, Courtney Robinson

On Friday, U.S. Central Command assumed a new commander. General Michael "Erik" Kurilla will now lead CENTCOM, headquartered on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**President Biden; @POTUS (1 Apr):** Jill and I extend our best wishes to Muslim communities here in the United States and around the world on the beginning of Ramadan. From the People's House to your own homes, we wish you and your loved ones a blessed and prosperous month. Ramadan Kareem!

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (1 Apr):** Spoke today with Jordan's Foreign Minister @AymanHsafadi about steps to preserve calm in Jerusalem during the upcoming holidays. Many thanks to Jordan for its leadership in the region and support for Ukraine.

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (1 Apr):** We welcome the @UN's announcement of a 2-month truce in the Yemen conflict and the parties' acceptance of its terms. This truce halts fighting and attacks for at least 60 days and facilitates the flow of goods and people, bringing relief to millions of Yemenis.

**Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres; @antonioguterres (1 Apr 22):** I commend the Government of Yemen, the Saudi-led Coalition and the Houthis for agreeing on a two-month truce in Yemen, including cross-border attacks. This truce must be a first step to ending Yemen's devastating war. The parties accepted to halt all offensive military air, ground and maritime operations inside Yemen and across its borders. This truce, which has the possibility of renewal, coincides with the start of the holy month of Ramadan. I thank my Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and his team for their tireless efforts in the pursuit of this agreement.

**Head of the Houthi Revolutionary Committee, Mohammad al-Houthi@Moh\_Alhouthi (1 Apr 22):** Implementation of the truce declared by the envoy is credible by implementation. Our Yemeni people should be careful.

**Inherent Resolve; @CJTFOIR (1 Apr):** Thank you @StateDeptCT, @INTERPOL\_HQ, & @Interpol\_USA for helping @IraqiGovt enhance border security capabilities that help pave the way for sustainable security. These collaborative efforts help in the broad fight to defeat terrorism. #StrongerTogether

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IRAN

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Yemen could be afflicted by an even worse humanitarian catastrophe if the UK government goes ahead with a plan to designate the Houthi rebels as a terrorist group, leading aid agencies have warned cabinet ministers in a letter.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **20. Israeli forces kill Palestinian in West Bank clashes**

Associated Press, 1 Apr 22

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron when clashes broke out after Friday prayers, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

### **21. Spike in violence poses test for Israel's fragile government**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Patrick Kingsley

A recent wave of terrorist attacks in Israel, the deadliest in seven years, has presented a stark challenge to Israel's fragile coalition government, which has come under criticism from both ends of the political spectrum for policies that critics claim have compounded the risk of violence.

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **22. Uzbekistan looks south for new trade routes**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Sophia Nina Burna-Asefi

Uzbekistan has received its first transit shipment via Pakistan and Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. For Uzbekistan, this means prioritizing a southern-looking policy, as it seeks to assert its own identity in the region and establish viable alternative trading partners.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **23. More 30,000-pound 'Bunker-Buster' bombs sought for U.S. forces**

Bloomberg, 1 Apr 22, Anthony Capaccio and Roxana Tiron

U.S. Central Command has asked Congress to authorize and appropriate \$35 million more than requested in the White House's latest budget proposal to replace 10 of America's most powerful non-nuclear weapons after supplies were depleted during tests.

### **24. Pentagon to send Ukraine another \$300 million in defense aid**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Alex Horton

The Pentagon said Friday that it will provide a new \$300 million package of military aid to Ukraine that includes drones, armored vehicles and machine guns.

### **25. U.S. to ease nuclear tensions with Russia, cancel 'Minuteman' Missile tests**

Newsweek, 1 Apr 22, Jake Thomas

The Pentagon is again delaying a test of a nuclear-capable missile to avoid a "misinterpretation or miscommunication" with Russia amid heightened tensions.

## **26. How two dozen retired generals are trying to stop an overhaul of the Marines**

Politico, 1 Apr 22, Paul McLeary and Lee Hudson

An influential group of over two dozen retired generals has launched a counteroffensive against plans to transform the Marine Corps and is using their clout in a high-power pressure campaign to get Congress to slam on the brakes.

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## **ADJACENT AORs**

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## **27. China calls on EU to act independently of US foreign policy**

Financial Times, 1 Apr 22, Andy Bounds, Sam Fleming, Tom Mitchell and Eleanor Olcott

Xi Jinping has called on the EU to act more independently of the US as China and Brussels clashed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the bloc's leaders warned Beijing not to aid Moscow's war effort.

## **28. China's embrace of Putin is looking more and more costly**

TIME, 1 Apr 22, Charlie Campbell

When Wang Jixian moved to the southern Ukrainian port city of Odessa, he didn't expect to find himself in the middle of a war. But as the 37-year-old software engineer picked up his cellphone and began posting online the reality of life under Russian bombardment—wailing sirens, booming artillery, buskers on fretful streets—he soon found himself under attack from a more surprising quarter: the Chinese government and nationalist trolls, who objected to Wang's stark portrayal of Russian aggression that chafed with Beijing's official narrative.

## **29. Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love**

The Economist, 1 Apr 22

Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

## **30. War in Ukraine compounds hunger in East Africa**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Abdi Latif Dahir

First came the drought, drying up rivers, and claiming the lives of two of Ruqiya Hussein Ahmed's children as her family fled the barren countryside in southwest Somalia. Then came the war in Ukraine, pushing food prices so high that even after making it to the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, she is struggling to keep her two other children alive.

**31. America and Saudi Arabia are stuck with each other: How Biden can recalibrate the relationship without breaking it**

Foreign Affairs, 1 Apr 22, Yasmine Farouk and Andrew Leber

In recent weeks, as Western sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine have roiled global energy markets, Saudi Arabia has continued to decline requests from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration that it increase oil production. Although the kingdom's pointed refusal to mitigate the pain of skyrocketing fuel prices clearly startled many American observers, inspiring a raft of commentary asking whether the 77-year U.S.-Saudi alliance was still worth maintaining, it should not have come as a surprise.

**32. A new video shows a missing American hostage pleading for help in Taliban custody**

The New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Michael Ames

When the Biden Administration pulled all U.S. forces out of Afghanistan last August, Mark Frerichs was believed to be the only American hostage remaining in Taliban custody. Frerichs, a fifty-nine-year-old civil engineer and Navy veteran, had been abducted on the streets of Kabul in 2020. Members of his family have repeatedly pleaded with the Taliban and the Biden Administration to negotiate his release, but, for more than two years, no evidence had publicly emerged that Frerichs was alive. The New Yorker has obtained a new video, from an unidentified individual in Afghanistan, that shows Frerichs in captivity and pleading for his freedom. "I've been patiently waiting for my release," Frerichs says, apparently reading from a script held in front of him. "I'd like to ask the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, please, release me."

**33. Government change in Islamabad will not derail China-Pakistan relations**

The Diplomat, 1 Apr 22, Krzysztof Iwanek

At present, the future of Imran Khan's government in Pakistan appears uncertain. As things stand now, the ruling coalition, led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has lost its majority and it is about to face a no-confidence vote. Should there be a change of government, however, there is unlikely to be a change in China-Pakistan ties. Pakistan's relationship with China may have already become more stable than Pakistan's democracy.

**34. Analysis: Oil prices, Ukraine war create Saudi pivot point**

Associated Press, 1 Apr 22, Jon Gambrell

The world is looking to Saudi Arabia to boost oil production as global energy prices spike because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But that could mean rethinking how to deal with the kingdom's controversial crown prince.

**35. Afghanistan's hungry will pay the price for Putin's war**

Foreign Policy, 1 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Russia's ban on food and fertilizer exports to stabilize supply and prices at home while it wages war on Ukraine is reverberating in its own backyard, pushing Central Asian states into economic crisis and threatening to tip Afghanistan from starvation into famine.

### **36. Israel and the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine**

New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Bernard Avishai

On Monday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, joined the foreign ministers of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Morocco for a meeting at Sde Boker, the retirement kibbutz and burial place of David Ben-Gurion, the nation's first Prime Minister. The meeting had been initiated by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, with encouragement from Blinken, whose main aim was to reassure the group that the United States is fixed in its commitment to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, and that the not-yet-consummated Iran nuclear deal is the best of available options to do that. "The summit was to showcase a strategic alliance growing out of the Abraham Accords," the Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman told me. "To seed the formation of a kind of Middle Eastern NATO to contain Iran—deal or no deal."

### **37. Painful choices lie in the path to peace in Ukraine**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, David Ignatius

In the agonizing final years of the Vietnam War, a strategist named Fred Iklé wrote a treatise titled "Every War Must End." His basic theme was that "wars are easier to start than to stop" a message that applies powerfully now to the conflict in Ukraine.

### **38. Peace in Ukraine will be elusive until one side makes a military breakthrough**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Lawrence Freedman

From almost the moment the war in Ukraine began, diplomats have been at work trying to end it. The UN Security Council has deliberated. Vladimir Putin has had regular telephone discussions with western leaders in which they urge him to stop his aggression or at least facilitate humanitarian relief for those suffering under the weight of Russian bombardments. He then in turn explains how they fail to understand Ukraine's responsibility for these tragic events.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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### **39. Wexler to Asharq Al-Awsat: Regional peace not possible without Saudi Arabia**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Fatehelrahman Yousif

US Senator and President of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington DC, Robert Wexler stressed that real peace in the Middle East is not possible without Saudi Arabia.

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### IRAN

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terrorism would be diminished ... whose ballistic missile program would be checked, all of those things turned out not only to be not true, but in almost every case the exact opposite has come to fruition.”

At the same time, while continuing to deny it seeks a nuclear bomb, Iran has vastly expanded the quality and quantity of uranium enrichment and is believed now only weeks away from assembling enough to fuel a weapon. It expanded other aggressive activities even as Trump reimposed sanctions that had been lifted by the Iran deal and imposed more than 1,500 more. Between 2019 and 2020, Price said, the number of attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq by Iran-backed groups “went up 400 percent.”

Much of the Vienna negotiations over the past year were devoted to disagreements between Iran insisting that all U.S. sanctions be lifted, and administration insistence that a return to the deal involved only those that were “nuclear related.” Those issues, along with questions of sequencing and the unfreezing of certain Iranian assets, have now been largely resolved.

But as word spread that the biggest remaining issue on the table was the terrorism designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, opponents of the deal, including virtually all Republicans vowed to redouble their efforts to stop the agreement, and a number of Democrats expressed worries.

“We are highly concerned about reports indicating the potential lifting” of the foreign terrorist organization designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, a bipartisan group of 21 House members wrote Biden last month, saying that the combination of not “adequately addressing Iran’s role as the world’s leading state sponsor of terror,” and providing billions of dollars in sanctions relief would provide “a clear path for Iranian proxies to continue fueling terrorism.”

Any administration action is further complicated by reported U.S. intelligence indicating ongoing Iranian plots to target Pompeo and other former U.S. officials whom Tehran holds responsible for the drone strike in 2020 that killed Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard Corps branch specializing in unconventional warfare. But others have warned that Iranian and U.S. leaders have “painted themselves into a corner” by allowing the issue to become what may ultimately kill any prospect of a deal.

“Failure to secure the nuclear deal will very likely lead to unpredictable and possible uncontrollable escalation, and almost certainly skyrocketing oil and gas prices,” Trita Parsi, an Iran expert and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft wrote Thursday. “The political costs to both the United States and Iran of either delisting” the Revolutionary Guard Corps or “dropping the demand to delist, respectively, pale in comparison.”

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#### **4. U.S. will help transfer Soviet-made tanks to Ukraine**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Helene Cooper

The Biden administration will work with allies to transfer Soviet-made tanks to bolster Ukrainian defenses in the country’s eastern Donbas region, a U.S. official said on Friday.

The decision to act as an intermediary to help transfer the Soviet-made tanks, which Ukrainian troops know how to use, comes in response to a request from President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, the official said. It marks the first time in the war that the United States has helped transfer tanks.

The official said the transfers would begin soon but declined to say how many tanks would be sent, or from which countries they would come. They will allow Ukraine to conduct long-range artillery strikes on Russian targets in Donbas, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The tanks' arrival could be another signal of a new phase in the war, which is five weeks old and has been dominated by Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities and installations from the air, and a stalled Russian advance on the ground. Earlier this week, Russian officials indicated that they were refocusing their efforts on eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian soldiers since 2014.

Mr. Zelensky called on Sunday for NATO allies to provide tanks and planes, in addition to the antitank and anti-aircraft weaponry that have become a staple of the arms transfers to Ukraine from the West. Frustrated at what he views as a slow pace of weapons transfers, Mr. Zelensky asked specifically for tanks, in remarks a day after President Biden met with senior Ukrainian officials in Poland.

An angry Mr. Zelensky criticized the West for what he called its "Ping-Pong" about weapons transfers. "I've talked to the defenders of Mariupol today," he said, in a reference to the besieged city that has been under an onslaught from Russia for four weeks. "If only those who have been thinking for 31 days on how to hand over dozens of jets and tanks had 1 percent of their courage."

In the past, the Biden administration has taken pains to call the weapons it is providing to Ukraine defensive, and has focused on smaller, easily portable arms. But as the war has progressed, the definition of defensive has become more elastic.

Ukraine had already found one source of tanks, capturing at least 161 from Russia on the battlefield, according to the military analysis site Oryx, though Russia has also destroyed a number of Ukrainian tanks. For its part, Russia has captured 43 Ukrainian tanks, according to analysts who study photos and videos on social media.

The decision to help transfer the tanks comes as the Ukrainian military has continued to turn back Russia's ground advance. Pentagon officials have been quick to point out that Russia's pivot to Donbas and away from capturing Kyiv, the capital, might be a necessity for Moscow after Russian forces stalled out in the central part of the country.

On Wednesday, Biden administration officials, citing declassified U.S. intelligence, said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had been misinformed by his advisers about the Russian military's problems in Ukraine. The intelligence, American officials said, also showed what

appeared to be growing tension between Mr. Putin and his defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, who was once among the most trusted members of the Kremlin's inner circle.

Russian officials have disputed the allegations, with the Kremlin on Thursday calling it a "complete misunderstanding" of the situation that could have "bad consequences."

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## CENTCOM CHANGE OF COMMAND

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### **5. Tampa hosts military leaders for CENTCOM change of command**

WFLA-TV (News Channel 8, Tampa), 1 Apr 22, Jeff Patterson

Ranking officers from every branch of the U.S. Military and a number of foreign nations traveled to Tampa on Friday for the change of command ceremony for U.S. Central Command based at MacDill Air Force Base.

The ceremony was attended by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin who previously served as the Commanding officer for CENTCOM. Austin says CENTCOM plays a vital role in the defense of the middle east.

"This region is where we protect waterways so that global commerce can flow, it is where we fight terrorists who threaten our citizens," said Austin who praised outgoing Marine General Kenneth McKenzie as he turned over the command to Army General Michael "Erik" Kurilla.

Kurilla once served as McKenzie's Chief of Staff at CENTCOM and so his return is homecoming of sorts to Tampa.

General Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff spoke at the ceremony, pointing out that combat operations are over in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that CENTCOM still has a vital role to play.

"The fight isn't over here. Every day there is new threats this country faces and there are always new challenges and in this complex theater, everything from terrorism to regional conflict can rear its ugly head on very short notice," said Milley.

General Kurilla is a West Point Graduate and a wounded combat veteran. He's previously commanded the 82nd Airborne and the 2nd Ranger Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment and is well aware of the history and importance of CENTCOM.

"CENTCOM was critical in its formation, it is critical now and it will be into the future," said Kurilla as he accepted his new position.

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### **6. McKenzie retires, hands over command of CENTCOM**

The Hill, 1 Apr 22, Ellen Mitchell

#### **24. Pentagon to send Ukraine another \$300 million in defense aid**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, Alex Horton

The Pentagon said Friday that it will provide a new \$300 million package of military aid to Ukraine that includes drones, armored vehicles and machine guns.

The assistance is part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, a program that lets the United States procure supplies from manufacturers instead delivering them from its own military stockpiles, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said. Under this initiative, Washington has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Ukraine each year since 2015.

The Biden administration has dispatched more than \$2.3 billion in defense support to Ukraine since it took office. Among the highlights of the new package are Puma unmanned aerial systems, or hand-launched lightweight drones, “non-standard” machine guns, counter-drone systems and access to commercial satellite imagery services.

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#### **25. U.S. to ease nuclear tensions with Russia, cancel 'Minuteman' Missile tests**

Newsweek, 1 Apr 22, Jake Thomas

The Pentagon is again delaying a test of a nuclear-capable missile to avoid a “misinterpretation or miscommunication” with Russia amid heightened tensions.

The U.S. military on Friday canceled a previously scheduled test flight of the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile, capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to Russia. The postponement is the second time the Pentagon has put off the planned test, signaling the U.S. is continuing to avoid nuclear escalation with Russia.

The Pentagon told Newsweek in an email that the Air Force recently canceled the test flight of the LGM-30G Minuteman III missile.

“The launch had been previously delayed due to an overabundance of caution to avoid misinterpretation or miscommunication during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and was canceled for the same reason,” the Pentagon said in the statement. “Our next planned test flight is later this year. The Department is confident in the readiness of the strategic forces of the United States.”

Pentagon officials announced on March 2 that it would delay the launch of the Minuteman III missile after Russian President Vladimir Putin said he would place his country's nuclear forces on high alert during its invasion of Ukraine.

At the time, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby contrasted what he described as the U.S.'s restraint to Putin's “dangerous and irresponsible...unnecessary step.”

“We did not take this decision lightly, but instead to demonstrate that we are a responsible nuclear power,” Kirby said in March.

The Minuteman III has been "the backbone of the U.S. land-based nuclear strategic force since 1962," according to Missile Threat, a product of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The missile is the only land-based component of the U.S. nuclear triad and has near 100 percent testing reliability.

There are currently an estimated 440 of the missiles in the U.S.'s arsenal, and two or more tests are conducted each year, according to Missile Threat.

Air Force crews test four Minuteman III missiles each year from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California to ensure its arsenal is functioning. Each of the tests are publicized in advance to avoid the appearance of being in response to a world event. The dummy warheads splash down near Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

The Air Force previously successfully tested a Minuteman III in August 2021. The missile flew about 4,200 miles and detonated explosives before landing in the ocean.

Previously, the Pentagon has said the launch's postponement will "not affect America's nuclear deterrence in any way."

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## **26. How two dozen retired generals are trying to stop an overhaul of the Marines** Politico, 1 Apr 22, Paul McLeary and Lee Hudson

An influential group of over two dozen retired generals has launched a counteroffensive against plans to transform the Marine Corps and is using their clout in a high-power pressure campaign to get Congress to slam on the brakes.

The roster of personalities includes every living former commandant, along with a slew of other retired four-star generals revered within the Corps. And all of them are bristling at different aspects of foundational changes introduced by Commandant Gen. David Berger, who aims to make the Corps lighter, faster and more capable of doing everything from electronic warfare to sinking ships at sea.

The group of retired generals includes former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, former Joint Chiefs Chair Joe Dunford and John Kelly, a former Homeland Security chief and White House chief of staff.

"This is not a fragmented effort, this is a collective of 30 some generals ... including six or seven of the most senior, most credible Marines that I've ever worked with," said Frank Hoffman, distinguished research fellow at the National Defense University and a retired Marine officer. Yet he also noted that Berger's efforts have already been blessed by Congress and the Pentagon brass, so putting a stop to them now is unlikely.

The Marine Corps' two-year-old plan represents a fundamental shift in how the Corps equips its troops and goes to war. The Corps' 400-odd tanks have already been shifted to the Army,

The Marines are working through some of their new concepts during the Cold Response war games taking place in Norway, Wolters said, adding, “the Marines are doing a fantastic job of leading from the front and showing the rest of us how to do it right.”

Backers of the changes note that they didn’t originate with Berger. In June 2017, his predecessor, Gen. Robert Neller, told Congress that the Marine Corps is “not currently organized, trained and equipped to face a peer adversary in the year 2025.”

Neller pointed to the use of electronic warfare, precision weapons, and cyberattacks that would confront Marines on future battlefields against China and Russia, adding, “I’m worried that we’re going too slow and that we’re afraid of change.”

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **27. China calls on EU to act independently of US foreign policy**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Andy Bounds, Sam Fleming, Tom Mitchell and Eleanor Olcott

Xi Jinping has called on the EU to act more independently of the US as China and Brussels clashed over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the bloc’s leaders warned Beijing not to aid Moscow’s war effort.

China’s president called on the EU “to pursue an independent policy towards China” — a thinly veiled criticism of European solidarity with the US in blaming Russia for the crisis and in hitting Vladimir Putin’s regime with sanctions.

Speaking after video meetings that exposed widening divisions between the two powers, Charles Michel, the European Council president, said China could not “turn a blind eye” to Russian aggression against Ukraine. Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission president, admitted the two sides had exchanged “clearly opposing views”.

Anything China did that supported Russia’s ability to wage war would do “major reputational damage” to the country in Europe, von der Leyen warned. “China has an influence on Russia and therefore we expect China to take its responsibility” to help bring a peaceful resolution of the conflict, she said.

Xi, however, refused to budge from his position that the US and EU had adopted what Chinese diplomats call a “cold war mentality” over the crisis in Ukraine.

While Xi’s diplomats insist China is a neutral party on Ukraine, they and Chinese state media have repeatedly endorsed Russia’s justifications for the invasion and blamed the US and Nato expansion for stoking conflict.

According to the official Xinhua news agency, Xi said “regional security conflicts” in Europe were the “root cause” of the Ukraine crisis.

Xi “did not condemn, but also did not defend” Putin’s invasion, according to a person present during the video call, adding that the Chinese president ignored a direct question from Michel as to whether he supported the invasion.

Instead, Xi referred to the importance of understanding Russia’s “security concerns in Europe”, the person said.

In a separate video call with the EU duo, Chinese premier Li Keqiang insisted Beijing was working towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis in “its own way”.

In the run-up to Friday’s summit, Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, told his Russian counterpart “the Ukrainian issue” was the result of “the long-term accumulation of security conflicts in Europe” as well as a “cold war mentality and group confrontation”.

Wang hosted Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of a regional security meeting about Afghanistan on Wednesday, their first in-person discussion since the war in Ukraine began in late February.

In early February, Xi and Putin said there were “no limits” to their friendship. But analysts say the threat of secondary western sanctions has stopped China from offering significant support to the struggling Russian economy.

“So far, China has not helped Russia offset the cost of sanctions because it doesn’t want to trigger secondary sanctions or become more entangled in the unstable Russian economy,” said Francesca Ghiretti, an EU-China analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies, a German think-tank.

“Beijing wants to avoid any more economic pain on top of the pandemic lockdowns and global inflationary pressures,” she added.

China’s trade with the EU was worth €1.9bn a day, compared with €330mn daily with Russia, von der Leyen said, suggesting Beijing’s attitude to the war could threaten that flow. Ukraine was a “defining moment for our relationship with the rest of the world”, she said.

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## **28. China's embrace of Putin is looking more and more costly**

TIME, 1 Apr 22, Charlie Campbell

When Wang Jixian moved to the southern Ukrainian port city of Odessa, he didn’t expect to find himself in the middle of a war. But as the 37-year-old software engineer picked up his cellphone and began posting online the reality of life under Russian bombardment – wailing sirens, booming artillery, buskers on fretful streets – he soon found himself under attack from a more surprising quarter: the Chinese government and nationalist trolls, who objected to Wang’s stark portrayal of Russian aggression that chafed with Beijing’s official narrative.

Wang’s Weibo social media account was blocked for “spreading rumors” and strangers started issuing expletive-riddled threats on his Wechat account. “I’m dealing with a war on two fronts,”

Wang told Voice of America. “The battlefield I’m faced with here is terrifying, but at least I can see the tanks. But the other battlefield lurking behind me is even scarier ... I don’t know who’s in it, but they’re all telling me that they want me dead.”

China’s censorship of Wang and other independent voices on Ukraine underscores the contradictory position that the Beijing government has adopted since Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Feb. 24 assault on Ukraine: on one hand upholding sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the rules-based international order; on the other refusing to condemn Putin’s invasion nor even call it one.

“For a major power like China, which is poised to become the world’s largest economy in less than 10 years, the most important thing is to strike a balance,” says Zhou Bo, a retired PLA senior colonel and senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University Zhou.

Over days and weeks of probing questions, China’s spokespeople settled on a line: The war is caused by NATO’s expansionism, which Russia is defending itself against. In an emailed statement March 18, China’s embassy in London said that Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke with Putin on the second day of the conflict and “expressed China’s hope to see Russia and Ukraine hold peace talks as early as possible.” Putin’s escalation since then—including the near total destruction of the eastern city of Mariupol—hardly indicates that he took Xi’s words to heart.

On April 1, Xi met E.U. leaders for a virtual summit with efforts to resurrect the stalled Comprehensive Agreement of Investment trade pact already facing pushback over allegations of forced labor and human-rights abuses in Xinjiang province. Refusal to help end the bloodshed in Ukraine just compounds the ill-feeling.

How much sway China has over Putin’s Ukraine invasion is a contentious matter. A Western intelligence report claimed that senior Chinese officials asked their Russian counterparts in early February to delay the invasion of Ukraine until after the Winter Olympics in Beijing. However, Qin Gang, the Chinese ambassador to the U.S., refuted that claim writing in the Washington Post March 16, saying “had China known about the imminent crisis, we would have tried our best to prevent it.”

Of course, figuring out China is like watching a magic show: sure, you can listen to the patter, but never take your eyes off the hands. And China’s actions reveal a cynical and risky gambit to back Vladimir Putin. Xi has often spoken of a world buffeted by “changes unseen in 100 years.” If Western sanctions targeting Russia’s economy, oligarchs and industry fail, it would confirm America’s decline as a superpower—and perhaps Xi would have less to fear from blowback were he to pursue his own strategic targets, such as reuniting self-ruling Taiwan.

But it’s looking increasingly likely that Beijing has its strategic calculus wrong. Putin’s offensive is foundering (for now, at least), and NATO has rarely been more united, as members announce a raft of defense spending hikes. A defeat for Putin just after he and Xi declared a “no limits” partnership in a high-profile meeting ahead of the Beijing Olympics would be an embarrassment

for the Chinese Communist Party leader just as he is seeking a protocol-shredding third term. And in Putin, China has a “partner” with neither scruples nor, it’s becoming increasingly apparent, a sense of reality.

“It’s quite exposing for China,” says Kerry Brown, director of the Lau China Institute at King’s College, London. “It’s pushed a lot of decisions on them far quicker than they were expecting, making them declare their hand in ways where they don’t want to.”

### **The high cost of siding with Russia**

Beijing’s initial approach was to deal with the crisis through inaction, on the assumption that you can’t punish inactivity. But things are happening on a scale in a speed that is compelling China into taking more proactive positions. On the one hand, China doesn’t want to align with Russia, which is antagonizing and angering Western countries who remain their biggest trade partners. But on the other, Beijing doesn’t want a continuation of American-led Western dominance, which it felt was already waning.

China was quick to refute reports that Russia had asked for military assistance. While it makes perfect sense for Putin to want to embroil China in his conflict, Beijing has more to lose than gain from actively assisting the invasion of Ukraine. And any help would mostly be symbolic—though China retains close military ties with Russia, with the two countries staging frequent joint-exercises including naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean and the Baltic seas—there’s little interoperability between their forces. Exercises in north-west China last year involving some 10,000 Russian and Chinese troops were the first to feature Russians using Chinese weapons and joint command-and-control. Coming down more heavily on the Russian side will entail huge costs, including risking tough sanctions and international boycotts. It doesn’t make much sense for Beijing to pay that for Russia, which they consider a regional power with a limited sphere of influence, whereas China today is a global player with interests on every continent—the only true rival to the United States.

“If China and Russia engage in a military alliance, the whole world would change,” says Zhou. “Western countries, no matter how strong their economic relationship with China, will definitely follow America and stand on their side. Then we inevitably will have two camps and a repetition of the Cold War. So it is extremely important for China to have this nonaligned relationship with Russia in spite of our friendship. And this is totally possible.”

### **Why Beijing won’t try to stop Putin**

At the same time, if the West believes it can shame China into isolating Russia, it’s kidding itself. Beijing has for decades propped up an ossified, rogue nuclear state on its border because dealing with Kim Jong Un is calculated as preferable to a united, U.S.-allied Korean peninsula. If the threat of nuclear catastrophe combined with the plight of 25 million North Koreans subject to U.N.-designated “crimes against humanity” doesn’t sway China’s leaders, 4 million Ukrainian refugees won’t warrant a shrug. Beijing has proved it will only act in the purest traditions of self-interest. And so, it’s doubtful that Beijing will suddenly oppose Putin as he attempts to carve up the world into spheres of influence, with NATO, and America’s role severely diminished.

In this sense, joining Western sanctions are contrary to China's self-interest, given that handing NATO an easy victory would reenergize a newly confident, united, America-led Western alliance. China wants a less-confident, less-zealous West to deal with, and more unity and purposefulness spells trouble. "Russia is causing that to happen," says Brown. "But it's still not a solution for China to align with the West as that actually brings about the very thing that it doesn't want. It just shows this rather torturous position they're in."

It's also likely that the West is inflating the clout Beijing has over the Kremlin to distract from its own culpability. China has little demand for Russian products other than oil and gas. True, bilateral trade rose 33.6% year-on-year to some \$140 billion in 2021, when Russia was China's second largest crude oil supplier, accounting for some 15.5% of China's total imports. But the 10 billion cubic meters of gas China purchased in 2021 is dwarfed by the 175 billion cubic meters Russia sold to Europe over the same period. For leverage over Russia's economy, European leaders should look closer to home.

Ultimately, it's a war that looks unwinnable, while perpetually muddying China's international reputation, stirring up antagonism in Washington and Europe. None of that speaks to China's interest, being the self-appointed global superpower in waiting. And while China may be winning the domestic propaganda war for now, voices like Wang's in Odessa—who has more than 100,000 subscribers on Youtube—will get louder as the war drags on and more people ask questions. "[Ukrainians] are fighting for their homes ... Why should they be bombed?" he posted March 4. "It's just that simple; it's got nothing to do with NATO. People just want to be able to live their lives."

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## **29. Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love**

The Economist, 1 Apr 22

Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

During one of a seemingly endless series of press appearances Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's busy foreign minister, moaned that there appears to be "almost a campaign" to influence India. If so, this is largely his fault. The official Indian response to the great drama that currently preoccupies much of the world, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has been so cold and tight-lipped that it has left everyone wondering where the world's largest democracy stands. The guessing game has at the same time raised Russian hopes of Indian support, Chinese hopes of wooing India from the clutches of America, Western hopes that India may dump its crotchety old friend Russia—and Western worries that a country they see as a natural ally couldn't, in fact, give a fig about their high-falutin' self-declared values, and is solely focused on a narrow notion of its own interests.

On every vote at the UN since Russia's tanks rolled into Ukraine on February 24th, India has abstained. It has not condemned Russia by name. But nor has it shied from calling this a war rather than a "special operation", as Sergei Lavrov, Russia's deadpan foreign minister, gamely corrected an Indian journalist in Delhi on April 1st. Russia's state-throttled media tries to paint India as a staunch cheerleader of Vladimir Putin, but struggles to find pukka Indians to parrot such tosh. And although India has annoyed those hoping to squash Russia with sanctions, by eagerly bargaining for discounted Russian oil and other goods, Mr Jaishankar points out that Western countries still buy heaps more Russian stuff than India ever has or will.

This prickly damn-them-all attitude is popular in India. In the polarized politics generated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) strident Hindu nationalism, giving the West a poke in the eye unites in delight both old leftists and young Hindutva hotheads. Mr Jaishankar was also not wrong when he told a perplexed-looking Liz Truss, Britain's foreign secretary, that Indians care less about Ukraine than they do, say, about Afghanistan simply because of proximity. The subtle message was, first, that Ukraine is Europe's problem and, second, that the West let India down by scuttling Afghanistan to the Taliban, so why should India be concerned now? India's press and social media tom-tommed umbrage when Daleep Singh, America's deputy national security adviser for economic affairs, suggested there might be "consequences" for undermining efforts to squeeze Russia. India will never bow to pressure, was the responding chorus.

While much of India's establishment does cherish musty memories of cold-war "non-alignment", when the Soviet Union backed the country against an American-supported Pakistan and a looming Chinese dragon, many also cite pragmatic contemporary reasons for staying off the West's anti-Putin bandwagon. Most obviously, India depends on Russia for most of its arms. Perhaps 80% of its legacy systems are of Russian origin and, despite intensifying efforts to diversify, Russia remains a key supplier of new weapons and a vital source for maintenance and spares. Perhaps more crucially in the eyes of Indian generals, many of the country's prestige military toys, such as nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic cruise missiles, rely on Russian inputs.

It is not just nostalgia, either, that attaches Indian strategists to a clumsy fading power whose economy is now little more than half of India's in size. Tanvi Madan of the Brookings Institution, an American think-tank, notes that India still sees Russia through the lens of its biggest long-term foreign-policy challenge, China. Delhi warmed to Moscow in the 1960s after the Soviet Union broke with Beijing. Indian security wonks still see Mr Putin's Russia as a potential balance to what is not only an Asian superpower, but one with which India regularly spars over a long and dangerously undefined border. India fears that an isolated Russia will fall deeper into China's embrace. At the same time, by declining to condemn Russia over Ukraine, India also wants to send a signal to China of its independence. The message is that for all its military footsie with the West, such as joining a "Quad" of China-wary powers along with America, Japan and Australia, carrying out joint naval exercises and mouthing mantras about a "rules-based order" and "free and open Indo-Pacific", India is not a Western stooge.

All this posturing is fine, say Western diplomats, swallowing yet another snub on April 1st when Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, granted an audience to Mr Lavrov that he had pointedly denied to any of the other envoys (including China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, who visited

Delhi on March 25th). Even the Americans accept that in a global energy crunch India may take some advantage of steep Russian discounts on its oil. They have already given Delhi a free pass for its recent purchase of an advanced Russian air-defense system – the sort of order that could trigger American laws requiring sanctions.

But although India may be right in thinking that it is too big and important a player for Western powers to forsake, Delhi's narrow focus on "realpolitik" is not without costs. China's "historic" claims on bits of Indian territory are not so different from Russia's in Ukraine. Cocking a snook at your partners in the Quad serves only to prove Mr Wang, the Chinese foreign minister, acute in his argument that the grouping is no more substantial than "sea foam". Clever as it may seem to use its closeness to Russia to its advantage in its contest with China, the erratic, bumbling and nasty Russia of Mr Putin, provider of costly weapons that don't work too well, does not a reliable partner make. And at some point, particularly if Ukraine gets even messier, India's own people might begin to take unwonted interest in foreign affairs. They might then ask, what kind of democracy are we anyway, if we can't help fellow democracies in need?

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### **30. War in Ukraine compounds hunger in East Africa**

New York Times, 1 Apr 22, Abdi Latif Dahir

First came the drought, drying up rivers, and claiming the lives of two of Ruqiya Hussein Ahmed's children as her family fled the barren countryside in southwest Somalia.

Then came the war in Ukraine, pushing food prices so high that even after making it to the outskirts of the capital, Mogadishu, she is struggling to keep her two other children alive.

"Even here, we have nothing," she said.

Across East Africa, below-average rainfall has created some of the driest conditions in four decades, according to the United Nations, leaving more than 13 million people facing severe hunger. Seasonal harvests have hit their lowest in decades, malnourished children are filling hospitals and many families are walking long distances to find help.

The devastating drought has blanketed most of Somalia, leaving nearly a third of the population hungry. In neighboring Kenya, the drought has left more than three million people short of food and killed more than 1.5 million livestock.

And in Ethiopia, where a civil war has impeded aid delivery into the northern Tigray region, food insecurity is more widespread than at any time in the last six years. The first food aid to Tigray in three months arrived on Friday.

Now, the war in Ukraine is making the crisis even worse by raising the price of grains, fuel and fertilizer.

Russia and Ukraine are some of the region's top suppliers of agricultural commodities such as wheat, soybeans and barley. At least 14 African countries import half of their wheat from Russia

and Ukraine, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. Eritrea depends on them entirely for its wheat imports.

“The conflict in Ukraine is compounding an already complicated situation in East Africa,” Gabriela Bucher, the executive director for the charity organization Oxfam International, said in a phone interview. “East Africa is not on the global agenda now, but the region needs the solidarity of the international community and it needs it now.”

The devastating drought and the war in Ukraine are amplified by a series of crises over the past two years.

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted food supply chains and forced many families to pay higher prices for food staples. The locust infestation in Kenya, the civil war in Ethiopia, extreme flooding in South Sudan, the political crises and growing terrorist attacks in Somalia, and the intensifying ethnic conflict in Sudan have all contributed to the destruction of farms, the depletion of harvests and a worsening food crisis, aid groups say.

The war in Ukraine, which is in its second month, is expected to cause further spikes in food costs across the region. The conflict, depending on how long it lasts, could reduce “the quantity and quality” of staples like wheat, said Sean Granville-Ross, the regional director for Africa at Mercy Corps, a nongovernmental organization.

“Meeting the basic needs of vulnerable drought-affected populations will become more expensive and challenging,” he said.

That ominous outcome is already evident in many parts of the region.

In Somalia, the price of a 20-liter container of cooking oil has increased to \$55 from \$32, while 25 kilograms of beans now go for \$28 instead of \$18, according to data gathered by Mercy Corps.

In Sudan, the price of bread has nearly doubled, and some bakeries have closed because wheat imports have dropped by 60 percent since the beginning of the war, according to Elsadig Elnour, the Sudan country director for the charity organization Islamic Relief.

Kenya, citing the war in Ukraine, also raised the price of fuel, leading to protests in parts of the country.

When famine hits, children are particularly vulnerable. An estimated 5.5 million children in the region are facing high levels of malnutrition from the drought, according to World Vision, a Christian aid organization.

“My children died of hunger. They suffered,” said Ms. Ahmed, whose children, aged 3 and 4, died during her days-long trek from her home in Adde Ali village in the Lower Shabelle region to the outskirts of Mogadishu. “They died under a tree.”

In Mogadishu, families are already feeling the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine, with rising food prices squeezing household budgets as the holy month of Ramadan approaches. With no job, proper shelter or access to the beans, maize and tomatoes she once farmed, Ms. Ahmed now relies on food donations from well-wishers to feed her two surviving children, ages 7 and 9.

And aid programs are stretched thin. The war has affected the operations of the World Food Program, which this month said it had reduced rations for refugees and others in East Africa and the Middle East because of rising costs and depleting funds.

Some fear that the continued drought in East Africa could come to resemble the one in 2011, which killed about 260,000 people in Somalia alone. While the situation hasn't reached that level yet, the funding and resources needed to avert such a crisis have not yet begun to flow, Ms. Bucher of Oxfam said.

Just 3 percent of the \$6 billion the U.N. needs this year for Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan has been allocated, she said, while Kenya has only secured 11 percent of the \$139 million needed for assistance.

Last week, the African Development Bank said it would raise up to \$1 billion to improve agricultural production and help Africans become self-sufficient in food in the long run. But while these initiatives are welcome, Ms. Bucher said it was imperative that donors also give unsparingly and immediately to avert a much wider crisis.

"The world needs to come to the rescue of East Africa to avert a catastrophe," she said.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **31. America and Saudi Arabia are stuck with each other: How Biden can recalibrate the relationship without breaking it**

Foreign Affairs, 1 Apr 22, Yasmine Farouk and Andrew Leber

In recent weeks, as Western sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine have roiled global energy markets, Saudi Arabia has continued to decline requests from U.S. President Joe Biden's administration that it increase oil production. Although the kingdom's pointed refusal to mitigate the pain of skyrocketing fuel prices clearly startled many American observers, inspiring a raft of commentary asking whether the 77-year U.S.-Saudi alliance was still worth maintaining, it should not have come as a surprise.

The United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia has been in a downward spiral since immediately after 9/11. After years of tensions over the U.S.-led "war on terror," the American intervention in Iraq, Washington's on-and-off pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran, the Saudi-led war in Yemen, and Riyadh's human rights record, even former President Donald Trump's open courtship of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) did little to improve trust and communication. Though some in the U.S. foreign policy establishment privately question

soon, a similar process may occur – the focus of some of the projects may be shifted to create benefits for different groups – but this will only mean the Chinese presence on Pakistani soil will shift, not depart entirely.

*Krzysztof Iwanek is a South Asia expert and the head of the Asia Research Centre (War Studies University, Poland)*

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### **34. Analysis: Oil prices, Ukraine war create Saudi pivot point**

Associated Press. 1 Apr 22, Jon Gambrell

The world is looking to Saudi Arabia to boost oil production as global energy prices spike because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But that could mean rethinking how to deal with the kingdom’s controversial crown prince.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s ties with longtime allies have been troubled by a string of issues. At the top of the list is the killing and dismemberment of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in 2018, as well as Saudi Arabia’s intervention in neighboring Yemen’s war.

U.S. President Joe Biden has kept the 36-year-old prince at a distance. But with economic worries high, others may be putting the controversies behind them.

Turkey on Thursday moved to end an ongoing court case of Khashoggi’s death, a step that could ease tensions with Saudi Arabia.

With higher oil prices flooding the kingdom’s coffers, the crown prince and his father King Salman face a potential pivot point of their own.

Can the ruling Al Saud family reset its relationship with the United States, long the security guarantor for the wider Persian Gulf? Or does the kingdom tip toward further toward China, now its biggest buyer of crude, or Moscow?

An American rapprochement seems unlikely. Asked in a recent interview about what he’d want Biden to know about, Prince Mohammed bluntly said: “I don’t care.”

“It’s up to him to think about the interests of America,” the prince added.

Perhaps no other country in the world stands to rapidly benefit financially from the Ukraine war as Saudi Arabia.

Its vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, make it one of the world’s cheapest places to produce crude. For every \$10 rise in the price of a barrel of oil, Saudi Arabia stands to make an additional \$40 billion a year, according to the Institute of International Finance.

It's a wild turn of events considering oil prices in April 2020 turned negative at the height of lockdowns in the coronavirus pandemic. Now, benchmark Brent crude stands at \$105 a barrel highs unseen since 2014.

The additional cash comes in handy for Prince Mohammed, who also has to deal with questions at home, particularly how to find jobs for a growing number of unemployed youth.

The crown prince has been known for his brash moves. His vision for Saudi Arabia includes developing a futuristic city called Neom in the desert reaches along the Red Sea. Its latest iteration involves a ski slope project called Trojena, advertised in a computer-generated commercial now in heavy rotation across Mideast satellite channels.

But while expansive palaces now exist there, satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC show the wider Neom project remains at an early stage. It likely will be years before it produces the jobs the prince counts on to slingshot the kingdom's economy away from oil.

Meanwhile, unemployment among youth stood at 32.7% for men and 25.2% for women late last year, according to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics. Reopening cinemas and allowing concerts in a kingdom where ultraconservatives view music as a sin comes as a part of that push for jobs.

"If I'm going to get the employment rate down, and tourism could create 1 million jobs in Saudi Arabia, ... that means I have to do it," the prince told *The Atlantic* magazine in a recent interview. "Choose a lesser sin rather than a bigger sin."

The sheen, however, has come off for human rights activists and some Western nations.

Saudi Arabia just put to death 81 prisoners in a single day, the biggest known mass execution in the kingdom's history, after a pandemic lull. Despite a unilateral Ramadan cease-fire, the Saudi-led war in Yemen against the Houthi rebels rages years after the prince promised a quick victory — and the Arab world's poorest country has been left in wreckage.

Internationally, perhaps nothing received more attention than Khashoggi's killing.

U.S. intelligence services believe Prince Mohammed approved the operation that killed Khashoggi, a permanent resident of the United States. Finding a resolution over the split with a close ally remains a difficult knot to untangle.

Biden, who called the crown prince "a pariah" while campaigning, pointedly has only spoken to King Salman since entering the White House. Biden's first foreign trip was to a G-7 summit in England, rather than the sword-dancing embrace then-President Donald Trump gave to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates appear to be leveraging record gasoline prices at the pump to extract American concessions on Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly said it can't be held responsible for energy price jumps caused by Houthi attacks on its oil facilities. That steps up pressure on Biden, whose administration withdrew American air defenses from Saudi Arabia last year.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is maintaining its own ties to Russia. The kingdom also is again reportedly thinking of selling some crude oil in Chinese yuan to Beijing, rather than the U.S. dollar.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy weighed in on the situation in recent days, urging Qatar and other regional energy powers to increase their output to make up for the loss of Russian supply. "The future of Europe depends on your efforts," he told them.

Faisal J. Abbas, the editor-in-chief of Saudi Arabia's English-language daily newspaper Arab News, wrote that the kingdom needs "all the support it can get" against the Houthis.

"The kingdom cannot — and must not — be left alone to safeguard global energy supplies at a time when the entire world is unanimously hurting from price hikes," he wrote.

Where the support comes from in the future remains the question.

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### **35. Afghanistan's hungry will pay the price for Putin's war**

Foreign Policy, 1 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Russia's ban on food and fertilizer exports to stabilize supply and prices at home while it wages war on Ukraine is reverberating in its own backyard, pushing Central Asian states into economic crisis and threatening to tip Afghanistan from starvation into famine.

The war in Ukraine has already sent shudders through commodities markets, pushing up prices of cereals, fuel, and fertilizer. Together, Ukraine and Russia account for 30 percent of wheat supply; Russia exports most of the world's fertilizer. The longer the war lasts, the greater the instability of supply and the higher prices will go in anticipation of shortages.

The impact on vulnerable countries such as Afghanistan, where millions of people are short of food and babies are dying of malnutrition, will be devastating, economists said. Other vulnerable countries, including Yemen, Lebanon, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, can expect serious ramifications at least for the coming year, possibly longer. The war is expected to hit harvests and yields, not only in Ukraine, where grain planting this year could be cut by half, but in countries that have relied on Russian fertilizer to boost their own output, according to Friederike Greb, an economist with the World Food Program (WFP).

WFP is spending \$71 million a month on grain purchases, she said, 44 percent more than the average monthly outlay in 2019, to meet existing needs. As the war fallout worsens, need will rise, and not only will WFP have to stretch stocks to feed more mouths, but hunger will intensify in countries already suffering from a lack of food as there just won't be enough to go around. Already, WFP has had to reduce food rations to 8 million people.

One of the worst-hit will likely be Afghanistan, reeling after emerging from four decades of war with little in the way of a sustainable economy. Since the Taliban's takeover last August, what economic activity there has come to a halt, and U.S. economic sanctions mean that many people do not have cash to buy anything, including food. Desperate people have reportedly sold their organs and their children.

"The situation in Afghanistan can only get worse," said Qais Mohammadi, an Afghan economist and former assistant professor at a private university in Kabul. "It's not just one but multiple variables, and the Ukraine war is an additional significant variable on top of unstable currency, unstable banking system, unstable political environment, instability of decision-making, having no rules and regulations, freezing of billions of dollars in financial assets."

WFP has repeatedly warned that half of Afghanistan's population is "food insecure," with nearly 9 million people facing famine-like conditions. Worldwide, that figure is 44 million, Gerb said. The Taliban's Ministry of Public Health has said more than 13,000 babies have died of malnutrition this year already, though the number is impossible to verify.

"Afghanistan is one huge humanitarian crisis," Greb said, adding that along with Yemen and Lebanon it was already in a "very dire place" before Russia's war in Ukraine. WFP operations in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Lebanon "are highly dependent on wheat," she said. "Our resources don't take us as far as they used to because we have to pay higher prices in global markets."

In Afghanistan, where the main staple is bread, wheat imports are essential. Kazakhstan is a major supplier but won't have so much to sell as Russian curtailments on exports to its own neighbors start to bite. Afghan economists expect that farmers in the eastern provinces will take advantage of higher prices in Pakistan, itself a recipient of WFP aid, to sell their grain over the border, rather than at home.

Nazar Bobitski, a strategic advisor with the Ukrainian Business and Trade Association, said Russia's blockade of the Black Sea coast has isolated Ukraine from global maritime trade, cutting supplies of cereals and vegetable oils, as well as grain for animal feed production. Almost all of Ukraine's grain exports are shipped through deep-water ports on the Black Sea, but no bulk shipments have left since the invasion.

"Sea lane trade was critical to ensure that there is stability of supply and price stability for these commodities," he said. Combined with the export bans, "this leaves significant curtailing of supply, and obviously price rises will follow. It's mostly less developed countries that will be affected."

It's not just Afghanistan. Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan will suffer from the ban on Russian fertilizer and grain exports, as well as the wilting of the Russian economy under Western sanctions, which will shrink their own remittance incomes from migrant workers.

Egypt, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen all depend on grain shipments from Black Sea ports, which cannot be easily replaced, as sourcing from elsewhere, such as Canada, Australia, or

India, adds to shipping costs and time. Nor do good harvests necessarily mean producing countries can pick up the slack, as port capacities are already tight.

“There’s only so much you can do, especially if transport costs are so high. So in the end it means cutting rations. And now WFP would need almost \$20 billion for this year to feed almost 140 million beneficiaries,” Greb said. “That’s a lot of money.”

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### **36. Israel and the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine**

New Yorker, 1 Apr 22, Bernard Avishai

On Monday, the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, joined the foreign ministers of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and Morocco for a meeting at Sde Boker, the retirement kibbutz and burial place of David Ben-Gurion, the nation’s first Prime Minister. The meeting had been initiated by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, with encouragement from Blinken, whose main aim was to reassure the group that the United States is fixed in its commitment to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, and that the not-yet-consummated Iran nuclear deal is the best of available options to do that. “The summit was to showcase a strategic alliance growing out of the Abraham Accords,” the Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman told me. “To seed the formation of a kind of Middle Eastern NATO to contain Iran—deal or no deal.”

Israel and its Arab guests registered a certain discontent. No deal currently being negotiated contemplates constraints on the Iranian missile and drone programs. The leaders of the Gulf states have been increasingly chagrined by the lack of a U.S. response to the various attacks that Iran’s Houthi proxies in Yemen have made on the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia during the past few months—including, most recently, a strike on a Saudi Aramco facility, on March 25th. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and Jordan were not represented in person at the summit, although their interests were. (“The Saudis were the real enablers of the meeting,” Cymerman said.) According to Axios, Blinken asked Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, at a pre-summit meeting on Sunday, what alternative Israel proposed to a new deal—other than a U.S.-led, preemptive strike, which Israel continues to prepare for but, particularly given the situation in Ukraine, the Biden Administration would not want to entertain. Bennett reportedly said that he believed Iran might be deterred from enriching uranium to weapons grade if it knew that the U.S. and European countries would intensify sanctions to the extreme levels they have placed on Russia. Since Israel has not joined in those sanctions, one can only wonder how Blinken received the suggestion.

In any event, Bennett had already stated that Israel did not see itself as a party to the Iran deal. Earlier in March, moreover, as if to prove some independence from Washington, the U.A.E. hosted a state visit by Syria’s Bashar al-Assad—who remains in power thanks to brutality abetted by Iran and Russia. The chief U.S. negotiator on the Iran deal, Robert Malley, perhaps signaled acknowledgement of Israel’s developing partnership with the Gulf states when he announced in Doha, on Sunday, that Washington would not yet remove Iran’s Revolutionary Guards from the terrorism-sanctions list, and noted that the signing of the deal was “not just around the corner.”

Two other matters cast shadows on Blinken's trip: Israel's occupation of Palestine, especially the continuing expansion of the settlements, and its quasi-neutrality on Ukraine, both of which are a source of tension between Jerusalem and Washington. They may seem unrelated, but each has rendered Israel a sort of outsider among democratic states at a decisive moment. And Blinken chose to finesse both. Bennett has made much of his attempts to mediate between Moscow and Kyiv, but, in addition to remaining aloof from sanctions against Russia, Israel refuses to supply Ukraine with war matériel in order to preserve, Lapid had said, Russian tolerance for its interdictions of Iranian-backed forces in Syria. Blinken, at a press conference with Bennett, tactfully praised Israel for the solidarity that it has shown with regards to Ukraine: joining the United Nations' vote to condemn Vladimir Putin's invasion; implementing new rules to prevent oligarchs from parking yachts and planes and fortunes in Israel (though Jewish oligarchs who are Israeli citizens, and have Israeli registered property, may well be able to elide them); setting up a field hospital in western Ukraine; and, last and apparently least, Bennett's mediation efforts.

The question of Palestine was largely sidelined at the Sde Boker summit, though few doubt that the Saudis and Jordanians made a show of boycotting it largely to avoid providing scenes of senior Arab and Israeli diplomats hobnobbing for the world's press, while Israeli occupation forces defended the at times violent settler zealots—which might have incited further violence in the West Bank and Amman, as Ramadan begins. Alas, that show seems to have been of little value. Eleven Israelis have been killed in three separate terror attacks during the past week. On Friday, a Palestinian man was shot and killed by soldiers in Hebron.

Blinken, apparently sensitive to this gap in the agenda, spent the afternoon before the summit with Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, who called the gathering a "harsh attack" on the Palestinian people, and decried a U.S. "double standard": acting against Russia's claims on the Ukraine, while tolerating Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. Jordan's King Abdullah II visited Abbas in Ramallah, on Monday, as the summit was taking place. Benny Gantz, the moderate Israeli Defense Minister, wanted to join that meeting, but Bennett, the annexationist Prime Minister, nixed the idea. Blinken, for his part, simply restated his endorsement of a "two-state" solution, while acknowledging that is not imminent. In the triangular crisis of Ukraine, Iran, and Palestine, the last issue seems the most deferrable at present.

Or is it? The occupation exacerbates Israel's hostility with Iran, and the desire to operate against Iran in Syria shapes its diplomacy with Russia. Leaders make strategic, not just transactional, decisions. Deliberately or by default, they define what a country stands for and set its course for a generation. And the leader who made this responsibility most vivid for the Israelis in recent days was not Blinken, or Bennett, but Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, who addressed the members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in an impassioned speech delivered remotely on March 20th. "Indifference kills. Calculation is often erroneous. And mediation can be between states, not between good and evil," he said. "I am sure that every word of my address echoes with pain in your hearts." But he wanted to know why Israeli military help had not been forthcoming. "What is it? Indifference? Political calculation? Mediation without choosing sides?" Putin's aggression, Zelensky said, had made the choice this stark. There is an urgency for democratic solidarity, he suggested, to valorizing a global order in which military power does not determine a neighbor's fate.

He might have added that Ben-Gurion himself, in his Biltmore Declaration of 1942, envisioned a “Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.” But Zelensky, a Jew, couched his appeal in a way that he clearly thought would resonate with the leaders of a Jewish state. “The Nazi Party raided Europe and wanted to destroy everything. Destroy everyone,” he told them. “Wanted to conquer the nations. And leave nothing from us, nothing from you.” Then he said, “They called it ‘the final solution to the Jewish issue.’ You remember that. And I’m sure you will never forget! But listen to what is sounding now in Moscow. Hear how these words are said again: ‘final solution.’ But already in relation, so to speak, to us, to the Ukrainian issue.”

Members of Bennett’s inner circle responded furiously to the comparison. The Communications Minister, Yoaz Hendel, tweeted that the Nazis’ genocide of Jews “was also carried out on Ukrainian land,” implying Ukrainian sympathy for it, and said that “the comparison to the horrors of the Holocaust and the Final Solution is outrageous.” The Interior Minister, Ayelet Shaked, went further, telling a conference sponsored by the newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth that, while some Ukrainians had behaved decently during the Second World War, “Ukraine, as a whole, colluded with the Nazis—may their name be cursed—in the slaughter of the Jewish people.” Bennett echoed Hendel and Shaked, albeit in a more compassionate tone. “I can’t imagine being in his shoes,” Bennett said, of Zelensky, but added that the Holocaust should not be compared with anything, and that Zelensky’s rhetoric was “misplaced.”

The discomfort that Bennett’s allies felt was from the messenger as much as from the message. Zelensky hardly needs a lesson on the unique cruelties of the Final Solution: his grandfather fought in the Red Army and lost many family members to Nazi occupiers. Indeed, Zelensky’s fierce liberalism and his ironist’s sense of history seem his tribute to them. But for national-Orthodox Zionists such as Bennett, Hendel, and Shaked, Zelensky’s grasp of nationhood would seem a kind of naïveté. Their lesson, as their erstwhile mentor Benjamin Netanyahu had put it, is that “only the strong survive.” Hendel, who grew up in a West Bank settlement, refused, during the spring of 2020, to allow a center-left government to be formed if it rested on the votes of Arab Israelis. More recently, Shaked scandalized moderates in the government by setting criteria—which have since been overturned—that would allow Israel to absorb only Ukrainian Jewish refugees. As long as Bennett is in power, the Israeli government’s hesitation to align unambiguously with the democratic world has an ideological, not just a pragmatic, aspect.

Zelensky, I hasten to add, thanked the Israelis for the support they have given, and he did not dismiss Bennett’s mediation efforts. But, as the negotiations that resumed this week in Istanbul have revealed, the question is not whether mediation should persist but whether Bennett’s value as a mediator outweighs Israel’s potential contribution to the resilience of Zelensky’s forces, America’s sanctions, and Western solidarity—whether that counterforce against Putin, not mediation, would cause him to inch toward agreement, if inch he will. A source close to Bennett claimed that the Prime Minister’s efforts were appreciated: Putin is no longer insisting on the “de-Nazification” of Ukraine’s regime, code for his being reconciled to Zelensky staying in power. Nor, the source told me, does the Kremlin’s demand for “demilitarization” mean a Russian takeover, though Putin expects Zelensky to recognize Russian annexation of the Donbas and Crimea. The remaining Ukrainian state, for its part, would adopt something like the neutral stance of Austria during the Cold War. Zelensky would need some sort of security guarantors,

though, the source said, he “didn’t get many volunteers.” But these shifting conditions have been shaped, obviously enough, by the desperate military courage of the Ukrainian forces. (Last week, the Times reported that Israel, fearing a Russian reaction, refused even to supply those forces with hacking software.)

All of which returns us to the Sde Boker meeting. Given Israel’s appeal to the “democratic world” — certainly to the United States — to anchor a new alliance against Iran, it is hard to see how Bennett justifies his maneuvering on Ukraine. If Iran, for example, were to attack Israel from Lebanon, and Tel Aviv became a site of carnage, no Israeli Prime Minister would be grateful for, say, the French President offering mediation instead of aid. The retired Lieutenant General H. R. McMaster, who briefly served as Donald Trump’s national-security adviser and has worked closely with the Israeli military, told Haaretz that “Israelis ought to be embarrassed” by their government’s proto-neutrality. (“This idea that you hedge with Vladimir Putin to compensate for concerns that the American Administration might attenuate or lessen support for Israel — that’s part of a long pattern and it’s always been wrong,” he said.)

The risks are real: Palestine, Iran, and Ukraine have presented Israeli leaders a strategic challenge. Does Israel prioritize a peace process with Palestinians, defer to American leadership on Iran, take a stronger stance on Russia—define its interests within “the structure of the new democratic world”? The complexity — as Zelensky implied — doesn’t mean that the answer isn’t simple.

Putin has punished his shrinking inner circle for misjudging the war.

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### **37. Painful choices lie in the path to peace in Ukraine**

Washington Post, 1 Apr 22, David Ignatius

In the agonizing final years of the Vietnam War, a strategist named Fred Iklé wrote a treatise titled “Every War Must End.” His basic theme was that “wars are easier to start than to stop” — a message that applies powerfully now to the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine have been meeting for preliminary peace talks in Turkey this week, which has raised hopes for a settlement. Both sides have described the same basic terms for resolving the conflict: In exchange for a halt in the fighting, Ukraine would agree to a neutral military status that wouldn’t threaten Russia.

But this formula masks painful choices: Such a pact would grant Russian President Vladimir Putin at least partial victory. For many in Ukraine and the West, that is unacceptable. Putin launched an unprovoked, illegal invasion. His army committed atrocities against civilians. He shouldn’t be rewarded for such behavior.

The Biden administration's view is that it's up to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to decide whether to settle for neutrality or keep fighting for a better deal. "The Ukrainians will have to decide when the situation on the ground is ripe for a settlement," argues Stephen Hadley, a former national security adviser to President George W. Bush who keeps close contact with the Biden team.

After fighting so valiantly, Ukrainians won't want a settlement that leaves the country disarmed and vulnerable to a future attack. "This is viable to me in only one way — the kind of neutrality that Switzerland has — fully armed, with a citizen army," Konstantin Gryshchenko, an influential former foreign minister of Ukraine, told me in an interview.

The Russian military has performed poorly so far, and some Ukrainians think more fighting will bring victory. But U.S. officials specializing in Russia are skeptical. Russia is a large country with the ability to resupply and reposition its forces; Ukraine is a relatively small one that's short on the essentials for survival. The war is 40 days old; who can say what the battlefield situation might be in six months or a year?

Iklé offered a useful caution: "It often happens in wars that the weaker party makes no attempt to seek peace while its military strength can still influence the enemy but fights until it has lost all its power to bargain." He called this "self-destructive perseverance."

Iklé was similarly skeptical of punitive tactics such as Russia's seeming determination to bomb its way to a desirable settlement. "Inflicting 'punishment' on the enemy nation is not only an ineffective strategy for ending a war, it may well have side effects that actually hasten the defeat of the side that relies on that strategy," he wrote.

Often, wars don't end with a peace treaty but a cease-fire that leaves forces in place along a "line of control." Some analysts think Russia may be moving toward such an outcome by consolidating its forces in a swath of southeastern Ukraine that could eventually stretch from Odessa to the Donbas region.

Such partition lines are messy but can be surprisingly durable. North and South Korea are still separated without a formal peace treaty. A disputed line of control separates India and Pakistan, and also India and China. Vietnam was similarly partitioned for decades.

Harvard's Graham Allison argues that such a division could allow the Western-allied part of Ukraine to prosper. Before the Russian invasion, he contends, Ukraine was a failing state — one of the rare post-Soviet republics whose real gross domestic product per capita actually declined after 1991. A future Western Ukraine might become a version of South Korea, Allison says.

As Russia and Ukraine exchange peace proposals, the United States and its allies are subtly pressuring Russia through what has been their best tool — the release of declassified intelligence. The latest installment was a series of statements this week by U.S. and British officials arguing that Putin's bloody invasion was marked by the Russian leader's delusion and the incompetence of his advisers. "Putin's advisers are afraid to tell him the truth," but "the

extent of these misjudgments must be crystal clear to the regime,” argued Jeremy Fleming, director of Britain’s code-breaking agency GCHQ, in a speech on Thursday.

That zinger was aimed directly at the Kremlin, and it could have several interesting consequences: Putin may further blame his military and intelligence chiefs for failing to warn him of the disaster ahead; the generals and spies may further resent their remote president who has waged what Fleming described as his “personal war”; and the Russian people may mistrust both Putin and his security chiefs.

The most hopeful development I saw in this week’s peace feelers was a statement by Russian negotiator Vladimir Medinsky that, although Moscow rejects Ukrainian membership of NATO, it “has no objection to Ukraine’s aspirations to join the European Union.”

Maybe that is a building block for a real settlement. For a European Ukraine would represent a profound defeat for Putin’s dream of hegemony over Kyiv. That’s an essential requirement for a peace deal, along with stopping the killing.

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### **38. Peace in Ukraine will be elusive until one side makes a military breakthrough**

Financial Times (UK), 1 Apr 22, Lawrence Freedman

From almost the moment the war in Ukraine began, diplomats have been at work trying to end it. The UN Security Council has deliberated. Vladimir Putin has had regular telephone discussions with western leaders in which they urge him to stop his aggression or at least facilitate humanitarian relief for those suffering under the weight of Russian bombardments. He then in turn explains how they fail to understand Ukraine’s responsibility for these tragic events.

Israel’s prime minister Naftali Bennett visited Moscow to explore a peace initiative some weeks ago, but that now seems to be in abeyance. The only talks that hold any real promise are those that take place regularly between Ukrainian and Russian teams. The most recent of these was in Istanbul. But here too there has been little tangible progress.

For now neither side has an incentive to commit to a long-term settlement. They are waiting for military breakthroughs and a clearer view on the likely course of the war. Should the prospect be one of a long stalemate, then both might feel obliged to compromise. As they wait for news from the front, all they can do is to urge each other to be more “realistic” in their expectations.

Russia has had most reason to scale down its ambitions. It launched this war presuming an early victory, an assessment that was shared in a number of western capitals. The resulting mindset, which assumed that it would be Ukraine who was compelled to make the big concessions, has still not gone away, even though Russia has had to relinquish some of its earlier territorial gains. Its forces are suffering heavy losses and struggle with logistical and morale issues. And on Friday, authorities in the city of Belgorod claimed that Ukrainian helicopters had made the first strike on Russian soil since the war began.

Russia's original demands, however, are still on the table. So far it has only acknowledged implicitly that it will be unable to achieve regime change in Kyiv or impose demilitarization.

What will happen if Ukraine sustains this military pressure, and Russian efforts to reinforce its forces and mount new offensives continue to falter? Moscow's best option in those circumstances will be to call for an imminent ceasefire. This would enable Russia to consolidate its gains.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky will see the trap and be obliged to refuse the offer. He can note a record of Russia failing to honor many of the localized ceasefires, intended to allow civilians from besieged towns and cities to escape and for relief supplies to enter. He could also point to the problems with the implementation of the February 2015 Minsk agreement. Russian-sponsored separatists stayed in control of the territory they had occupied the previous year.

While Putin might be happy to start with a ceasefire without an accompanying peace deal, giving him an opportunity to confirm his gains while using a period of quiet to encourage his armed forces to sort themselves out, Zelensky will want a peace deal that only leads to a ceasefire as it is being implemented. His core demand is that Russian forces must leave Ukrainian territory. The war cannot truly end while any remain.

To sweeten the pill for Russia, the Ukrainian leader has come up with ideas to deal with the most contentious issues. The proposal that captured the most attention was one to abandon efforts to join Nato and turn Ukraine into a neutral state.

At first glance this looks like an important step. But Zelensky is after an armed neutrality backed by security guarantees. As he wants these guarantees to be stronger than those Ukraine had before, notably the ones in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which were provided in return for giving up its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal. Weeks before the war began foreign minister Sergei Lavrov explained that Russia was no longer bound by any promises because of the "state coup in Ukraine".

This experience explains why Ukraine was so keen to join Nato and why it now will want guarantees from the US, UK and others that are more or less the same as those as it would get as a member of Nato. However, as always with guarantees, there is small print. Whatever formula is found, Ukraine will carry on being dependent upon its own defenses, fortified by more equipment coming in from the west. It might hope that Moscow's experience of military failure will encourage caution in the future, though it will hardly feel secure if Russia ends this war still holding a chunk of Ukrainian territory.

Kyiv has all but accepted that while it will never agree in principle to Russia's annexation of the Crimea, in practice this is a fait accompli. But it will not agree to Russian control over the Donbas, the area for which Putin went to war.

It seems doubtful that this shattered territory, with its hostile population and vast reconstruction costs, requiring defense for the indefinite future, will appear now as such an attractive prize. But without it Putin has absolutely nothing to show for all this effort. This war should end with

Russian forces out of the Donbas. That would also be the most stable outcome. Without an agreement on this core issue, whatever else has been settled in negotiations, the conflict will not be concluded. That is why the search for a durable peace cannot be separated from the search for military success.

*The writer is emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London*

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **39. Wexler to Asharq Al-Awsat: Regional peace not possible without Saudi Arabia**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 1 Apr 22, Fatehelrahman Yousif

US Senator and President of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington DC, Robert Wexler stressed that real peace in the Middle East is not possible without Saudi Arabia.

In remarks to Asharq Al-Awsat, he said the Saudi-American relationship is the cornerstone for not just tangible security, but in handling terrorism related to extremist ideologies and deterring emerging groups.

The relationship between Riyadh and Washington is very important, not just in traditional politics, but goes beyond it to the fields of innovation, economy and regional peace efforts, he continued.

Moreover, he said there was deep understanding of the fundamental nature of the American-Saudi relationship and the massive long-term value of the partnership and joint interests and goals.

Saudi Arabia is the cornerstone for American interests and its allies.

When it comes to Israeli-Palestinian peace, it would be impossible to imagine any deal or any real tangible peace progress taking place without Saudi Arabia, said Wexler from Riyadh.

He cited late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's declaration of the 2002 Arab peace initiative, saying it was a great vision of peace.

The collective challenge at hand, continued Wexler, is building sustainable peace.

Furthermore, he acknowledged that Israel is partly to blame for the collapse of the peace process in the region.

He refused to blame Tel Aviv entirely for the failure to achieve peace in the conflict with Palestinians.

Adding to his woes are recent judicial rulings by Iraq's highest courts on the constitutional interpretation of how presidents should be elected. Effectively, Iraq's highest legal authorities have stepped in to ensure that Sadr has to share power with his Shia rivals.

This is not to say that Sadr is particularly "anti-Iran", but rather that Tehran has long encouraged a form of "sibling rivalry" between its Shia proxies and associates so that no single party becomes too powerful and may one day think about striking out on its own without Iranian patronage.

By keeping its clients at each other's throats, Iran is better positioned to leverage its influence and continue to use Iraq as an instrument of its own power projection, allowing it to reach deep into Syria and even threaten Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States.

What the Iraqi parliamentary chaos shows is that the political system established by the 2003 US occupation designed it to be controlled by external forces, and democracy does not remotely factor into how the state should be run.

Unless there is root-and-branch reform of the Iraqi political system, anyone who engages in Iraqi politics and the democratic process will have to face an entrenched deep state that ensures that the nation remains at the mercy of powerful foreign players, most notably the US and Iran.

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## SYRIA

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### **42. In Syria, Russia leads effort to recruit fighters for Ukraine**

Al Jazeera, 1 Apr 22, Kareem Chehayeb

Even after a decade of civil war, Syrians have been trying to find a way out of the country to fight in another. Moscow through the mercenary company the Wagner Group and supported Syrian fighter groups have been recruiting men to fight alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. Thousands across the war-torn country have reportedly expressed an interest in signing up.

One group, dubbed the ISIS Hunters, have made calls for recruitment at least twice over the past month. Those interested have to be between 23 and 43 years old, and must submit personal identification and documents that show they have military experience.

The ISIS Hunters will then let them know whether or not they have been recruited, and will summon them for deployment "at a later time when needed".

They are closely linked to the Wagner Group, and even share an almost identical insignia.

"Moscow is taking the lead with recruitment," Omar Abu Layla, a Syrian activist based in Europe who runs Syrian media and monitoring group Deir EzZor 24, told Al Jazeera.

“If you see it as a hierarchal structure, you have Russia at the top, then the Wagner Group, then the National Defense Forces,” he explained, the latter being a network of private pro-government fighter groups.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced in March that he will approve up to 16,000 fighters from the Middle East to deploy in Ukraine’s Donbas region to support Russian-backed rebel groups.

The US Pentagon said it has seen indicators that the Wagner Group has been recruiting fighters from Syria, Libya, and other countries with a goal to deploy “a thousand or so” in the eastern province.

Russian defense-ministry-owned Zvezda TV broadcast a video of Syrian men in military garb, waving Syrian and Russian flags, pledging to fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

### **Recruitment centers**

A fighter in Homs with the recently disbanded Russia-backed group Desert Hawks Brigade said its leader, Mohamad Jaber, has been contacting former fighters to regroup and support Russia’s war in Ukraine. He accepted Jaber’s request.

The Desert Hawks was considered one of Syria’s two most significant and ruthless fighter branches in the military. It has taken part in key offensives in Aleppo, Palmyra, Lattakia, and Deraa to keep President Bashar al-Assad in power.

“Otherwise you sign up at the [ISIS] Hunters center in Homs,” said the fighter, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gregory Waters, an analyst at the Counter Extremism Project and nonresident fellow at the Middle East Institute, said there are more than a dozen recruitment centers in Syria run by Moscow-backed private pro-government armed groups.

Meanwhile, in the eastern Deir Az Zor province, the Wagner Group and allied Syrian forces have directly started recruiting Syrians to volunteer in Ukraine, Abu Layla said.

Salaries start as low as \$200-\$300 per month for volunteers to work as security guards to protect installations, but those with greater military experience are paid higher rates, exceeding \$1,000 per month, he said.

It is an attractive pay in a country where 90 percent of the population lives in poverty, and where access to adequate food and heating is becoming more out of reach.

Abu Layla said many Syrians volunteering are not just in it for the money.

“Some of these Syrian militias are hoping to get higher positions, and believe that they could do this if they show loyalty to Russia,” he explained. “But with many others in Syria hoping to emigrate to Europe, they see this as their golden ticket.”

Meanwhile, brokers claiming to help speed up recruitment for Syrians have swarmed Facebook groups and other social media platforms, including one called Job Opportunities with Our Russian Friends.

Dozens of Syrians, many dressed in camouflage in their photos, appear desperate for opportunities abroad, even if it puts their lives at risk.

Many on the page, including the Desert Hawk Brigades fighter, waiting for deployments have called them “scammers”.

“There are so many corrupted people who say you will be instantly recruited and sent to Ukraine if you pay them an advance,” he said.

One recruiter claimed in a post that volunteers deployed to Syria will be paid a monthly salary of 1,500 euros (US\$1,657), have all their personal expenses covered, and will receive a 50,000 euro (\$55,235) lump sum at their end of service. “I want to sign up, please somebody help me,” one middle-aged man said in the comment section.

However, a young man on the page, dressed in military garb in his photo, said this recruiter was a fraud.

He posted WhatsApp screenshots where the recruiter asked for broker fees, but would reduce the fee if he would find more people to recruit. “This crook says he will sign us off to go to Russia, notify the authorities!” he said in an angry post.

### **‘Stay away’**

Some analysts are skeptical about the recruitment process and whether Russia will deploy armed Syrians in Ukraine anytime soon.

“I’ve yet to see evidence of contracts,” Waters said, describing pledges as “political grandstanding”.

No Syrian fighters have reached Ukraine yet. However, some have reportedly arrived in Russia. Accountability organization Syrians for Truth and Justice, said the Wagner Group and a Syrian partner security company have transported Syrian volunteers in Benghazi, Libya to Damascus, Syria, and eventually to Russia. A Syrian government official denied this.

The Desert Hawks Brigade fighter is still waiting in Syria, and does not know when he will be called for deployment. “I don’t know what’s going on right now,” he admitted. “Once our leader tells us we’re traveling, we’ll travel.”

That said, not all Syrians are interested in fighting a new war, after more than a decade of conflict in their own country that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions. Some say despite Russia’s crucial military support to the Syrian government, Ukraine is not a war for them to fight.

Yemen's president dismissed his controversial deputy on Thursday and delegated his own powers to a presidential council in a move backed by Saudi Arabia, removing some obstacles to U.N.-led efforts to revive negotiations to end the seven-year war.

### **3. In a break with the past, U.S. is using intel to fight an info war with Russia, even when the intel isn't rock solid**

NBC News, 6 Apr 22, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Dan De Luce

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions.

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### **NOTABLE TWEETS**

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**Iraq Ministry of Defense Security Media Cell; @SecMedCell (6 Apr):** (1) At a time when the Iraqi lands enjoy security and faith during the days of the holy month of Ramadan, outlaw groups are trying to disturb these blessed days. This evening, terrorist elements bombed Khabat district in Erbil governorate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq with three Katyusha rockets. (2) It fell in separate areas eliminated in empty and agricultural spaces near the Kurusk complex, the Great Zab River and the Kurokosk refinery, without recording human or material losses. It was found that these missiles were launched from the Hamdaniya crossing. (3) For their part, the competent security services have launched a search and search process for the terrorist elements that carried out this terrorist act. The security forces will work to bring those who tampered with security to justice, so that they may receive their just punishment.

**Yemen PM, Dr. Maeen Abdulmalek Saeed, @Yemen\_PM (6 Apr):** A meeting with the Vice President of the World Bank dealt with aspects of joint coordination to mobilize support and funds necessary for government programs to maintain food security, provide services, and help it carry out its duties and obligations in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

**U.S. State Dept - Near Eastern Affairs; @StateDept\_NEA (6 Apr):** The U.S. supports @UN peace efforts for #Yemen, including the negotiated truce. But ultimately, deep-rooted divisions need to be resolved by Yemenis through dialogue & compromise," said #USEnvoyYemen in a mtg w/Secretary-General People's Congress Advisor Alalimi. @USEmbassyYemen

**Inherent Resolve; @CJTFOIR (6 Apr):** Hope for a better future. Daesh attempts to destroy people's spirit in NE Syria during its brutal rule has failed. The @Coalition remains partnered with the #SDF to ensure the lasting defeat of Daesh & help keep NE Syria safe & secure. #StrongerTogether

**President Biden; @POTUS (6 Apr):** I made clear that Russia would pay a severe and immediate price for its atrocities in Bucha. Today, along with our Allies and partners, we're announcing a new round of devastating sanctions.

Two weeks after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, South African president Cyril Ramaphosa held a phone call with Russia's Vladimir Putin. On the same day, European leaders meeting in Versailles warned democracy itself was at stake. Yet Ramaphosa struck a very different tone.

**20. US disrupts global 'botnet' controlled by Russian military intelligence, DOJ says**

The Guardian, 6 Apr 22, David Smith

The US has disrupted a global "botnet" controlled by Russia's military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday.

**21. U.S. government and energy firms close ranks, fearing Russian cyberattacks**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Ellen Nakashima

In February, as Russian troops massed on Ukraine's border, executives with a major energy firm here worked with U.S. energy and homeland security officials to draw up a playbook and help prepare the electricity sector to deal with potential cyberattacks by Russia.

**22. Hypersonic-Missile delay puts U.S. further Behind Russia, China**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

The first U.S. hypersonic weapon will be delayed for as long as a year under a new schedule, even as lawmakers protest that the Pentagon is lagging behind in a new technology that Russia has already used in Ukraine and China has demonstrated in a space launch.

**23. USS Gerald R. Ford's captain on why the carrier's new island design works**

The War Zone, 6 Apr 22, Howard Altman

For Navy Capt. Paul "Paulie" Lanzilotta, 140 feet makes a world of difference. That's how far the island superstructure of the \$13 billion USS Gerald R. Ford has been moved to the aft on the 1,106-foot long vessel, which leads a new class of aircraft carriers, compared to what's found on the previous Nimitz class.

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ADJACENT AORs

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**24. NATO nations see differing paths as Ukraine War enters uncertain stage**

New York Times, Apr 6, 22, Steven Erlanger and Michael Crowley

Faced with the prospect that the war in Ukraine will be long and grinding, NATO countries are divided on how best to manage the next stage of the conflict and the uncertain period that promises to follow.

**25. US imposes 'severe' sanctions on Russian banks after Bucha atrocities**

Financial Times (UK), 6 Apr 22, Courtney Weaver, James Politi, Colby Smith and Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe

The US has imposed its most severe level of sanctions on Sberbank, Russia's largest financial institution, and Alfa-Bank, the country's biggest private bank, escalating its economic punishment of Moscow in response to atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

**26. Eastern Ukraine braces for renewed assault as Russia regroup**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, David L. Stern, Joby Warrick, Louisa Loveluck and Max Bearak

MUKACHEVO, Ukraine Ukrainian officials called Wednesday for evacuations in three provinces near the Russian border amid new signs that President Vladimir Putin's troops are escalating their assault on eastern and southern cities following a failed attempt to take the country's capital.

**27. Ukraine's surprise strike on Russian fleet hobbles Putin's Donbas strategy**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Brett Forrest and Nancy A. Youssef

A surprise Ukrainian strike on a Russian ship at a southern port city last month could curb Moscow's plan to expand its hold on the Donbas region, eliminating a key military advantage in the Russian attack plan, Ukrainian military analysts and U.S. officials said.

**28. Russia is recruiting mercenaries and Syrians to Ukraine, Western officials say**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper

As Russian troops retreat from northern Ukraine and focus operations on the country's east and south, the Kremlin is struggling to scrape together enough combat-ready reinforcements to conduct a new phase of the war, according to American and other Western military and intelligence officials.

**29. Pentagon: Russia has fully withdrawn from Kyiv, Chernihiv**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Karoun Demirjian and Dan Lamothe

Russian forces have fully withdrawn from the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the city of Chernihiv to its north, the Pentagon said Wednesday, as Moscow prepares to concentrate its invading forces in the eastern part of the country.

**30. China's security deal with Solomons raises alarm in Pacific**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nick Perry and David Rising

A security alliance between China and the Solomon Islands has sent shudders throughout the South Pacific, with many worried it could set off a large-scale military buildup or that Western animosity to the deal could play into China's hands. What remains most unclear is the extent of China's ambitions.

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ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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**31. Finland may finally want in on NATO; Sweden is not far behind.**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, Robbie Gramer and Amy Mackinnon

Just over two months ago, the prospect of Finland joining NATO was virtually unthinkable to most in the northern European country. It had grown closer to the military alliance over the last three decades but resisted the idea of becoming a full-fledged member. That all changed when tens of thousands of Russian troops rolled across Ukraine's border in late February.

### **32. Don't let Putin win in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Daniel Henninger

In no sense now can Vladimir Putin be allowed to win in Ukraine. People shouldn't have to be shot in the back of the head with their hands tied behind them to make that clear, but such is history's record of humanity slow-walking counterattacks against mass slaughter.

### **33. Across South Asia, U.S. and India push back against China**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, C. Raja Mohan

When Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh hold a so-called two-plus-two dialogue with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in Washington on Monday, managing the discord between their countries over Russia's war in Ukraine will be a priority. India, a major customer of Russian weapons, has so far refused to condemn the brutal invasion at the United Nations or join the West in sanctioning Russia. The Biden administration and the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, are determined not to let their differences over Russia come in the way of strengthening the Indian-U.S. partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **MIDDLE EAST**

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### **34. Outgoing air force chief: Israel no longer has full freedom of action over Lebanon**

Times of Israel, 6 Apr 22

Outgoing air force chief Amikam Norkin said Israel no longer has unfettered air superiority and freedom of action in Lebanon's skies in an interview broadcast on Tuesday. After a drone was nearly shot down by an anti-aircraft missile over Lebanon about a year ago, Israel realized that Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group had some capabilities it was not previously aware of, Norkin said.

### **35. Israel concerned over Iranian takeover of Syrian Golan**

Arutz Sheva, 6 Apr 22

Terror groups seeking to enlist supporters among Shiite population in Syria have already enlisted a few hundred, report says. With the end of Syria's civil war, the IDF has identified a new threat brought about by the demographic change and significant growth of the Alawite and Shiite population in Syria.

### **36. Gantz speaks with Palestinian president for Ramadan**

Riyadh, which last deposited funds into the Aden-based central bank in 2018, has struggled to exit the costly and unpopular conflict, which is widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Hadi took the helm of a crumbling Yemeni state in 2012 in a political transition plan backed by Gulf states after Arab Spring protests in 2011 that brought down President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The United Nations is pushing for inclusive political negotiations to end the conflict in which several Yemeni factions are vying for power.

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### **3. In a break with the past, U.S. is using intel to fight an info war with Russia, even when the intel isn't rock solid**

NBC News, 6 Apr 22, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Dan De Luce

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine.

President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions.

It's one of a string of examples of the Biden administration's breaking with recent precedent by deploying declassified intelligence as part of an information war against Russia. The administration has done so even when the intelligence wasn't rock solid, officials said, to keep Russian President Vladimir Putin off balance. Coordinated by the White House National Security Council, the unprecedented intelligence releases have been so frequent and voluminous, officials said, that intelligence agencies had to devote more staff members to work on the declassification process, scrubbing the information so it wouldn't betray sources and methods.

Observers of all stripes have called it a bold and so far successful strategy — although not one without risks.

“It's the most amazing display of intelligence as an instrument of state power that I have seen or that I've heard of since the Cuban Missile Crisis,” said Tim Weiner, the author of a 2006 history of the CIA and 2020's “The Folly and the Glory,” a look at the U.S.-Russia rivalry over decades. “It has certainly blunted and defused the disinformation weaponry of the Kremlin.”

Four days before the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the U.S. publicized spy plane photos to show the Soviet Union had deployed nuclear missiles not far from Florida's coast. The Biden administration began releasing reams of intelligence about what it said were Putin's plans and intentions even before the invasion of Ukraine began.

Just this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan stood at the White House podium and read out what officials said was more declassified intelligence, asserting that Russia's pullout from areas around Kyiv wasn't a retreat but a strategic redeployment that signals a significant assault

on eastern and southern Ukraine, one that U.S. officials believe could be a protracted and bloody fight.

The idea is to pre-empt and disrupt the Kremlin's tactics, complicate its military campaign, "undermine Moscow's propaganda and prevent Russia from defining how the war is perceived in the world," said a Western government official familiar with the strategy.

Multiple U.S. officials acknowledged that the U.S. has used information as a weapon even when confidence in the accuracy of the information wasn't high. Sometimes it has used low-confidence intelligence for deterrent effect, as with chemical agents, and other times, as an official put it, the U.S. is just "trying to get inside Putin's head."

Some officials believe, however, that trying to get into Putin's head is a meaningless exercise, because he will do what he wants regardless.

After this story was published, a U.S. official told NBC News that "the U.S. government's effort to strategically downgrade intelligence to share with allies and the public is underpinned by a rigorous review process by the National Security Council and the Intelligence Community to validate the quality of the information and protect sources and methods." The official added that "we only approve the release of intelligence if we are confident those two requirements are met."

### **'Spot on'**

The biggest success of the U.S. information offensive may have been delaying the invasion itself by weeks or months, which officials believe they did with accurate predictions that Russia intended to attack, based on definitive intelligence. By the time Russia moved its troops in, the West presented a unified front.

Before the invasion, the U.S. asserted that Russia intended to stage a false flag attack against members of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population as a justification for war and that the plans included a video featuring fake corpses. The video never materialized; Russia has consistently claimed it was invading to protect ethnic Russians from "Nazis" in Ukraine.

The U.S. accurately predicted that Putin intended to go through with the attack, even as other Western countries, notably France, argued otherwise. The head of France's military intelligence agency stepped down last week over the wrong call.

A former U.S. official said administration officials believe the strategy delayed Putin's invasion from the first week of January to after the Olympics and that the delay bought the U.S. valuable time to get allies on the same page in terms of the level of the Russian threat and how to respond.

CIA Director William Burns, a former ambassador to Russia, told lawmakers at a congressional threats hearing last month that "in all the years I spent as a career diplomat, I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians."

Now, he said, "by being careful about this we have stripped away the pretext that Putin, in particular, often uses."

“That has been a real benefit, I think, to Ukrainians,” he said.

The policy has drawn lavish praise even from some Republicans.

“You were spot on in your intelligence,” Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., said at the House’s annual worldwide threats hearing last month, addressing Burns and other intelligence agency leaders. “Your decision to declassify, both the form and the fashion in which you did so, saved lives. Sleep well, and thank you for doing that.”

But the strategy has its dangers. One of them, the Western official said, is that getting something clearly wrong would be extremely damaging to U.S. credibility and play into Moscow’s hands.

### **Disclosure as a deterrent**

As the war has proceeded, the administration has used intelligence to warn of possible Russian actions and draw attention to Russian military failings.

At times, the Biden administration has released information in which it has less confidence or about things that are possible rather than truly likely.

Last week, U.S. officials told reporters they had intelligence suggesting Putin is being misled by his own advisers, who are afraid to tell him the truth.

But when Biden was asked about the disclosure later in the day — after it made headlines around the globe — he was less than definitive.

“That’s an open question. There’s a lot of speculation,” Biden told reporters. “But he seems to be I’m not saying this with a certainty he seems to be self-isolating.

The degree to which Putin is isolated or relying on flawed information can’t be verified, said Paul Pillar, a retired career U.S. intelligence officer. “There’s no way you can prove or disprove that stuff,” he said.

Two U.S. officials said the intelligence about whether Putin’s inner circle was lying to him wasn’t conclusive — based more on analysis than hard evidence. Other officials disputed that, saying the intelligence was very reliable and had been vetted at the highest levels.

In another disclosure, U.S. officials said one reason not to provide Ukraine with MiG fighter jets is that intelligence showed Russia would view the move as escalatory.

That was true, but it was also true of Stinger missiles, which the Biden administration did provide, two U.S. officials said, adding that the administration declassified the MiG information to bolster the argument not to provide them to Ukraine.

Likewise, a charge that Russia had turned to China for potential military help lacked hard evidence, a European official and two U.S. officials said.

The U.S. officials said there are no indications China is considering providing weapons to Russia. The Biden administration put that out as a warning to China not to do so, they said.

The European official described the disclosure as “a public game to prevent any military support from China.”

Game or not, U.S. intelligence officials say it has been successful. Intelligence is rarely definitive, and Biden officials have calculated in some cases that it’s better to pre-empt something that might not happen, rather than stay silent and watch it unfold.

“It doesn’t have to be solid intelligence when we talk about it,” a U.S. official said. “It’s more important to get out ahead of them — Putin specifically — before they do something. It’s preventative. We don’t always want to wait until the intelligence is 100 percent certainty that they are going to do something. We want to get out ahead to stop them.”

The official said there was an extensive discussion about whether to reveal that the Russians had a blacklist of Ukrainian enemies whom they intended to arrest and possibly kill once they seized control. Officials weighed the potential harm of divulging the intelligence. “That was a big decision,” the official said.

But the intelligence appears to have been borne out by witness accounts from towns Russian once occupied and has now left, where political assassinations have been documented.

### **Leaning forward**

Some U.S. officials have advocated a strategy of leaning further forward in declassifying and releasing intelligence for years, as U.S. adversaries became adept at using modern communications platforms to spread propaganda.

In 2020, nine of 11 U.S. military combatant commanders signed a memo urging the U.S. intelligence community to declassify more information to counter disinformation and propaganda from Moscow and Beijing.

The U.S. can bolster support from allies only by “waging the truth in the public domain against America’s 21st century challengers,” the officers wrote. But efforts to compete in the battle of ideas, they added, are hamstrung by overly stringent secrecy practices.

“We request this help to better enable the US, and by extension its allies and partners, to win without fighting, to fight now in so-called gray zones, and to supply ammunition in the ongoing war of narratives,” the four-star generals wrote to the acting director of national intelligence at the time, Joseph Maguire.

“Unfortunately, we continue to miss opportunities to clarify truth, counter distortions, puncture false narratives, and influence events in time to make a difference,” the generals said.

In the past, the U.S. had sat on its hands as Russia waged information war.

In 2014, days before Russia invaded Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, Russia released a recording of an apparent phone conversation between senior U.S. diplomat Victoria Nuland and the ambassador to Ukraine at the time, in which Nuland disparaged the European Union.

The move was part of a wave of disinformation and propaganda from Moscow surrounding the seizure of Crimea. But the Obama administration didn't react.

That's because the U.S. had opted out of the great power propaganda wars after the 9/11 attacks, Weiner said.

"So what was the United States' response to all of this?" Weiner asked. "Crickets, nothing, zip. They had no response."

The Biden strategy has been different.

Pillar said the Biden administration took a significant risk in predicting Russia would invade Ukraine, a bold move that was vindicated by Putin's actions.

"That suggests that there are some pretty strong bases for this information," Pillar said. "Not only did it turn out to be correct ... but evidently it had been presented to the president with enough confidence that he felt confident going out on the limb as far as he did."

Said Pillar, "Boy, if there wasn't an invasion, this would have a huge 'cry wolf' effect and make our president look pretty bad."

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ISIS

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#### **4. Germany arrests Syrian accused of torturing captives with Daesh**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22

German investigators on Wednesday arrested a Syrian man accused of war crimes for allegedly torturing captives while he was with Daesh group in Syria in 2014.

Federal prosecutors said the man, identified only as Raed E. in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Berlin. He is suspected of membership in a foreign terrorist organization, crimes against humanity, war crimes and bodily harm.

The suspect joined Daesh in summer 2014 and participated in an attack that August on the Shueitat tribe in the Deir Ezzor region of eastern Syria, prosecutors said.

Activists reported death tolls ranging up to 700.

Raed E. is accused of abusing and torturing three captives after that attack. Prosecutors say that he had a man who was looking for a 13-year old brother kidnapped by Daesh arrested and then tortured him at various prisons run by the terrorist group.

U.S. surveillance of Russia's Ukraine invasion has been buttressed by two newer satellite systems built with commercial parts and on-board imagery processes, the head of the intelligence agency that manages the programs said in a rare public statement.

Alongside orbiting spy satellites, the new systems built using commercial technology have "enabled NATO and the entire world to see in real time the Russian military buildup prior to its invasion," National Reconnaissance Office Director Christopher Scolese said in prepared testimony Wednesday for a mostly closed-door House Armed Services subcommittee hearing.

The new systems, which Scolese said "went from concept to orbit in less than three years," have since helped Biden administration officials provide a stream of detailed intelligence statements about Russian battlefield developments, missile launches, likely strategic goals and -- this week -- potential war crimes, without disclosing classified sources.

"They illustrate our efforts to deliver capabilities more quickly, using a combination of commercial components and processes and government-sponsored capabilities," Scolese said. "And they almost immediately started serving the needs of both warfighters and national policy makers."

That includes foreign allies of the U.S. Working with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which produces precise, geo-located maps from the NRO imagery, "these products are being widely disseminated at the NATO Intelligence Fusion Center and shared with the U.S. European Command," he said.

The Ukraine war isn't the first time the technology has been employed for humanitarian or U.S. national security purposes.

Before the invasion, the systems built on commercial technology "supported earthquake relief in Haiti, imaged areas over Afghanistan to support the evacuation of U.S. troops," Before the invasion, the systems built on commercial technology "supported earthquake relief in Haiti, imaged areas over Afghanistan to support the evacuation of U.S. troops." Scolese said.

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### **19. Financial warfare: will there be a backlash against the dollar?**

Financial Times (UK), 7 Apr 22, Robin Wigglesworth, Polina Ivanova and Colby Smith

*This is the second part of a series on the weaponization of finance*

Two weeks after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, South African president Cyril Ramaphosa held a phone call with Russia's Vladimir Putin. On the same day, European leaders meeting in Versailles warned democracy itself was at stake. Yet Ramaphosa struck a very different tone.

"Thanking His Excellency President Vladimir Putin for taking my call today, so I could gain an understanding of the situation that was unfolding between Russia and Ukraine," he wrote on Twitter. Ramaphosa, who has blamed Nato expansion for the war, said Putin "appreciated our balanced approach".

The South African president is not alone in pursuing a “balanced” position to the war. “We will not take sides. We will continue being neutral and help with whatever is possible,” Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro said after Russia invaded Ukraine. Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador also declined to join the sanctions being imposed on Russia. “We are not going to take any sort of economic reprisal because we want to have good relations with all the governments in the world,” he said.

And, then, there is China: an increasingly close ally of Russia. The world’s second-largest economy has scrupulously declined to criticize the invasion of Ukraine.

It might seem that most of the world is united in condemnation of the war in Ukraine, but while there is a western-led coalition against Russia, there is no global coalition. This could have important implications for the future of international finance as countries around the world respond to the dramatic move by the US and its allies to freeze Russia’s foreign currency reserves.

“The sanctions have been earth-shattering,” admits John Smith, who used to be the leading sanctions official at the US Treasury department and now co-heads the national security practice at Morrison & Foerster, a law firm. “They’ve broken the mold.”

The power of the sanctions on Russia is based on the dominance of the US dollar, which is the most widely-used currency in trade, financial transactions and central bank reserves. Yet by explicitly weaponizing the dollar in this way, the US and its allies risk provoking a backlash that could undermine the US currency and sunder the global financial system into rival blocks that could leave everyone worse off.

“Wars also upend the dominance of currencies and serve as a doula to the birth of new monetary systems,” says Zoltan Pozsar, an analyst at Credit Suisse.

China, in particular, has long-term plans for its currency to play a much bigger role in the international financial system. Beijing views the dollar’s dominant position as one of the bulwarks of American power that it wants to chip away at, the flipside of the US Navy’s control of the oceans. The Ukrainian conflict will solidify this view.

Zhang Yanling, former executive vice-president of Bank of China, said in a speech last week the sanctions would “cause the US to lose its credibility and undermine the dollar’s hegemony in the long run”. She suggested China should help the world “get rid of the dollar hegemony sooner rather than later”.

The death of the dollar has been predicted on countless occasions before, only for the US currency to maintain its position. Inertia is a powerful force in cross-border finance: once a currency is widely used, that becomes a self-perpetuating position.

But if there is a steady shift away from the dollar in the coming years, the sanctions on Russia’s central bank might come to be seen not as a bold, new way of exerting pressure on an opponent but the moment when the dollar’s dominance began to decline — a financial Suez Canal.

Analysts point out that previous examples of financial warfare have mostly related to blocking money for terrorism or deployed in specific cases such as Iran's nuclear programme. Targeting a country of Russia's size and power is unprecedented, and for better or worse it could become a blueprint for the future, argues Mitu Gulati, a financial law professor at the university of Virginia.

"If you change the rules for Russia, you're changing the rules for the whole world," he says. "Once these rules change, they change international finance forever."

### **'It was simply theft'**

As Russia accelerated its build up of forces on the border of Ukraine earlier this year and the threat of war hung in the air, the country's leading financial officials conducted a stress-test of the impact of potential sanctions.

But when one senior Russian banker suggested modelling what would happen if the ruble went over the symbolic mark of 100 to the dollar — a huge jump at the time — the suggestion was dismissed as unrealistic.

By the end of February, Russia had launched an invasion of Ukraine, sanctions had been introduced and a large part of the Russian central bank's foreign reserves had been frozen. Western governments surprised themselves and Moscow with the strength of their economic response to the war. As a result, the ruble fell to 135 against the dollar, a depreciation of about 50 per cent since the start of the year.

"No one who was forecasting what sanctions the west might impose could have predicted that, when the central bank reserves [were frozen]," Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said in March. "It was simply theft."

Five weeks into the war, the situation looks different — at least superficially. The ruble has regained most of the ground it lost in the days after the sanctions were first announced — prompting some Russian officials to claim that the measures had failed.

"This is the beginning of the end of the dollar's monopoly in the world," Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the Russian Duma lower house of parliament, said on Wednesday. "Anyone who keeps money in dollars today can no longer be sure that the US will not steal their money."

Volodin added: "The 'hellish' sanctions didn't work. They hoped to collapse the economy and paralyse Russia's banking system. It didn't work."

But analysts say the rebound largely reflects the draconian capital controls and interest rate increases Russia has unveiled in response. They add that the economic impact is undoubtedly going to be severe, regardless of the ruble's movements.

"It's very grim," says Carmen Reinhart, the World Bank's chief economist. "Modelling at a time like this is an art, so I don't want to be too precise, but we're talking about significant, double-digit declines in economic activity and skyrocketing inflation."

Nonetheless, there are a few tentative signs that Russia could find ways around the sanctions that bypass the dollar-based US financial system. One area is trade. India, a country which is eager to maintain the independence of its foreign policy, has been flirting with the idea of providing a payments backdoor to Russia.

Indian officials say the government and central bank have looked into the viability of a rupee-rouble arrangement — a mechanism the two countries used during the Soviet Union era, which also involved barter trades involving oil and other goods. But officials stress that the issue is not yet settled. Such arrangements are “not easy to undo once the crisis goes,” one official cautions.

Some fear the war is the beginning of a profound shift in the global economy. Larry Fink, the chief executive of BlackRock, the world’s largest investment group with \$10tn of assets under management, argued in his annual letter to shareholders that “the Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the globalization we have experienced over the last three decades”. One result, he said, could be a greater use of digital currencies — an area where the Chinese authorities have made significant preparations.

Even the IMF believes the dollar’s dominance could be diluted due to the “fragmentation” of the system, although it will likely remain the primary global currency. “We are already seeing that with some countries renegotiating the currency in which they get paid for trade,” says Gita Gopinath, the IMF’s first deputy managing director.

The sanctions could also accelerate changes in the infrastructure of international finance. As part of its push to reduce dependence on US-controlled systems, China has spent years developing its own renminbi-denominated cross-border interbank payments system (Cips), which now has 1,200 member institutions across 100 countries.

Cips is still small compared with Swift, the European-based payments system, which is an important part of the sanctions regime against Russia. But the fact that the biggest Russian banks have been kicked off Swift has given a potential growth opportunity to the Chinese rival.

“Cips has the potential to be a game changer,” says Eswar Prasad, a former senior IMF official now at the Brookings Institution. “China is setting up an infrastructure for payments and payment messaging that could one day provide an alternative to the western-dominated international financial system and in particular Swift.”

Even before the war, there were also tentative signs of a big shift already under way in the composition of central bank reserves — one of the main building blocks of the international financial system.

US government debt has for much of the past century been central banks’ preferred place to stash away rainy-day money, given the size and strength of the US, the safety and tradability of its debt and the dominant role of the dollar in international trade and finance. In the 1960s, former French president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing called this America’s “exorbitant privilege”. But that privilege has been eroded in recent decades.

Of the \$12tn worth of foreign currency reserves held by central banks around the world at the end of 2021, the dollar accounts for about 59 per cent, according to the latest IMF data. That is down from 71 per cent in 1999, when the euro was launched.

The European common currency is the principal dollar alternative — it accounts for 20 per cent of central bank reserves — but there has also been a marked shift into smaller currencies such as the Australian dollar, the Korean won and above all the Chinese renminbi, according to Barry Eichengreen, Berkeley economics professor who is the dean of studies of the international monetary system.

In a recent report co-authored with the IMF, he called this “the stealth erosion of dollar dominance”, and argued it “hints of how the international system may evolve going forward”. The use of central bank sanctions would probably accelerate the process, he told the Financial Times.

“It’s a huge deal. Freezing the assets of the Russian central bank certainly came as a surprise to me, and it would appear to Putin as well,” he says. “These issues have always come up in the past whenever the words ‘weaponize’ and ‘dollar’ are spoken. The worry is always that this will work to the disfavor of US banks, and you go some way towards eroding the dollar’s exorbitant privilege.”

Yu Yongding, a leading economist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said in a speech last week that sanctions had “fundamentally undermined national credibility in the international monetary system”. Yu, who used to be an adviser to the Chinese central bank, added: “What contracts and agreements can’t be dishonored in international financial activities if foreign central banks’ assets can be frozen.”

### **Is it too early for the death knell of the US dollar?**

Yet for all the speculation about the impact of the sanctions, there are also strong reasons to believe they will not promote a shift in the tectonic plates that underpin global finance — at least for the foreseeable future.

Despite the recent rebound in the ruble, there is no easy way for Russia to escape from the impact of the sanctions. Natalya Zubarevich, director of the regional programme of the Independent Institute for Social Policy, says people are expecting results “too quickly” from the sanctions. “Sanctions do not work quickly,” she says. “The other sanctions will have an effect over months, not days.”

Moreover, the threat of US and European sanctions on entities that actively try to help Russia evade the financial blockade will be a major deterrent — even for banks in countries that are amenable to helping Moscow.

Nor is it easy for challengers to displace the dollar. The uncomfortable realization for countries that might now be nervously eyeing their vulnerability to similar sanctions is that there is simply a lack of viable alternatives. Even Eichengreen says he is nowadays less worried about the dollar’s standing than he used to be, after it survived the “erratic” presidency of Donald Trump.

That dilemma is particularly acute for China. With foreign currency reserves of \$3.2tn that need to be invested, it has no choice but to have extensive dollar holdings. Outside of Europe and potentially Japan, which have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with America in this case, there simply are not enough liquid financial assets in other currencies to meet that demand.

“We have very accommodative monetary policy, we are very open with our markets, things are easily convertible and we are safe as an economy. Until those things change, the rest of it ain’t changing,” says Brian O’Toole, a sanctions expert at the Atlantic Council and former senior official at the US Treasury. “If we’re acting with all of our partners and allies in this, where else are you going to go? There’s no place else that has anything approaching the level of liquidity and access that the US market has. It doesn’t exist anywhere.”

China also faces an intractable problem if it wants other countries to hold its currency in their reserves. Its capital controls are not as strict as they used to be, but the renminbi is still not a fully convertible currency. In the decade since it first started trying to internationalize the renminbi, the Chinese Communist party has come to realize it can have a global currency that might one day rival the dollar or it can retain tight control over its domestic financial system, but it cannot have both.

Prasad points out that despite the message that countries can no longer rely completely on “their carefully built up war chests at times of war” in light of the “quite dramatic moves by the western economies”, there is simply a paucity of viable alternatives. “The harsh reality though is that the renminbi at this stage is not a big enough player in international finance to be a viable alternative to the dollar,” he says.

Given the profound changes that have taken place in the global economy over the last four decades, it might seem an anachronism that the traditional western allies still dominate the financial world. But for the time being, there is little escape from the hold that their currencies enjoy.

Smith, the former Treasury official, points out that “the death knell of the US dollar in the international economy has been sounded every year” since roughly 2008, when Washington first blocked Iran from using the US dollar for its international energy transactions. But nothing tangible has ever come from it.

“There’s been a lot of hoopla ever since about the US dollar losing its status as the reserve currency and the currency of choice in the energy markets and in the international economy, [but] we have not seen that occur,” he says. “The US dollar has continued to remain strong as a source of stability in international financial transactions, and that is likely to continue even after the dust settles on the Ukraine war that Russia has unleashed.”

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**20. US disrupts global ‘botnet’ controlled by Russian military intelligence, DOJ says**  
The Guardian, 6 Apr 22, David Smith

The US has disrupted a global “botnet” controlled by Russia’s military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday.

A botnet is a network of hijacked computers used to carry out cyberattacks. “The Russian government has recently used similar infrastructure to attack Ukrainian targets,” Garland told reporters at the justice department.

“Fortunately, we were able to disrupt this botnet before it could be used. Thanks to our close work with international partners, we were able to detect the infection of thousands of network hardware devices.

“We were then able to disable the GRU’s [the military intelligence agency] control over those devices before the botnet could be weaponized.”

The attorney general also announced charges against Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev for sanctions violations. He said the billionaire had been previously identified as a source of financing for Russians promoting separatism in Crimea and providing support for the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic in eastern Ukraine.

“After being sanctioned by the United States, Malofeyev attempted to evade the sanctions by using co-conspirators to surreptitiously acquire and run media outlets across Europe,” Garland said.

The indictment is the first of a Russian oligarch in the US since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In a related move, a federal court in the southern district of New York unsealed a criminal indictment against TV producer John Hanick, 71, a US citizen charged with violations of sanctions and false statements because of his work for Malofeyev over several years.

Matthew Olsen, assistant attorney general of the justice department’s national security division, said: “The defendant Hanick knowingly chose to help Malofeyev spread his destabilizing messages by establishing, or attempting to establish, TV networks in Russia, Bulgaria and Greece, in violation of those sanctions.”

Last month Garland, who is America’s top law enforcement official, announced the launch of Task Force KleptoCapture, an interagency law enforcement task force dedicated to enforcing the sweeping sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

He vowed on Wednesday: “Our message to those who continue to enable the Russian regime through their criminal conduct is this: it does not matter how far you sail your yacht, it does not matter how well you conceal your assets, it does not matter how cleverly you write your malware or hide your online activity.

“The justice department will use every available tool to find you, disrupt your plots and hold you accountable.”

Garland, whose grandparents fled antisemitism at the border of western Russia and eastern Europe more than a century ago, acknowledged horrific images that emerged from Bucha in Ukraine his week. “We have seen the dead bodies of civilians, some with bound hands, scattered in the streets. We have seen the mass graves. We have seen the bombed hospital, theatre and residential apartment buildings.

“The world sees what is happening in Ukraine. The justice department sees what is happening in Ukraine. This department has a long history of helping to hold accountable those who perpetrate war crimes.”

He noted that one of his predecessors, Attorney General Robert Jackson, later served as a chief American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials after the second world war. “Today, we are assisting international efforts to identify and hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Ukraine and we will continue to do so.”

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## **21. U.S. government and energy firms close ranks, fearing Russian cyberattacks**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Ellen Nakashima

In February, as Russian troops massed on Ukraine’s border, executives with a major energy firm here worked with U.S. energy and homeland security officials to draw up a playbook and help prepare the electricity sector to deal with potential cyberattacks by Russia.

Berkshire Hathaway Energy officers were among the small group that wrote the guidelines, which stressed the importance of quickly sharing cyberattack information between industry and government.

With President Biden warning last month of evolving intelligence that Russia is exploring possible cyberattacks against American critical industries, companies such as Berkshire Hathaway Energy and the U.S. government are on high alert. After years of what critics saw as lip service, cybersecurity collaboration between the federal government and some critical industries has taken root, officials and industry leaders say, and it could be put to the test as Russian government hackers probe the defenses of American power plants, banks and telecommunications networks.

“The collaboration between government and the private sector has seen exponential improvement over the last couple of years,” said Bill Fehrman, president and chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway Energy (BHE), which provides electricity generated by wind, solar, natural gas and coal to 12 million customers in the United States, Canada and Britain. “The main benefit,” he said, “is the more efficient transfer of information from the front line — the companies — to the government, and getting usable information back from the government in a timely manner.”

In particular, he said, the declassification of information from the government “has gone from months to in some cases hours.”

BHE is so large — one of the biggest electricity companies in North America by number of customers — that if its systems were disrupted by a Russian cyberattack, officials say, the impact on Americans' lives would be substantial. At the same time, they say, practices such as those adopted by BHE, whose CEO chairs the electricity sector group that coordinates with the federal government, can serve as a model for the industry.

As a chill wind whipped off the farm fields an hour northwest of Des Moines, the warmth from a 10,000-horsepower engine and the smell of oil filled a compressor room. The engine, chugging so loudly workers wear earplugs, powers pistons that compress natural gas. The compressor station in Ogden is one stop along the 13,000-mile-long Northern Natural Gas pipeline, which is part of BHE and studded with similar stations every 60 miles or so. The compressed gas is fed from one station to another in relay fashion, serving homes, hospitals and power plants from Bakersfield, Tex., to Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

There has never been a cyberattack on any industrial control system within BHE and its 11 subsidiaries. That is because of strict security measures imposed over the past eight years, said Chief Security Officer Michael Ball. No operational network is connected to the Internet, and third-party vendors coming in to do maintenance follow stringent rules, including a ban on plugging any outside hardware into the system.

But although its industrial control or operational technology (OT) systems are not connected to the Internet, the company still has to ensure that traffic flowing within its systems is not contaminated by malware.

In a campaign launched by the White House a year ago to boost the cyberdefenses of critical sectors, BHE deployed sensor software in its OT networks to look for malicious activity and vulnerabilities. The software it chose, developed by a company called Dragos, detects suspicious traffic from nation-state actors. It also anonymizes the data and makes it available to analysts at the National Security Agency, the Energy Department and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

"We have confirmed foreign states are active in their targeting of U.S. energy industrial control systems," said Robert M. Lee, CEO of Dragos, whose software allows the government to send queries to the companies to see whether they have detected the presence of certain adversaries.

By the end of the first 100-day campaign, which focused on electricity companies, almost 60 percent of electricity customers in the United States were covered by companies that had or pledged to have commercial cyberthreat sensors on their OT networks, said Fehrman, who coordinated the effort across the sector.

Work with the natural gas sector followed, and in January an effort for the water sector began.

"If power is disrupted, or if oil and gas is disrupted, or if clean water is disrupted, that really affects Americans' lives," said Anne Neuberger, deputy U.S. national security adviser for cyber and emerging technology. "The collaboration between companies and with the government, the

deployment of commercial sensors, the deepened information-sharing has been an important contribution to the sectors' resilience," she said.

Though Biden's warning last month was based on intelligence gathered by the U.S. government, the sensors were helpful for additional insight, U.S. officials said.

Five years ago, Russian government hackers penetrated the OT systems of some American electricity companies, but the intrusions were not detected immediately. It took some companies months to realize they had been infiltrated. The sensors should cut that time drastically, U.S. and company officials said.

Last year, Russian criminals carried off a ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline, snarling up the company's administrative computer network. Out of fear that the malware might spread to the OT system, the company shut down its fuel pipeline for five days, prompting panic-buying at gas stations on the East Coast and raising concerns that Russia might target other critical companies.

The abundance of targets in American industry prompted CISA to issue a call in February to companies to harden their cyberdefenses in a campaign the agency dubbed "Shields Up."

On a recent day, a senior threat intelligence analyst at BHE's global security operations center pulled up a dashboard on a large screen on a wall, displaying some 3,000 Russian "indicators of compromise," or IP addresses and other digital clues that had been tied to cyberattacks on Ukraine government systems since January. The IOCs, as they are called, came from the DHS; the Canadian Center for Cyber Security, a government agency; and the Energy Department; as well as an industry information-sharing collective and private threat intelligence companies.

In years past, companies might get this sort of data, but by the time it got to them, "chances are really good I already knew about it," BHE's Ball said. "Now it's flipped, and we're seeing stuff faster, more of the stuff we haven't already heard about."

And, more importantly, company executives say, the quality of some of that information has improved.

"We have been getting 'actionable intelligence' — extremely helpful feedback that we can implement," Fehrman said. That is intelligence obtained through U.S. government penetration of adversaries' systems overseas and enhanced with more information that, for instance, tells companies what threat is really significant, what techniques the hackers are using, what machines they are targeting — sometimes down to make and model — and what defensive actions should be taken as a result.

A major milestone in facilitating some of the cooperation driven by the Ukraine crisis was a congressional mandate that CISA set up a 24/7 center for the real-time sharing of threat information that includes personnel from key industrial sectors as well as from the FBI, the DHS, the NSA and the Energy and Treasury departments. The result was the launch last summer of what CISA Director Jen Easterly named the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative.

The JCDC has “created a beachhead,” said Tom Fanning, CEO of the energy giant Southern and a member of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission, which recommended the formation of the collaborative. “As we mature the process, it will get better and better and better.”

Michael Ball, vice president and chief security officer for Berkshire Hathaway Energy, at the company's global security operations center in Urbandale, Iowa. (KC McGinnis for The Washington Post)

A major spoke off the JCDC information-sharing hub is the Energy Department’s Energy Threat Analysis Center, created in January to enable companies and the government to jointly analyze threats and develop measures to deal with them.

It will also feed that information back to the JCDC. “If we’re seeing a threat to an energy industrial control system, we certainly want to make sure that information gets out to other sectors like water and chemical, [which] have similar systems,” said Puesh Kumar, director of the department’s Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response.

In February, the White House put CISA Executive Director Brandon Wales in charge of an effort to ensure the government can handle a cyberattack from the Russians, including any resulting physical consequences in the public or private sectors.

“On the whole we are more prepared now than ever before,” Wales said.

“Russian malicious cyber actors have posed a high threat to the U.S. government and the critical infrastructure since before the invasion of Ukraine,” he said, “and they will present a threat after this current crisis is resolved.”

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## **22. Hypersonic-Missile delay puts U.S. further behind Russia, China**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

The first U.S. hypersonic weapon will be delayed for as long as a year under a new schedule, even as lawmakers protest that the Pentagon is lagging behind in a new technology that Russia has already used in Ukraine and China has demonstrated in a space launch.

The goal to declare an “early operational capability” for the Lockheed Martin Corp. missile by Sept. 30 has been moved back to sometime in the next fiscal year, according to an Air Force statement. The Pentagon has said the Air-Launched Rapid Response Weapon, or ARRW, is expected to be the “nation’s first operational hypersonic weapon.”

Hypersonic weapons are hard to track and destroy because they fly five times the speed of sound and can be maneuvered. Last month, Russia debuted a hypersonic air-to-ground missile in its attack on Ukraine, and in July China hit a demonstration target on Earth with a weapon in orbit. Adversaries don’t have to meet the rigorous standards set under the U.S. defense acquisition system or face public scrutiny over delays and failure.

That comes in handy, he added, when boaters try something stupid.

“Sometimes there are mariners out there that aren’t very smart, and they think it's smart to cross the bow of an aircraft carrier in tight quarters,” he said. “And I don't know how great his engineering plant is, you know, if you're on a small sport fisherman or something like that, if you lose your diesels right in front of me, I need to be able to stop and I know I can.”

For the world's largest warship, CVN-78 is surprisingly nimble, thanks largely in part to the massive amount of power at her crew's disposal thanks to her twin nuclear reactors.

Sometime later this year, Lanzilotta will finally get a better idea of just how well the new island design will work on the carrier’s first operational cruise, and what, if any, challenges it will create.

“I think so,” he said when asked about whether the new island design will prove more efficient. “But when we deploy later in the year we’re going to learn more and improve more. And that's an important mindset.”

When asked what lessons he anticipates learning during that deployment, Lanzilotta waxed philosophical.

“The sailors are smarter than most of us old guys,” he said. “You know, I've been doing this for 28 years. So I have my own predisposed notions of how things are going. I've got sailors that are younger, super-intelligent, and always thinking like ‘hey, why don't we do it like this?’ Or ‘let's try something like that.’ So that I'm gonna stay open-minded on it. So I don't drive the solution too much.”

Still, that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have questions about how things will go.

“I think maybe just you know, how fast can I go?” he pondered., “Not speed to the water, but how quickly can I generate sorties? What is our limiting factor? Can we work on that?”

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **24. NATO nations see differing paths as Ukraine War enters uncertain stage**

New York Times, Apr 6, 22, Steven Erlanger and Michael Crowley

Faced with the prospect that the war in Ukraine will be long and grinding, NATO countries are divided on how best to manage the next stage of the conflict and the uncertain period that promises to follow.

Central European members like Poland and the Baltic states want a total break with Moscow and an effort to bring Russia to its knees, two senior Western officials said. They worry that anything that Russia can present as a victory will do serious damage to European security.

But other nations believe that Russia cannot be easily subdued and that the war's outcome is likely to be messy — more exhausting cease-fire than resounding victory. Countries like France, Germany and Turkey want to keep contacts with Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, regardless of the allegations of war crimes committed by his troops, the officials said.

NATO foreign ministers, meeting this week to discuss how to help Ukraine prosecute the war, do agree on one major point: The war is far from over and — as badly as Russia's forces have performed and despite their retreat from areas around Kyiv, the capital — they are making slow and brutal progress in Ukraine's east.

“Moscow is not giving up its ambitions in Ukraine,” Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, said this week. “We now see a significant movement of troops away from Kyiv, to regroup, rearm and resupply. And they shift their focus to the east.”

That will take several weeks, officials believe, as Russian troops move back into Belarus to be resupplied and reorganized, and then must make their way with their equipment through Russia toward eastern Ukraine.

“In the coming weeks, we expect a further Russian push in the eastern and southern Ukraine to try to take the entire Donbas and to create a land bridge to occupied Crimea,” Mr. Stoltenberg said. “This is a crucial phase of the war.”

In response to the scenes of corpses in Bucha, the United States and the European Union are preparing more sanctions against Russia, but without much expectation that they will hasten the end of the war.

But at the NATO meetings, the talk will be of weapons and matériel, not sanctions.

There is a general agreement that Russia is no longer a strategic partner of the alliance, that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is no longer bound by the troop limits of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, and that its military posture must be sharply enhanced to deter a confrontational Russia, so long as Mr. Putin and his allies retain power there.

There is also a commitment to continue aiding Ukraine — some two-thirds of NATO members have already provided lethal weaponry, including the Czechs' contribution of Soviet-era tanks and armored personnel carriers.

But some stocks are running low in the West — U.S.-made Javelin antitank missiles, for example. And Ukraine is also going to need different weapons for the next phase of the war in the east, officials suggest, including longer-range artillery and more sophisticated armed drones, if they hope to push the Russians back, let alone drive them out of Ukraine.

The amount of matériel arriving in Ukraine remains a secret, but officials say that the overall flow is very large and has made an enormous difference to the war. But what sort of weapons are most useful, and how to think through the possible conclusion to the war, is preoccupying alliance leaders.

“On a number of fronts, we obviously have some changing battlefield dynamics,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, who is in Brussels for the NATO meetings, told reporters this week.

Mr. Blinken said the NATO meetings would focus on new ways to support Ukraine and to “put pressure on Russia,” and on Mr. Putin. More evidence of atrocities is likely to emerge, he said on Wednesday, as Russia pulls out of territories it controlled, “like a receding tide.”

On Tuesday, Mr. Blinken announced a further \$100 million worth of weapons and equipment from American stockpiles. Total U.S. military aid to Ukraine is worth some \$2.4 billion since President Biden took office and more than \$1.7 billion since the war began on Feb. 24, he said.

How the war might finally end is an important issue not just for Ukraine but for the entire alliance.

U.S. officials are skeptical that Russia is prepared to make real concessions in ongoing peace talks with Ukraine, although they do not rule out the possibility and want to ensure Kyiv’s leverage in the negotiations.

That is a key discussion. While Ukraine will decide for itself how and when to try to end the war and what it will negotiate with Moscow, President Volodymyr Zelensky and his government are in regular discussion with NATO country leaders, including the Americans.

“We believe that our job is to support the Ukrainians,” Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, said this week. “We are not going to define the outcome of this for the Ukrainians.”

Some countries, especially in Central Europe and including Britain, are anxious that any sort of Russian expansion into Ukrainian territory, let alone a Russian victory, would embolden Mr. Putin, undermining overall European security and values such as the adherence to international law, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They want Russia to be seen as the loser.

Even if the war ends with a new line of contact between Russian and Ukrainian forces, NATO aims to work with Kyiv to make Ukraine indigestible to Russia, as another senior Western official said. The point is to arm and train the Ukrainians so well that Mr. Putin would not wish to try again.

The foreign ministers will also begin a deeper discussion of NATO’s new strategic concept, the first since 2010, now in early draft. It is much tougher on Russia, and foresees a longer period of confrontation and expensive deterrence.

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## **25. US imposes ‘severe’ sanctions on Russian banks after Bucha atrocities**

Financial Times (UK), 6 Apr 22, Courtney Weaver, James Politi, Colby Smith and Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe

The US has imposed its most severe level of sanctions on Sberbank, Russia's largest financial institution, and Alfa-Bank, the country's biggest private bank, escalating its economic punishment of Moscow in response to atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

The announcement on Wednesday of "full blocking sanctions", which prevent the lenders from transacting with any US institutions or individuals, came after top officials including President Joe Biden warned this week that they were planning to impose harsher restrictions on Russia.

"There's nothing less happening than major war crimes," Biden said at an event in Washington on Wednesday, during which he listed some of the atrocities committed in Ukraine.

"Responsible nations have to come together to hold these perpetrators accountable. And together with our allies and our partners, we're going to keep raising economic costs and ratchet up the pain for [Vladimir] Putin," Biden added.

A senior US official said the latest measures were in response to "the sickening brutality in Bucha", a city near the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv where gruesome images of the bodies of civilians have emerged in recent days, indicating a possible massacre by Russian soldiers.

"Treasury is committed to holding Russia accountable for its actions so it cannot benefit from the international financial system," Janet Yellen, the US Treasury secretary, told Congress during a hearing on Wednesday.

The US also imposed sanctions on Putin's two adult daughters, Ekaterina Tikhonova and Maria Vorontsova; the wife and daughter of Sergei Lavrov, foreign minister; and members of Russia's Security Council, including Dmitry Medvedev, former president; and Mikhail Mishustin, prime minister.

In addition, the US said it would prohibit any new American investments in Russia, and announce new sanctions on large Russian state-owned enterprises on Thursday.

Immediately after the invasion, the US prohibited debt or equity transactions with Alfa and Sberbank, but its "full blocking sanctions" amount to much stricter curbs.

"This is the most severe action we can take in terms of financial measures," the US official said. "And in practice, the history of sanctions is when we impose full blocking sanctions . . . the rest of the world, even in other jurisdictions that have not yet imposed a full block, they respect the regime. So there tends to be a multiplier effect."

The official added that the US and EU had chosen to target Putin's daughters because they believed they were helping shield the Russian president's wealth.

The UK government on Wednesday also announced additional sanctions against Putin's regime, including full asset freezes against Sberbank.

The measures, which Liz Truss, UK foreign secretary, said marked “the toughest sanctions yet”, included a ban on imports of Russian iron and steel products alongside an outright ban on new investment in the country.

The UK also imposed sanctions on a further eight individuals linked to key Russian industries, including Andrey Akimov, chief executive of Gazprombank, and Leonid Mikhelson, founder and chief executive of Novatek.

The US and European allies had hoped that the initial burst of sanctions imposed after Russia’s invasion in late February, including cutting off Moscow’s access to its foreign reserves by banning transactions with its central bank, would isolate the country financially without causing excessive spillovers into the rest of the global economy.

But as the conflict has continued, they have been forced to consider additional targets, widening the net to include companies and individuals in third countries continuing to do business with Russian entities and sharpening enforcement of existing sanctions.

Edward Fishman, a former Russia and Europe sanctions lead at the state department, called Wednesday’s measures “the most significant sanctions taken since the [Russian] central bank sanctions” imposed in late February.

“We’re headed towards Iran-style sanctions,” he added, referring to the decades-long measures against Tehran beginning in 1979. “This is a conveyor belt and it only leads in one direction.”

Despite the new sanctions, some US legislators on Wednesday criticized the Biden administration for not doing enough, noting that the package stopped short of levying the harshest penalties on certain oligarchs and still included exemptions for Russian energy.

David Scott, a Democrat on the House financial services committee, told Yellen that the Treasury department’s decision to issue a special license for Alisher Usmanov — an oligarch he described as Putin’s “favorite” — which allowed him to continue doing business was becoming a “black mark” on the nation.

“Our reputation as the world leader is at stake when these types of things happen, and there’s no explanation for it,” Scott said.

Yellen said the US was prepared to wield further sanctions, including against China if it attacked Taiwan.

“We are concerned about Taiwan and will act as appropriate,” she said. “In the case of Russia, we’ve threatened significant consequences, we’ve imposed significant consequences, and I think that you should not doubt our ability and resolve to do the same in other situations.”

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## **26. Eastern Ukraine braces for renewed assault as Russia regroups**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, David L. Stern, Joby Warrick, Louisa Loveluck and Max Bearak

**MUKACHEVO, Ukraine** Ukrainian officials called Wednesday for evacuations in three provinces near the Russian border amid new signs that President Vladimir Putin's troops are escalating their assault on eastern and southern cities following a failed attempt to take the country's capital.

Local officials reported renewed Russian shelling in the eastern Donetsk region, killing at least five people, and as many as 10 high-rise apartment buildings on fire in Severodonetsk, in the neighboring Luhansk district. U.S. analysts said Moscow has begun gradually shifting the focus of its military operations to the eastern border provinces after withdrawing thousands of troops that previously encircled the capital, Kyiv.

The continued violence came amid fresh reports of human-rights atrocities in Ukrainian cities and towns that had been under Russian control. Accounts of rape and summary executions of civilians by Russian occupiers prompted the United States and several allies to announce new economic sanctions, including measures targeting two of Russia's largest banks and Putin's adult children.

"We're going to further increase Russia's economic isolation," President Biden said in a speech announcing the sanctions at a meeting of North America's Building Trades Unions. "The United States will continue to stand with the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom."

Biden again accused Russia of committing "major war crimes" and said the additional measures would further strain its economy. "Civilians executed in cold blood, bodies dumped into mass graves," he said, ticking off a list of alleged war crimes. "A sense of brutality and inhumanity left for all the world to see unapologetically."

The speech came as NATO and European Union leaders gathered to consider additional measures to punish Moscow and support Ukraine. A possible European ban on Russian coal is expected to be approved on Thursday, along with additional military aid for Kyiv from the NATO alliance.

Pentagon officials confirmed Wednesday that Russia had, in the past 24 hours, completed an evacuation of all forces from around Kyiv and Chernihiv, two cities it had tried unsuccessfully to capture in the opening days of the invasion, now in its sixth week.

While U.S. analysts have not observed a tangible increase in troops and tanks in the Donbas — the energy-rich region near the Russian border that includes Donetsk and Luhansk — the Pentagon believes that retreating units are regrouping for a concentrated assault on the eastern provinces. Some of the recently withdrawn troops are now in neighboring Belarus, where the pro-Moscow government is allowing Russia to resupply its exhausted battalions. Few, if any, have reentered Ukraine so far, a senior Defense Department official told reporters.

"Our assessment is that they won't want to spend too much refitting and resupplying because they have made a very public show of saying that they're going to prioritize their efforts on the Donbas region," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity according to rules set by the Pentagon.

For their part, Ukrainian forces are “absolutely adapting and adjusting in real time to Russian efforts now to increase their activities” in eastern Ukraine, the official said. “As they have beaten back the Russians or as the Russians have left, they are reoccupying that ground and making their own assessments about what their force posture ought to be going forward.”

Increased shelling in the eastern provinces claimed additional casualties on Wednesday, including the five people reportedly killed in Donetsk. Provincial Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said four people were killed by Russian artillery fire in the city of Vuhledar as they waited to receive humanitarian aid. The fifth victim, also a civilian, was killed during an attack on the town of Ocheretyn, he said, and six houses and a kindergarten facility were destroyed.

A regional military official in Luhansk reported “mass shelling” in Severodonetsk. The number of casualties was unclear. Video posted on Facebook and verified by The Washington Post shows townspeople scrambling for cover as shells explode in a residential street.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk, in broadcast remarks, urged residents of the Luhansk, Donetsk and Kharkiv regions to start preparing for the expected Russian onslaught. While the Kremlin has described the troop withdrawal from Kyiv as a “goodwill” gesture to facilitate peace talks, she said it was clear that more attacks were coming. Moscow has greater support in the east, where Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists have been locked in a grinding conflict for many years.

“We need to evacuate,” she said. “We must do it because then people will be on fire, they will be shot ... and we will not be able to help them.”

Elsewhere in Ukraine, rescue workers looked for survivors in rubble-strewn neighborhoods newly freed of Russian troops. Washington Post reporters witnessed scenes of devastation in Borodyanka, a community northwest of Kyiv that had been pummeled by airstrikes that gouged huge chunks out of residential buildings.

In a schoolyard that was converted into a garrison while Borodyanka was occupied, the Russians had cut a trench through a playground and built a sandbag wall along the perimeter fence, with openings for gun emplacements.

In a ruined apartment a few blocks away, Katia Palivshenko, 34, said she feared that some of her neighbors were still trapped, and likely dead, in the basements of bombed-out buildings nearby. Cellphone service had faltered when the town came under attack, and she had not heard from some of her friends since then.

“They were below ground but then messages stopped coming,” she said. “We don’t know what happened to them.”

In Bucha, a town associated with some of the war’s most disturbing assaults on Ukrainian civilians, soldiers and police continued the gut-wrenching work of removing and burying bodies, dozens of which still lay in the streets and in open fields. Some bodies were booby-trapped by the departing Russians, officials said.

The city remained almost entirely deserted, as mine-clearing teams searched methodically for hidden bombs. On Vokzalna Street near the train station, the blackened hulks of Russian tanks, all destroyed in a fierce counterattack by Ukrainian forces, sat in an eerie silence that was punctuated only by the barking of stray dogs.

The images from Bucha have evoked shock and condemnation around the world, including at the United Nations, where dozens of countries have backed an effort to boot Moscow from the body's Human Rights Council — a move reserved for countries that have repeatedly violated human rights. A vote of the 193-nation body could come as early as Thursday morning at the U.N. headquarters in New York.

The U.S. sanctions announced on Wednesday targeted Sberbank and Alfa Bank — two of Russia's biggest financial institutions — and two daughters of the Russian president, Katerina Tikhonova and Mariya Putina. U.S. officials say much of the Putin family's enormous wealth is stashed away in accounts held by family members. The White House also is seeking new economic sanctions against state-owned Russian enterprises involved in shipbuilding and aircraft manufacturing, as well as relatives of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Members of the 27-nation European Union were preparing to decide Thursday on a measure banning all imports of Russian coal, a key revenue source for Moscow, even as NATO leaders discuss ways to further isolate Russia while bolstering Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

"Today, tomorrow, we'll continue to talk about not only how we can sustain these efforts but how we can build upon them," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters. He was flanked by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who earlier in the day warned that the conflict could become protracted despite the surge of Western military support to Ukrainian forces.

"We have to be realistic and realize that this may last for a long time, for many months, for even years," Stoltenberg said. "And that's the reason why we need also to be prepared for the long haul."

Britain launched additional sanctions against eight Russian oligarchs and two Russian banks and vowed to end all dependency on Russian coal and oil by the end of 2022. "We are showing the Russian elite that they cannot wash their hands of the atrocities committed on Putin's orders," Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said.

In Washington, the Justice Department announced indictments against Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev, who U.S. officials accused of illegally supporting pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine. Speaking at a news conference, Attorney General Merrick Garland also announced the successful disruption of a global "botnet" — or network of hacked computers — that he said was controlled by the Russian military intelligence agency known as the GRU. Moscow has used similar networks to attack Ukrainian targets, Garland said.

"It does not matter how far you sail your yacht. It does not matter how well you conceal your assets. It does not matter how cleverly you write your malware or hide your online activity,"

Garland said. “The Justice Department will use every available tool to find you, disrupt your plots and hold you accountable.”

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## **27. Ukraine’s surprise strike on Russian fleet hobbles Putin’s Donbas strategy**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Brett Forrest and Nancy A. Youssef

A surprise Ukrainian strike on a Russian ship at a southern port city last month could curb Moscow’s plan to expand its hold on the Donbas region, eliminating a key military advantage in the Russian attack plan, Ukrainian military analysts and U.S. officials said.

The March 24 offensive against Russian navy ships docked at a captured port in Berdyansk on the Azov Sea was the first major strike on the Russian fleet, Ukrainian and U.S. officials said. The attack destroyed a ship laden with supplies, drove others back into the sea, and damaged the port facilities.

The strike ended the presumption that Russian ships could attack without the threat of a Ukrainian reply. And it has limited Russia’s ability to fire missiles and artillery as it pivots its assault toward Donbas in Ukraine’s east, said retired Adm. James Foggo, who commanded U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

Hours after the strike, Russia moved its ships in port out to sea, making it harder for them to attack Ukraine’s cities and preventing them from supporting ground forces.

“It’s a major logistical blow,” Adm. Foggo said. “It’s an ‘aha!’ moment for the Russians. Despite the damage they have done inside Ukraine, Ukrainian forces are still capable of conducting offensive strikes with precision.”

Residents in the Ukraine town of Borodyanka surveyed damage. Officials urged civilians to leave eastern regions as they braced for a major new Russian offensive. The West announced new sanctions on Russian banks and citizens, including on two daughters of Vladimir Putin. Photo: I-Images/Zuma Press

In the nearly two weeks since the strike, Russia’s navy hasn’t launched any major attacks on Ukrainian cities, although it has struck targets around a few of them. On Sunday, missiles from Russian ships struck the Ukrainian port city of Odessa, hitting infrastructure.

Russia’s military made port cities a priority during its assault into Ukraine. It seized the city of Berdyansk, a key foothold for its future attacks in strategically important cities such as Mariupol, just days into its invasion of Ukraine, soon boasting of the advantage the port would afford its war effort.

Quickly putting the port to use, Russia landed huge ships carrying as much as 2,000 tons of supplies each for its ground forces in the Ukrainian south. The Russians ejected Ukrainian cargo ships, dredgers and a tug, then berthed their own ships carrying multiple-launch rocket systems to provide cover for troops moving into the region.

The ships at Berdyansk were only lightly defended, as the nearest Ukrainian forces were about 60 miles away.

“The Russians thought Ukraine didn’t have any capability to reach them,” said Andrii Ryzhenko, a former Ukrainian navy captain now with the Center for Defense Strategies, a Kyiv think tank with close ties to the military. “But Ukraine had the capability.”

By the early weeks of the war, Russia had as many as 22 ships in the Black Sea and another dozen in the Azov Sea, U.S. officials said. At least half of those in the Azov Sea were docked at Berdyansk—“sitting ducks,” said Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington.

“It’s just an example of how cavalier Russia’s operations have been about keeping ships at shore,” Mr. Clark said.

Russia had major advantages over the Ukrainian navy for nearly a decade. It captured and destroyed much of the Ukrainian navy at the port of Sevastopol during Moscow’s 2014 seizure of Crimea, expanding its influence over the Black Sea. And in the run-up to the Feb. 24 invasion, Russia moved much of its navy from as far as the Baltic Sea toward Ukraine’s shores.

The Azov Sea, a small, shallow body of water bounded by Russia, Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula, has been strategically important for centuries. Ships operating off the Azov Sea coast took part in the Russian assault on the southern city of Mariupol, military analysts said, firing artillery into Mariupol with little risk from Ukraine’s defenses. The ships also held supplies for nearby ground forces and provided another line of defense to troops and tanks entering Mariupol.

The Azov Sea is also the fastest supply route between Russia and Crimea, because Ukrainian forces destroyed the rail lines between the two in 2014. From the Russian port of Temryuk, it is faster for Moscow to deliver troops and supplies by sea to Berdyansk than to drive them over the bridge that spans the Kerch Strait, then north through Crimea and eastward over a strip of captured Ukrainian coastline.

On March 24, Ukraine fired a Tochka-U ballistic missile at the port, Mr. Ryzhenko said. The missile struck the Saratov, a Cold War-era landing vessel designed to ferry troops and equipment ashore through a ramp at the bow. As the Saratov foundered, other ships fled the Berdyansk port under a plume of smoke. The attack also damaged the port, according to satellite images.

U.S. defense officials warned that Russia could be making adjustments in the sea, much as it is doing around the Ukrainian capital. Russia said it was repositioning its forces around Kyiv, which U.S. officials described as a regrouping based on battlefield losses and logistical challenges.

Since the strike, Russia had withdrawn all but three ships from the Azov Sea as of last week, a U.S. senior defense official said, hindering Moscow’s ability to supply troops in the Ukrainian south.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin late last month said it was shifting its mission to Ukraine's east, aiming to consolidate control over Donbas, its initial plan to quickly take Kyiv fading under relentless Ukrainian resistance.

The Berdyansk strike could also have a wide-reaching impact on the ability of Russia's navy to support its army.

With the damaged Berdyansk port off limits to ships for weeks, Russia's capacity to land troops there and in the vicinity of Odessa has diminished, especially as nearby Mykolaiv remains in Ukrainian control, analysts said.

"After the attack on landing ships in Berdyansk, the Russian Federation will be forced to take several, possibly two or three, landing ships from the Black Sea to the Azov Sea," said Andrii Klymenko, a defense and maritime analyst with the Black Sea Institute of Strategic Studies, a Ukrainian think tank. "This will weaken landing capabilities."

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## **28. Russia is recruiting mercenaries and Syrians to Ukraine, Western officials say**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper

As Russian troops retreat from northern Ukraine and focus operations on the country's east and south, the Kremlin is struggling to scrape together enough combat-ready reinforcements to conduct a new phase of the war, according to American and other Western military and intelligence officials.

Moscow initially sent 75 percent of its main ground combat forces into the war in February, Pentagon officials said. But much of that army of more than 150,000 troops is now a spent force, after suffering logistics problems, flagging morale and devastating casualties inflicted by stiffer-than-expected Ukrainian resistance, military and intelligence officials say.

There are relatively few fresh Russian troops to fill the breach. Russia has withdrawn the forces — as many as 40,000 soldiers — it had arrayed around Kyiv and Chernihiv, two cities in the north, to rearm and resupply in Russia and neighboring Belarus before most likely repositioning them in eastern Ukraine in the next few weeks, U.S. officials say.

The Kremlin is also rushing to the east a mix of Russian mercenaries, Syrian fighters, new conscripts and regular Russian army troops from Georgia and easternmost Russia.

Whether this weakened but still very lethal Russian force can overcome its blunders of the first six weeks of combat and accomplish a narrower set of war aims in a smaller swath of the country remains an open question, senior U.S. officials and analysts said.

"Russia still has forces available to outnumber Ukraine's, and Russia is now concentrating its military power on fewer lines of attack, but this does not mean that Russia will succeed in the east," Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security adviser, said on Monday.

“The next stage of this conflict may very well be protracted,” Mr. Sullivan said. He added that Russia would probably send “tens of thousands of soldiers to the front line in Ukraine’s east,” and continue to rain rockets, missiles and mortars on Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Lviv and other cities.

U.S. officials have based their assessments on satellite imagery, electronic intercepts, Ukrainian battlefield reports and other information, and those intelligence estimates have been backed up by independent analysts examining commercially available information.

Earlier U.S. intelligence assessments of the Russian government’s intent to attack Ukraine proved accurate, although some lawmakers said spy agencies overestimated the Russian military’s ability to advance quickly.

As the invasion faltered, U.S. and European officials have highlighted the Russian military’s errors and logistical problems, though they have cautioned that Moscow’s ability to regroup should not be underestimated.

The Ukrainian military has managed to reclaim territory around Kyiv and Chernihiv, attacking the Russians as they retreat; thwarted a ground attack against Odesa in the south and held on in Mariupol, the battered and besieged city on the Black Sea. Ukraine is now receiving T-72 battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and other heavy weapons — in addition to Javelin antitank and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles — from the West.

Anticipating this next major phase of the war in the east, the Pentagon announced late Tuesday that it was sending \$100 million worth of Javelin anti-tank missiles — roughly several hundred missiles from Pentagon stocks — to Ukraine, where the weapon has been very effective in destroying Russian tanks and other armored vehicles.

American and European officials believe that the Russian military’s shift in focus is aimed at correcting some of the mistakes that have led to its failure to overcome a Ukrainian army that is far stronger and savvier than Moscow initially assessed.

But the officials said it remained to be seen how effective Russia would be in building up its forces to renew its attack. And there are early signs that pulling Russian troops and mercenaries from Georgia, Syria and Libya could complicate the Kremlin’s priorities in those countries.

Some officials say Russia will try to go in with more heavy artillery. By focusing its forces in smaller geographic areas, and moving them closer to supply routes into Russia, Western intelligence officials said, Russia hopes to avoid the logistics problems its troops suffered in their failed attack on Kyiv.

Other European intelligence officials predicted it would take Russian forces one to two weeks to regroup and refocus before they could press a major offensive in eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting for eight years. Western officials said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia was desperate for some kind of win by May 9, when Russia traditionally celebrates the end of World War II with a big Victory Day parade in Red Square.

“What we are seeing now is that the Kremlin is trying to achieve some kind of success on the ground to pretend there is a victory for its domestic audience by the 9th of May,” said Mikk Marran, the director general of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service.

Mr. Putin would like to consolidate control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine, and establish a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula by early May, a senior Western intelligence official said.

Russia has already moved air assets to the east in preparation for the renewed attack on the heart of the Ukrainian military, and has increased aerial bombardment in that area in recent days, a European diplomat and other officials said.

“It’s a particularly dangerous scenario for the Ukrainians now, at least on paper,” said Alexander S. Vindman, an expert on Ukraine who became the chief witness in President Donald J. Trump’s first impeachment trial. “In reality, the Russians haven’t performed superbly well. Whether they could actually bring to bear their armor, their infantry, their artillery and air power in a concerted way to destroy larger Ukrainian formations is yet to be seen.”

Russian troops have been fighting in groups of a few hundred soldiers, rather than in the bigger and more effective formations of thousands of soldiers used in the past.

“We haven’t seen any indication that they have the ability to adapt,” said Mick Mulroy, a former senior Pentagon official and retired C.I.A. officer.

The number of Russian losses in the war so far remains unknown, though Western intelligence agencies estimate 7,000 to 10,000 killed and 20,000 to 30,000 wounded. Thousands more have been captured or are missing in action.

The Russian military, the Western and European officials said, has learned at least one major lesson from its failures: the need to concentrate forces, rather than spread them out.

But Moscow is trying to find additional forces, according to intelligence officials.

Russia’s best forces, its two airborne divisions and the First Guards Tank army, have suffered significant casualties and an erosion of combat power, and the military has scoured its army looking for reinforcements.

The British Defense Ministry and the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank that analyzes the Ukraine war, both reported on Tuesday that the Russian troops withdrawing from Kyiv and Chernihiv would not be fit for redeployment soon.

“The Russians have no ability to rebuild their destroyed vehicles and weapon systems because of foreign components, which they can no longer get,” said Maj. Gen. Michael S. Repass, a former commander of U.S. Special Operations forces in Europe who has been involved with Ukrainian defense matters since 2016.

Russian forces arriving from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two secessionist statelets that broke away from Georgia during the 1990s and then expanded in 2008, have been conducting peacekeeping duties and are not combat ready, General Repass said.

Russia's problems finding additional troops are in large measure why it has invited Syrian fighters, Chechens and Russian mercenaries to serve as reinforcements. But these additional forces number in the hundreds, not thousands, European intelligence officials said.

The Chechen force, one of the European intelligence officials said, is "clearly used to sow fear." The Chechen units are not better fighters and have suffered high losses. But they have been used in urban combat situations and for "the dirtiest kind of work," the official said.

Russian mercenaries with combat experience in Syria and Libya are gearing up to assume an increasingly active role in a phase of the war that Moscow now says is its top priority: fighting in the country's east.

The number of mercenaries deployed to Ukraine from the Wagner Group, a private military force with ties to Mr. Putin, is expected to more than triple to at least 1,000 from the early days of the invasion, a senior American official said.

Wagner is also relocating artillery, air defenses and radar that it had used in Libya to Ukraine, the official said.

Moving mercenaries will "backfire because these are units that can't be incorporated into the regular army, and we know that they are brutal violators of human rights which will only turn Ukrainian and world opinion further against Russia," said Evelyn N. Farkas, the top Pentagon official for Russia and Ukraine during the Obama administration.

Hundreds of Syrian fighters could also be heading to Ukraine, in what would effectively return a favor to Moscow for its helping President Bashar al-Assad crush rebels in an 11-year civil war.

A contingent of at least 300 Syrian soldiers has already arrived in Russia for regular training, but it was unclear if or when they would be sent to Ukraine, officials said.

"They are bringing in fighters known for brutality in the hopes of breaking the Ukrainian will to fight," said Kori Schake, the director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. But, she added, any military gains there for Russia will depend on the willingness of the foreign fighters to fight.

"One of the difficult things about putting together a coalition of disparate interests is that it can be hard to make them an effective fighting force," she said.

Finally, Mr. Putin recently signed a decree calling up 134,000 conscripts. It will take months to train the recruits, though Moscow could opt to rush them straight to the front lines with little or no instruction, officials said.

“Russia is short on troops and is looking to get manpower where they can,” said Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va. “They are not well placed for a prolonged war against Ukraine.”

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## **29. Pentagon: Russia has fully withdrawn from Kyiv, Chernihiv**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Karoun Demirjian and Dan Lamothe

Russian forces have fully withdrawn from the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the city of Chernihiv to its north, the Pentagon said Wednesday, as Moscow prepares to concentrate its invading forces in the eastern part of the country.

“We are assessing that all of the Russians have left,” said a senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under terms set by the Pentagon. Their full departure was confirmed only in the last 24 hours, this person said, cautioning that Russian forces may have left mines in their wake that would still need to be cleared.

U.S. and European intelligence officials have been tracking for days that Russia is in the midst of reorienting after encountering fierce resistance and suffering thousands of casualties in northern Ukraine. Moscow enjoys greater support in the east, where Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists have been locked in a grinding conflict for many years.

But while Russia’s withdrawal from Ukraine’s capital region appears to be complete, with many units retreating through Belarus, the Pentagon has yet to see those personnel reenter eastern Ukraine, the senior defense official said Wednesday.

The United States announced Tuesday night the approval of an additional \$100 million in military assistance for Ukraine, a move made in part to ensure Ukrainian forces will have the weapons they need to fight for the Donbas region, the official said. There is a particularly “urgent” need for Javelin anti-armor systems, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby noted Wednesday.

Kirby said that earlier this week the United States also sent Ukraine 100 Switchblade drones, which can be loaded with explosives and flown into enemy targets, and that a “very small number” of Ukrainian soldiers receiving military education in the United States since the fall had been taught how to use them. The Switchblade — what some analysts have termed a “kamikaze” drone — is not a complex system, Kirby said, noting that personnel could be trained how to use them in about two days.

On average, it is taking the United States about four days to ship weapons to pass-off points outside Ukraine, and another day or two for those shipments to enter the country, Kirby said, adding that such transfers have “never been done that fast before.”

Kirby expressed some confidence Wednesday that Ukraine “can win this,” arguing that Russian President Vladimir Putin has achieved “exactly zero” of his strategic objectives thus far. But the

Pentagon continues to caution that even though the war's epicenter appears to be shifting, serious threats remain.

There are more than 30 Russian battalion tactical groups operating in the Donbas region, according to Pentagon estimates.

Earlier this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan predicted that if Russia could successfully regroup in the Donbas region, it may seek to push out from there into other parts of Ukraine.

"It's not like Kyiv is somehow immune from further attack," the senior U.S. defense official said Wednesday.

More than 80 of the approximately 130 battalion tactical groups that Russia deployed into Ukraine continue to operate in the country, this official added, estimating that such groups each contain 800 to 1,000 troops.

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### **30. China's security deal with Solomons raises alarm in Pacific**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nick Perry and David Rising

A security alliance between China and the Solomon Islands has sent shudders throughout the South Pacific, with many worried it could set off a large-scale military buildup or that Western animosity to the deal could play into China's hands.

What remains most unclear is the extent of China's ambitions.

A Chinese military presence in the Solomons would put it not only on the doorstep of Australia and New Zealand but also in close proximity to Guam, with its massive U.S. military bases.

China so far operates just one acknowledged foreign military base, in the impoverished but strategically important Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti. Many believe that China's People's Liberation Army is busy establishing an overseas military network, even if they don't use the term "base."

The Solomon Islands government says a draft of its agreement with China was initialed last week and will be "cleaned up" and signed soon.

The draft, which was leaked online, says that Chinese warships could stop in the Solomons for "logistical replenishment" and that China could send police, military personnel and other armed forces to the Solomons "to assist in maintaining social order."

The draft agreement specifies China must approve what information is disclosed about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

The Solomon Islands, home to about 700,000 people, switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to Beijing in 2019 — a move rejected by the most populous province and a contributing factor to riots last November.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded in February by saying that Washington would reopen its embassy in the capital, Honiara, which has been closed since 1993, to increase its influence in the Solomons before China becomes “strongly embedded.”

Both China and the Solomons have strongly denied the new pact will lead to the establishment of a Chinese military base. The Solomon Islands government said the pact is necessary because of its limited ability to deal with violent uprisings like the one in November.

“The country has been ruined by recurring internal violence for years,” the government said this week.

But Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. have all expressed alarm about the deal, with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern describing it as “gravely concerning.”

David Panuelo, the president of nearby Micronesia, which has close ties to the U.S., wrote an impassioned letter to Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare asking him to rethink the agreement.

He noted that both Micronesia and the Solomon Islands were battlegrounds during World War II, caught up in the clash of great powers.

“I am confident that neither of us wishes to see a conflict of that scope or scale ever again, and most particularly in our own backyards,” Panuelo wrote.

But the Solomon Islands police minister mocked Panuelo's concerns on social media, saying he should be more worried about his own atoll being swallowed by the ocean due to climate change.

Sogavare has likewise dismissed foreign criticism of the security agreement as insulting, while labeling those who leaked the draft as “lunatics.”

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the agreement aims to maintain the safety of people's lives and property, and “does not have any military overtones,” saying media speculation on the potential development of a base was groundless.

Euan Graham, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies based in Singapore, said China has been pursuing such a port facility for some five years as it aims to expand its naval presence in the South Pacific as part of Beijing's long-game of seeking to become the dominant regional power.

“If they want to break out into the Pacific, at some point they will need the logistics capability to support that presence,” Graham said. “We're not talking about war plans here; this is really about extending their presence and influence.”

Unlike the base built in Djibouti, where China has commercial interests in the region to protect, Graham said any operation in the Solomon Islands would likely be less substantial.

“It’s quite a subtle and interesting geopolitical game that’s emerged in the South Pacific,” he added. “And I think the Chinese have been very successful, if you like, in outflanking the United States and Australia in an influence competition, not a military competition.”

China's base in Djibouti was opened in 2017. China doesn't call it a base, but rather a support facility for its naval operations fending off piracy in the Gulf of Aden and for its African peacekeeping operations. It boasts a 400-meter (1,300-foot) runway and a pier big enough to dock either of China’s two operating aircraft carriers.

The base, with 2,000 personnel, allows China to position supplies, troops and equipment in a strategically crucial region, while also keeping an eye on U.S. forces that are stationed nearby.

Chief among other potential base candidates is Cambodia, whose authoritarian leader Hun Sen has long been a trusted Chinese ally and which reportedly signed a secret 2019 agreement permitting the establishment of a Chinese base.

China is dredging the harbor at Ream Naval Base to allow ships larger than any Cambodia possesses to dock, and is building new infrastructure to replace a U.S.-built naval tactical headquarters. A Chinese base in Cambodia would establish a chokepoint in the Gulf of Thailand close to the crucial Malacca Strait.

China has also funded projects at Gwadar in Pakistan, another close ally, and in Sri Lanka, where Chinese infrastructure lending has forced the government to hand over control of the southern port of Hambantota.

Especially intriguing has been an alleged Chinese push to establish a base in the West African nation of Equatorial Guinea. That would give China a presence on the Atlantic opposite the east coast of the continental United States as well as in an important African oil-producing region.

“China has seized opportunities to expand its influence at a time when the U.S. and other countries have not been as engaged economically in the Pacific islands,” said Elizabeth Wishnick, an expert on Chinese foreign policy at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

About 80 years ago in the Solomon Islands, the U.S. military began its famous “island hopping” campaign of World War II to take back Pacific islands from Imperial Japanese forces one-by-one. It successfully won back the main island of Guadalcanal in February 1943 after some six months of fierce fighting.

Today, the Solomon Islands would give China the potential ability to interfere with U.S. naval operations in the region that could be crucial in the event of a conflict over Taiwan or in the South and East China seas.

Lt. Gen. Greg Bilton, Australia’s chief of joint operations, said that if Chinese naval ships were able to operate from the Solomon Islands it would “change the calculus.”

“They’re in much closer proximity to the Australian mainland, obviously, and that would change the way that we would undertake day-to-day operations, particularly in the air and at sea,” he told reporters.

But Jonathan Pryke, the director of the Pacific Islands Program at the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, said he thinks that leaders have overreacted to the agreement, perhaps in Australia's case because there is an election looming.

“It's clearly getting everyone very animated in the West and very alarmed,” Pryke said. “But I don't think it markedly changes things on the ground.”

He said the pact could be seen as the first step toward China establishing a base, but there would need to be many more steps taken before that could happen.

“I think the alarmism has strengthened China's hand by pushing the Solomon Islands into a corner,” Pryke said. “And they've reacted the way I imagine many countries would react from getting this outside pressure — by pushing back, and digging their heels in.”

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **31. Finland may finally want in on NATO; Sweden is not far behind.**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, Robbie Gramer and Amy Mackinnon

Just over two months ago, the prospect of Finland joining NATO was virtually unthinkable to most in the northern European country. It had grown closer to the military alliance over the last three decades but resisted the idea of becoming a full-fledged member.

That all changed when tens of thousands of Russian troops rolled across Ukraine's border in late February.

Now, top Finnish leaders are edging closer to joining NATO, buoyed by a drastic turnaround in Finnish public opinion that went from opposing the move to supporting it virtually overnight.

“It has been a major change,” said Pete Piirainen, a visiting senior fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. “We feel Russia broke the rules, broke the international system and security architecture.”

Finland's sudden shift on NATO membership is a sea change in Europe's security environment in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one that could drastically alter the map of the showdown between Russia and the West.

If Finland were to join the alliance, the total land border between NATO territory and Russia would more than double, from around 754 miles currently to nearly 1,600 miles. It would also extend NATO's northern flank across the full length of the border with Russia's strategically

important Murmansk region and Kola Peninsula, where a sizable chunk of Russia's navy is based.

A similar debate over NATO membership is playing out in neighboring Sweden, another longtime partner of the alliance that had spurned full membership for decades—until Russia's brazen invasion of Ukraine. Of the two countries, it is the Swedish public that has historically been more open to membership of the military alliance than their Finnish neighbors. That is no longer the case. "The biggest momentum is in Finland, and that has been a bit surprising actually," said Anna Wieslander, director of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, a Swedish think tank.

In the days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, support for NATO membership in Finland surged into the majority for the first time, reaching 62 percent in a second survey conducted in mid-March by the Finnish public broadcaster. In Sweden, 51 percent now support NATO membership, according to a poll from early March, up from 42 percent in January.

Although Finland is edging closer to NATO membership than Sweden, most analysts and diplomats agree that the countries are a package deal. If one joins, the other is likely to follow suit. Given their shared geography on the Scandinavian Peninsula—along with NATO member Norway—the alliance would prefer if the two countries joined at the same time. "[With] that, you will have one new solution for the security arrangements," Wieslander said.

"Finland is on a path toward membership. I think now it's a question of when, not if," said Erik Brattberg, an expert on trans-Atlantic security with the Albright Stonebridge Group, a consulting firm. "I think Sweden is still adjusting to the new geopolitical reality. It has been slower in that adjustment, but they are also moving in the same direction."

NATO members seem universally ready to welcome Sweden and Finland with open arms. Diplomats from Germany, Britain, France, Canada, Lithuania, and Estonia all told Foreign Policy their governments would likely support Finland and Sweden's membership bid.

Julianne Smith, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, said Washington would "welcome" the two new members but stressed it was up to the governments in Helsinki and Stockholm to make the first move. "They bring very capable militaries. They are some of our closest allies in Europe, and so I can't imagine a situation where there would be tremendous resistance to this idea," she told reporters in a briefing on Tuesday. "Quite the contrary, I think NATO allies would be generally enthusiastic."

The Finnish government is working on a white paper on security due to be released this month, which will fuel conversation about NATO membership ahead of the security alliance's summit in Madrid in June. The white paper will "clearly influence the debate here in Sweden as well," Wieslander said.

Brattberg said the ruling party in Sweden, the center-left Swedish Social Democratic Party, appears to be starting to shift its foreign-policy platform in the wake of Russia's war, prodded in part by the center-right parties in opposition to renewing a push for NATO membership. "The

Social Democratic Party has traditionally, historically stood for Swedish neutrality ... and military nonalignment,” Brattberg said. “But even amongst leading Social Democrats in Sweden, that stance is increasingly being seen as less and less relevant in a new era marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.”

The question of NATO membership is likely to factor higher than ever before in debate ahead of the Swedish general election scheduled for September. The country’s Moderate Party has already announced that it would back membership of the military alliance.

The prospect of Finland and Sweden joining NATO is likely to further inflame tensions between Russia and the NATO alliance. The Kremlin has characterized the alliance, borne out of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the West, as its top geopolitical foe and signaled that Ukraine’s prospective NATO membership played a major role in its decision to fully invade the country. A senior Russian diplomat warned last month that there would be “serious military and political consequences” if the two countries joined the alliance.

Finland’s ambassador to Washington, Mikko Hautala, told Foreign Policy in an interview that he expected a reaction from Moscow if Finland or Sweden were to move ahead with applying to NATO. “[At] a minimum, we will see information influencing ... those kind of activities,” he said. “But it’s hard to say what the reaction would be.”

During the Cold War, as Europe was carved up into spheres of influence, Finland opted for neutrality, serving as an important buffer between the East and the West. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave Finland more room to maneuver in its foreign policy, joining the European Union in 1995 and deepening its cooperation with NATO. “We are basically as close to NATO as you can get without being a member,” Hautala said.

Smith, the U.S. NATO ambassador, said the Kremlin’s fierce opposition to NATO enlargement wouldn’t deter allies from welcoming new members, even in the face of a full-scale Russian war in Ukraine. “Russia tried its very best in recent months to try and get NATO allies to revisit that policy,” she said. “It sent a treaty requesting that NATO basically turn off the process of NATO enlargement, and the answer that came back in stereo surround sound from all 30 allies was: absolutely not. NATO’s door will remain open—full stop.”

NATO diplomats say Finland brings more advantages to the alliance than just military hardware. Few countries know how Russia works better than Finland—at least as well as foreign countries can in the shadowy and opaque power structure that Russian President Vladimir Putin has built. They say adding Finland’s expertise and experience in balancing relations with its larger eastern neighbor would add significant value to the alliance.

Other experts on trans-Atlantic security said while Russia would likely condemn Finland and Sweden’s membership, it doesn’t view those countries in the same light as other prospective members that used to be in the Soviet Union and, at least in the eyes of Putin, should fall under Moscow’s orbit.

“Russia would be furious, but I don’t think it would react the same way if, say, Georgia or Ukraine were on a clear track to NATO membership now,” said Rachel Rizzo, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank.

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### **32. Don’t let Putin win in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Daniel Henninger

In no sense now can Vladimir Putin be allowed to win in Ukraine. People shouldn’t have to be shot in the back of the head with their hands tied behind them to make that clear, but such is history’s record of humanity slow-walking counterattacks against mass slaughter.

Mr. Putin was going to defeat Ukraine quickly. Now he isn’t. But he can still win if the West’s commitments to Ukraine, however impressive, produce a frozen conflict, as Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley predicted to Congress Tuesday when he said the conflict could last “years for sure.” Time like that is Mr. Putin’s friend because he has Stalin’s stomach for death, and eventually we won’t.

It is good in the wake of the Bucha atrocities that President Biden and Europe’s leaders are talking about holding Mr. Putin and his associates accountable for war crimes—once it is possible to collect evidence. Still, one doesn’t have to be Volodymyr Zelensky to notice that these good intentions have little to do with the reality that the current level of help from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization still leaves Ukraine in purgatory, with one foot in Mr. Putin’s hell and the other stretching toward deliverance by the West.

A stirring of moral sensibilities is always welcome, but Bucha, Mariupol and these events have surfaced new realities that the West’s political leadership can’t pretend away into some future when, as they hope, this is over.

A few weeks ago, it was possible at least to describe as an endgame talking point the possibility that Ukraine would be divided into western and eastern parts, ceding control to Russia of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Donbas and possibly Crimea if the Putin army establishes a land bridge through Mariupol.

That result, however, assumed the war would default into a traditional military standoff between competing armies. That’s not what is happening in Ukraine. It is increasingly clear that after failing to secure a quick win, Mr. Putin’s Plan B is scorched earth.

Using crudely targeted long-range missiles, land mines and his army’s historic instinct to barbarity, he is simply destroying Ukraine—its people, its economy, whole cities and infrastructure. After the current “pause,” he’ll go back for more.

The consequences of this obviously unexpected scale of destruction are significant for the West’s calculations. At this point all the arguments, such as they are, for affirming a negotiated settlement that turns so much of Ukraine over to Mr. Putin have become impossible to credit.

It will take a decade and unimaginable amounts of capital to rebuild what Mr. Putin has destroyed. Who exactly is going to do that? Dividing Ukraine in two would effectively turn the eastern part into a Cold War East Germany, which would create the destabilizing post-Yalta imbalances that existed for decades between the wealthy West and those living in the Third World East.

To rebuild the Ukraine under his control, Mr. Putin would have to send vast amounts of his oil and gas revenue into the region. Fat chance of that on the scale needed.

Any serious rebuilding of Mariupol, Mykolaiv and other cities ceded to Russia will never happen without capital investments from Western banks and governments, making us the morally humiliated paymasters for Mr. Putin's demolition. Why is this man smiling?

Until the invasion, Ukraine's economy was growing, including a vital new technology sector, and leaning toward the West. Absent the Putin lunacy, Ukraine could have become an economic "land bridge" between the European Union nations to the west and the modern economy younger Russians were building to the east. Now much of Ukraine is rubble, and the Russian market will be a ruin for years.

Any notion Russians themselves may have entertained that somewhere at the bottom of all this was a rationale for uniting with the medieval political state known as the Kievan Rus is now exposed as a gross lie by their leader. Mr. Putin was willing to settle for nothing more than the dirt.

In the absence of anything but passing press contact with the U.S. president, a question often put to those who interpret for Mr. Biden at the White House, Pentagon and State Department is whether we want Ukraine to win. After this week, I think the better question is: Are we willing to make Mr. Putin lose?

Saying that he's experiencing a "strategic defeat" is a dodge. Every day—or year—that he is killing and wrecking, he's winning. Vladimir Putin has to lose in Ukraine, not only in the eyes of the aghast outside world. NATO's current military and political status quo—the arms flows and ratcheting sanctions—just isn't enough.

It's a terrible thing to say, but one suspects that for some in Washington, Berlin and Paris, the world's roaring moral outrage at these atrocities lets them kick the harder decisions about raising the military costs for Mr. Putin into another week. If the media is writing about Bucha, genocide and war crimes, the argument fades for sending Ukraine high-altitude missile defenses, counter-artillery radar and other "escalatory" military equipment.

Eventually, Putin wins. Don't let him.

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### **33. Across South Asia, U.S. and India push back against China**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, C. Raja Mohan

New York Times, 7 Mar 22, Carol Rosenberg

The Biden administration on Monday repatriated to Saudi Arabia for mental health care a prisoner who was tortured so badly by U.S. interrogators that he was ruled ineligible for trial as the suspected would-be 20th hijacker in the Sept. 11 attacks.

#### **16. Russia-Ukraine central to Blinken talks with Israel minister**

Associated Press, 7 Mar 22, Matthew Lee

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday thanked Israel for its efforts to end Russia's war with Ukraine as he and his Israeli counterpart met to discuss the conflict and ongoing nuclear talks with Iran in Vienna.

#### **17. The real cost of an Iran nuclear deal**

OilPrice.com, 7 Mar 22, Cyril Widdershoven

While Russia's invasion of Ukraine may be front and center of today's media coverage, the ongoing JCPOA discussions with Iran in Vienna need to be watched carefully. Under pressure from a growing military conflict in the heart of Europe and steep energy and commodity prices, it now seems that Tehran's rulers are going to get what they have wanted for so long.

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### NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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#### **18. China warns U.S. over forming Pacific NATO, backing Taiwan**

Bloomberg News, 7 Mar 22, Colum Murphy, Lucille Liu, Jing Li, and Philip Glamann

China warned the U.S. against trying to build what it called a Pacific version of NATO, while declaring that security disputes over Taiwan and Ukraine were "not comparable at all."

#### **19. Pentagon to shut down leaking fuel tank facility in Hawaii**

Associated Press, 7 Mar 22, Lolita C. Baldor

The Defense Department will permanently shut down the Navy's massive fuel tank facility in Hawaii that leaked petroleum into Pearl Harbor's tap water, and will remove all the fuel, The Associated Press has learned.

#### **20. Biden administration asks Supreme Court to block order to deploy unvaccinated Navy SEALs**

CNN, 7 Mar 22, Ariane de Vogue,

The Biden administration filed an emergency application with the Supreme Court on Monday, asking it to freeze a lower-court opinion requiring the Navy to deploy special operations forces even though they have refused to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

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### ADJACENT AORs

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#### **21. US considers banning Russian oil, easing sanctions on Venezuela**

Los Angeles Times, 7 Mar 22, Eli Stokols And Tracy Wilkinson

President Joe Biden is considering a ban on imports of Russian oil while weighing actions that would boost energy production by autocracies in the hopes of mitigating the effects on American consumers and global energy markets, U.S. officials said.

## **22. US and 10 other countries condemn North Korean missile launch**

Miami Herald, 7 Mar 22

The United States and ten other countries have sharply condemned North Korea's renewed missile test over the weekend. The US, Albania, Australia, Brazil, France, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea and Britain said in a joint statement on Monday that Pyongyang "violated multiple Security Council resolutions" with its March 5 launch of what they characterized as a ballistic missile.

## **23. How Ukraine crisis undermines Turkey's economic program**

Al-Monitor, 7 Mar 22, Sebnem Turhan

The viability of the Turkish government's "new economic model" — a controversial policy to battle inflation without the central bank hiking rates — was already in doubt before Russia's incursion into Ukraine. But it has clearly hit a deadlock now that the fallout of the war is undermining Ankara's plans to bridge its current account deficit by promoting export-focused growth and steady its battered currency by safeguarding lira deposits.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **24. Rebuilding U.S. defenses after Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 7 Mar 22, Editorial Board

Vladimir Putin's assault on Ukraine has caused Germany to revolutionize its defense policy in less than a week. Will the Biden Administration have a similar awakening about defending Americans with dictators on the march?

## **25. Bahrain's paranoia about Iran is self-defeating**

Foreign Policy, 7 Mar 22, Anchal Vohra

Naftali Bennett made history in mid-February by becoming the first Israeli prime minister to ever make an official visit to Bahrain. Bennett is struggling at home as the leader of an ideologically divided ruling coalition, but on his visit to Bahrain he fulfilled the role of statesman, embracing the unprecedented regional alliance that has formed between Israel and Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, against Iran. Bennett offered Israel's assistance to Bahrain against Iran whenever called upon.

## **26. Why this new Israeli-Palestinian peace plan deserves attention**

Washington Post, 7 Mar 22, Gershon Gorenberg

If all the plans for how Israelis and Palestinians can peacefully divide or share their homeland were printed and shelved, they could overflow the vast Library of Alexandria. And yet, the latest one deserves attention, and not just for what it states explicitly.

**27. Turkey and the UAE are getting close again. But why now?**

Atlantic Council, 7 Mar 22, Amjad Ahmad and Defne Arslan

In the decade since the Arab Spring, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been locked in a rivalry, taking diverging positions on Egypt, Libya, and Qatar, to name just a few issues. The political tension greatly impacted their economic ties and reduced investment activity. However, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's February 14 visit to the UAE—during which the two countries signed thirteen agreements in defense, trade, technology, agriculture, and other sectors—indicates that rapprochement is well underway.

**28. Houthis warn Israel, touts military training**

Long War Journal, 7 Mar 22, Joe Truzman

Yemen's Houthi movement (also known as Ansarallah) recently published a military training video warning Israel of a potential response by the Iran-backed group if conflict with the Palestinians or Hezbollah were to erupt.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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**29. Amir tells MPs Kuwait not immune to crisis fallout**

Kuwait Times, 7 Mar 22, B. Izzak

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday urged lawmakers to avoid disputes amid the highly delicate international situation, saying Kuwait is not immune to the effects of the Russia-Ukraine military confrontation. In a message to lawmakers conveyed by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem during yesterday's emergency session, HH the Amir urged lawmakers to place Kuwait's national interests ahead of everything else and called on them to pay greater attention to safeguard Kuwait's security and political interests.

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### IRAN

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**30. IAEA chief describes terms of likely new Iran nuke deal**

Jerusalem Post, 7 Mar 22, Yonah Jeremy Bob

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi on Monday described aspects of a likely new Iran nuclear deal with the world powers while fielding more technical questions about what his agency will do in the event of such an agreement.

**31. Top Turkish, Iranian diplomats discuss Ukraine**

Anadolu Agency, 7 Mar 22, Handan Kazanci

The foreign ministers of Turkiye and Iran on Monday discussed over phone latest developments in Ukraine amid its war with Russia, Turkiye's Foreign Ministry said.

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## IRAQ

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### **32. Iraq eases Covid-19 health measures for travelers**

The National, 7 Mar 22, Sinan Mahmoud

The Iraqi government on Monday announced it was easing coronavirus-related measures for travelers arriving to or leaving Iraq as the country emerged from the fourth wave of the pandemic.

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## SYRIA

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### **33. British-Moroccan woman who joined ISIS loses appeal to return to UK from Syria**

The National, 7 Mar 22, Paul Peachey

A British-Moroccan woman stripped of her citizenship after travelling to Syria with her husband to join ISIS has lost an appeal to return to the UK to join her three children.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **34. US wants to impose their demands on Afghanistan: IEA**

Ariana News, 7 Mar 22

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) officials said on Monday that the US wants to impose its political demands on the new government of Afghanistan.

### **35. Afghanistan tops list of countries impacted by terrorism in 2021**

TOLOnews, 7 Mar 22

Afghanistan and Iraq are at the top of the list of countries impacted by terrorism in 2021 according to the Global Terrorism Index published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).

### **36. Media activities restricted in Afghanistan, rights watchdog says**

Times of Central Asia, 7 Mar 22

Human Rights Watch (HRW) on March 7 said that media in Afghanistan is facing "far-reaching censorship" and "violence," stressing that the situation is much worse in districts and provincial centers compared to Kabul and big urban centers, Afghan broadcaster TOLOnews reported.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **37. Pakistan PM criticizes EU over 'double standards'**

Gulf News, 7 Mar 22, Sana Jamal

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan criticized Islamabad-based Western envoys who in a letter urged Pakistan to vote against Russia in the UN over its military action in Ukraine. "I want to ask the European Union ambassadors: Did you write such a letter to India?" Khan said addressing a political rally in the Vehari district of Punjab on Sunday.

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## YEMEN

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### **38. Angelina Jolie visits refugees in war-torn Yemen**

Anadolu Agency, 7 Mar 22

Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie visited a refugee camp in Yemen's southwestern Lahj province on Monday, as part of her visit to the war-ravaged Arab country. "UNHCR's Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie's first stop in Yemen today [Monday] was at a site in Lahj governorate," UNHCR said on Twitter.

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## EGYPT

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### **39. Inflation and impending wheat crisis spark concern in Egypt**

The National, 7 Mar 22, Hamza Hendawi

Spiking global food and energy prices, including a steep hike in wheat prices caused by the war in Ukraine, are piling pressure on Egypt's poorest. Egypt is the world's largest wheat importer, with Russia and Ukraine providing a combined 80 per cent of its supply.

### **40. Egypt is past 'difficult phase' of latest coronavirus wave: Official**

Ahram Online, 7 Mar 22, Mohamed Awad

Egypt recently achieved the highest recovery rates at isolation hospitals, which exceeded 85 percent on Sunday, Tag El-Din said on Monday. Since the outbreak began in February 2020, Egypt has recorded a total of 421,215 recoveries after 1,321 patients were discharged from hospitals nationwide over the past 24 hours. The country has had a total infection tally of 490,969 and a total death toll of 24,197.

### **41. Egypt's FM discusses reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks with Palestinian officials**

Ahram Online, 7 Mar 22

Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shourky discussed on Monday reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process with Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Abu Amr and Minister of Social Development Ahmed Majdalani in Cairo, the Egyptian foreign ministry said.

### **42. Uzbekistan, Pakistan agree to enhance strategic partnership**

Times of Central Asia, 7 Mar 22

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid a state visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on March 3-4. During the visit, Uzbekistan and Pakistan agreed to enhance bilateral, "strategic partnership", according to a joint declaration issued after the talks and a joint press conference of

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in the Pakistani capital Islamabad.

#### **43. Egypt, UAE work on developing bilateral economic relations**

Daily News (Egypt), 7 Mar 22

Egypt's Minister of Trade and Industry Nevine Gamea met with Ambassador of the UAE to Cairo Mariam Khalifa Al-Kaabi on Monday to discuss the latest economic developments regionally and globally.

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### ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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#### **44. Russia-Ukraine war casts new shadow over Syria**

Middle East Eye, 7 Mar 22

The Ukraine and Syria conflicts have long been intertwined. One of Russian President Vladimir Putin's motivations for intervening in Syria in the first place was to break out of the diplomatic isolation he faced after annexing Crimea in 2014.

#### **45. Blue-eyed refugees first**

Daily Sabah, 7 Mar 22, Ibrahim Karataş

People of the Middle East have been suffering from either civil wars or foreign intervention for decades. It is possible that more than 1 million people have been killed by dictators or invaders during that time. In addition, millions have been displaced and immigrated to neighboring countries or Europe. Surprisingly (or not), the two big invaders, namely the U.S. and Russia, host almost no refugees though they are perpetrators.

#### **46. Ukrainian-Russian crisis exposes racism in Western media coverage — journalists**

Jordan Times, 7 Mar 22, Batool Ghaith

The Ukrainian-Russian crisis has revealed deep-rooted racism in Western media's coverage of the conflict, according to experts. Over the past week, multiple Western politicians and journalists have used discriminatory language, based on race and religion while discussing the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, sparking anger globally, especially in the Middle East.

#### **47. As Kyiv burns, a new world order emerges**

Arab News, 7 Mar 22

If only all humanitarian crises inspired such global unity and resolve! In a few short days we have been living through the traumatic birth pains of an entirely new geopolitical order, with profound and unpredictable reverberations for decades to come.

#### **48. Russia-Ukraine: Another Cold War?**

The Nation (Pakistan), 8 Mar 22, Dr Atique Ur Rehman

Torture. “His transfer is a welcome incremental step, but the Biden administration needs to act much faster and more comprehensively to close Guantánamo than it has so far.”

The transfer leaves 38 detainees at Guantánamo, half of them approved for release if the State Department can reach security agreements with receiving countries. Of the rest, 12 have been charged with war crimes, including two men who have been convicted.

The other seven are held as “law of war” prisoners, essentially detained indefinitely because the United States considers them too dangerous to release. Their cases are reviewed periodically by a U.S. government panel, which can recommend a transfer with certain security measures, including restrictions on travel or to detention in overseas prisons.

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## **16. Russia-Ukraine central to Blinken talks with Israel minister**

Associated Press, 7 Mar 22, Matthew Lee

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday thanked Israel for its efforts to end Russia’s war with Ukraine as he and his Israeli counterpart met to discuss the conflict and ongoing nuclear talks with Iran in Vienna.

Blinken said that any initiative to try to halt the conflict would be welcome as long as the move is consistent with U.S., NATO and European principles that Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected.

He made the comments as he and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid sat down for hastily arranged talks in the Latvian capital of Riga just two days after Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

“We very much appreciate the efforts that any of our close partners and friends and allies can make to see if there’s any opening to end the war consistent, of course, with the principles that we’ve all established,” Blinken told Lapid.

“I look forward to hearing your ideas, hearing about some of the engagements that Israel has had, but we appreciate all efforts by friends and allies to look for a diplomatic resolution,” he said.

Lapid, who flew to Latvia especially to brief Blinken on Bennett’s meeting with Putin and express Israel’s grave concern at the prospect of a new nuclear deal with Iran, said the meeting was taking place “at the moment the world order is changing.”

“The war that is going on in Ukraine and the nuclear talks in Vienna are events that are changing the world as we know it,” he said. He said Israel is “totally committed” to doing everything in its power to bring an end to the war in Ukraine.

On Iran, Lapid noted Israel’s concerns about the nuclear negotiations potentially at the point of a breakthrough, saying Israel has well-known differences with the U.S. on a deal even if they share the end goal of preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

“It’s no secret we have our differences on this, but it’s it’s a conversation between allies that have a common goal, which is preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear threshold country and to stop Iran’s ability to spread terror and instability all around the world,” Lapid said.

Blinken responded that both Israel and the United States are “united and committed to the proposition that Iran must never obtain a nuclear weapon.”

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### **17. The real cost of an Iran nuclear deal**

OilPrice.com, 7 Mar 22, Cyril Widdershoven

While Russia’s invasion of Ukraine may be front and center of today’s media coverage, the ongoing JCPOA discussions with Iran in Vienna need to be watched carefully. Under pressure from a growing military conflict in the heart of Europe and steep energy and commodity prices, it now seems that Tehran’s rulers are going to get what they have wanted for so long. While the specifics have not yet been divulged to the public, insiders appear very optimistic that a deal will be reached soon. Some insiders have indicated that an agreement would see Iran quickly return to international markets. The underlying reasons for the recent rapid progress in negotiations, however, hint at the potential of diplomatic and geopolitical miscalculations. Some analysts are warning that the US Midterms and European elections are partly influencing the decisions being made at the negotiating table. High energy and commodity prices are threatening the electoral success of Biden and other European leaders. Perceived domestic pressure to do something about higher gasoline prices or power bills could have forced Western politicians to be much more flexible to Iran’s extremist regime than would have otherwise been the case. Strategic decisions appear to be being pushed through based on misconceptions about the impact that Iran’s vast oil and gas reserves could have on energy prices. At the same time, the ongoing military build-up and regional aggression of the Raisi regime are being largely ignored.

The main underlying political failure here appears to be a failure to recognize that the removal of US sanctions, which were put in place by US President Donald Trump, will not stabilize the Middle East at all. To open up the global financial sector and commodity markets to Iran will be a major mistake, as it gives the extremist regime a new lease on life, while hydrocarbon revenues will be pushed not only into the Iranian economy but also to military procurement, development of ballistic missile systems, drones, and the financing of Iranian proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen. The financial gains of the Iranian government will not lead to a push for democratization or strengthen the public interests of Iranians.

At the same time, Iran’s connection to and support of Russia is apparently being ignored. Russia has been using Tehran’s forces in the battle for control of Syria. Moscow clearly understands that the use of Iran in the Middle East has not only pushed Western powers out of the region but can be used as a bargaining chip with major Arab powers, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and even Egypt. Washington and Brussels will understand that any action they take with Iran will need to be justified to Israel and its Arab allies. Russia is clearly using Iran to maintain its foothold in the Middle East and to make sure Israel is wary of getting involved in Ukraine. Israeli tech would significantly strengthen Ukraine’s position if the country was to get more involved.

Pyongyang has been ratcheting up tensions with a series of missile launches since the start of this year.

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### **23. How Ukraine crisis undermines Turkey's economic program**

Al-Monitor, 7 Mar 22, Sebnem Turhan

The viability of the Turkish government's "new economic model" — a controversial policy to battle inflation without the central bank hiking rates — was already in doubt before Russia's incursion into Ukraine. But it has clearly hit a deadlock now that the fallout of the war is undermining Ankara's plans to bridge its current account deficit by promoting export-focused growth and steady its battered currency by safeguarding lira deposits.

With its annual consumer inflation already over 54%, Turkey stands to take some of the heaviest blows from the conflict as both Russia and Ukraine are among its major economic partners, with crucial links in tourism, agricultural trade, energy and even the defense industry.

The impact is already tangible on various fronts. Chief among them is Turkey's tourism industry, a vital source of hard-currency revenues, which was hoping to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels this year. Bookings from Russia and Ukraine have ground to a halt, and those from European countries have markedly dropped.

Russians were the largest group of foreign visitors to Turkey in 2021, numbering some 4.7 million or 19% of all tourists. Ukrainians ranked third after Germans, numbering about 2 million or 8%. Turkey was hoping for \$35 billion in tourism revenues this year, up from \$24.5 billion in 2021 and on par with its revenues in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Some representatives of the tourism industry cling to the hope that the Ukraine crisis might be resolved soon and some of the canceled early bookings might be renewed before the high season starts. Though Turkey is not part of the avalanche of Western sanctions targeting Russia, the disruptions in international air traffic and payment systems loom large for tour operators.

A tourism investment consultant in Antalya, Turkey's main tourist hub on the Mediterranean coast, speaking on the condition of anonymity said the sector's planning for this year, based on the target of \$35 billion in revenues, "had gone upside down" with the war. "The number of Ukrainian tourists was reaching nearly 2 million in Antalya alone. Antalya and the Aegean region will be hit hard," he told Al-Monitor. "Nevertheless, we should not panic, and [we should] keep calm until May."

The executive of a tourism association speaking on the condition of anonymity said, "The tourism sector is waiting in apprehension. It was expecting to outstrip its 2019 performance and break a new record in 2022. Provided that the Russia-Ukraine crisis is settled soon, we stand a chance to weather it without big damage."

The problem of money transfers could be resolved by rerouting payments to Russian banks that are not subject to the SWIFT ban, according to experts. And energy payments are expected to proceed smoothly, given Gazprombank's exclusion from the sanctions.

Haluk Burumcekci, a prominent economist, warned of "significant losses" should the war drag on. "Russians and Ukrainians account for some 30% of tourists in terms of numbers, but their share in the tourism revenues is 15%. There could be risks, yet the current account balance is the real issue here," he told Al-Monitor.

Indeed, Ankara's ambitious goal of a current account surplus, which officials have described as key to price stability, appears increasingly beyond reach amid the rise in global energy prices, stoked by the Ukraine crisis. Turkey's economy is heavily reliant on imported energy and inputs, the cost of which had already soared due to the lira's severe depreciation last year.

The country's foreign trade deficit — the most important leg of the balance of payments — increased 186.3% year-on-year to some \$18.4 billion in the first two months of the year, owing mainly to the surging energy cost.

Russia is Turkey's main energy supplier, meeting more than 33% of the country's natural gas needs. In February, imports from Russia topped Turkey's importation bills by countries.

Energy imports cost \$8 billion in February out of total imports of \$28.1 billion, and the foreign trade deficit stood at \$8.1 billion, a 142% increase from the same period last year.

Oil prices surged by more than 20% to over \$115 a barrel last week, a level unseen for many years. And every \$10 rise in the price of oil adds \$5 billion to Turkey's current account deficit, economists calculate.

"The bill of our monthly energy imports has jumped abruptly to some \$8 billion and is likely to climb to \$10 billion in March," Burumcekci said, recalling that monthly bills stood at \$2 to 3 billion last year. "This is a harbinger of how big the current account deficit will be. Year-end current account deficit forecasts have already been raised to over \$30 billion," he added.

JP Morgan has recently doubled its current account deficit forecast for Turkey for 2022 to 2.2% of gross domestic product (GDP), while Goldman Sachs has revised its forecast to 2.5% from 1.5% of GDP.

Disruptions in supply chains and Russia's overseas payments as well as adversities affecting Turkish exports stand out as further economic challenges for Turkey. The war has stalled goods transportation to Ukraine and disabled land routes to Russia via Ukraine. Scrambling for alternative routes, Turkish trucks reportedly formed queues of up to 20 kilometers (12 miles) at the Georgian-Russian border last week, with freight prices jumping by about 50%.

Taking blows from the war are also textile and leather hubs in Istanbul, which rely heavily on Russian and Ukrainian buyers. According to business representatives in the district of Laleli, the heart of the garment industry and the suitcase trade, orders of more than \$200 million have been canceled in a matter of days. Russian and Ukrainian markets account for 40% of Laleli's \$3

billion annual sales. A protracted war threatens billions of dollars of losses for manufacturers in the sector.

With Russia and Ukraine both major wheat exporters, the war has sent global wheat prices to record levels, threatening to aggravate food inflation globally.

A scare of shortage of sunflower oil has already startled Turkey. The country is the world's largest importer of sunflower seed, and Russia and Ukraine supply 70% of its sunflower oil imports. At least 15 ships carrying crude sunflower oil to Turkey are reportedly stranded in the Sea of Azov, denied exit by the Russians. In a letter to government authorities earlier this month, the head of Turkey's Vegetable Oil Industrialists Association called for action to secure the passage of the ships, warning that existing stocks would meet the country's needs by mid-April at best and that crude sunflower oil prices had jumped to over \$2,000 per ton from \$1,400 before the war.

Food prices were already skyrocketing in Turkey and have spiked further since the invasion, as have fuel prices, boding further price hikes across the board. Even before the war, Turkey's annual consumer inflation soared to 54.4% and producer inflation hit 105%, with energy and food prices leading the uptick. Every \$10 rise in the price of oil pushes Turkey's consumer inflation up by 1.5 percentage points, economists calculate.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **24. Rebuilding U.S. defenses after Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 7 Mar 22, Editorial Board

Vladimir Putin's assault on Ukraine has caused Germany to revolutionize its defense policy in less than a week. Will the Biden Administration have a similar awakening about defending Americans with dictators on the march?

Progressives complain the Pentagon budget is larger than any other nation's, but the truth is that defense spending is at historic lows. It's heading to under 3% of the economy. Defense spending reached a postwar high of 9.1% in 1968 but never fell below 4.5% even in the 1970s, reaching a high of 6% in 1986 at the height of the Reagan buildup that helped win the Cold War. (See nearby chart.)

American military power in the last two decades has been burned up in counterterrorism operations, and the current force may be too small and geriatric to crush a peer military, let alone aggression on two fronts.

No matter, some say: Europe can deal with Russia, and Taiwan is in China's sphere of influence. But authoritarians have little incentive to stop gobbling territory if they pay no price, and the U.S. is bound to defend treaty allies in NATO or Japan if they're next on the menu, not to mention the U.S. territory of Guam.

One reason the U.S. is struggling to deter bad behavior is that adversaries know American military power is in retreat. Controlling the skies is indispensable to American warfighting in any theater, but the U.S. Air Force fighter inventory has fallen to about 2,000 from 4,000 aircraft in 1991 and the average age is 29 years old, up from 11.5 then.

The Air Force has cannibalized readiness to buy more capable equipment, which it also needs to stay competitive. President Trump's Air Force Secretary, Heather Wilson, was right that to deal with "the world as it is" the U.S. needs 386 squadrons by 2030, up from 312—especially more bomber and tanker squadrons to cope with distance in the Pacific.

The Navy is working at the same clip as the Cold War with half as many ships, and the fleet is smaller and older than China's navy. The sea service needs and wants many more attack submarines—a potent defense against China—but the Navy lacks the maintenance yards to keep up with even current inventory. Carriers need attack aircraft with longer range.

The Marines are the only branch adapting fast for the future. But the price is a shrinking force, including three fewer infantry battalions and tanks the country may miss if land battles make a comeback. The Army's brief should be Europe, though the land force's budget is down nearly 11% since 2018 in real terms, as analyst Thomas Spoehr calculates, including cuts to exercises and procuring less of everything from helicopters to ammunition.

Any conflict would require enormous amounts of munitions, and on current plans U.S. forces could run out of some of the most lethal and important stuff in weeks. The Pentagon needs to ramp up planned purchases of long-range antiship and joint air-to-surface standoff missiles—now. But it can't afford to stop working on hypersonics or offensive cyber, which means spending will have to increase.

The Biden team has been pushing a "divest to invest" strategy that skimps on weapons to develop technology for the 2030s, a plan that now belongs in a Pentagon paper shredder. A memo at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies called "Battle Force 2025" is full of ideas for making the most of existing assets: Modifying Navy submarine-hunting aircraft to fight with anti-surface ordnance, for instance.

A boost in defense spending doesn't preclude cutting bloat, even heretical ideas like controlling personnel spending and healthcare costs. Contract public affairs and lawyers instead of using so many expensive uniformed officers. Tell retirees they'll have to muddle through without subsidized groceries and close the commissaries. Cut general officers. If an Air Force colonel or Navy captain can reasonably fill a billet, it shouldn't be a flag position.

The brass bear some blame for the country's lack of preparation, especially acquisition catastrophes like the F-35 or the Ford-class aircraft carrier. But what better time for Congress to renovate how the Pentagon buys equipment, concentrating political accountability in one office?

The precedent here is Jimmy Carter, who began his Administration bemoaning the "inordinate fear of Communism" but did a 180-degree turn three years later and began a defense buildup as

the Soviets gained ground around the world. Mr. Biden has wanted to focus on domestic affairs but Presidents have to deal with the world as it is.

Mr. Putin's invasion means the end of post-Cold War illusions, and it heralds an age of new threats to our allies and the homeland. Americans don't want to learn through defeat that, as retired Lt. Gen David Deptula has warned, "the only thing more expensive than a first-rate military is a second-rate one."

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## **25. Bahrain's paranoia about Iran is self-defeating**

Foreign Policy, 7 Mar 22, Anchal Vohra

Naftali Bennett made history in mid-February by becoming the first Israeli prime minister to ever make an official visit to Bahrain. Bennett is struggling at home as the leader of an ideologically divided ruling coalition, but on his visit to Bahrain he fulfilled the role of statesman, embracing the unprecedented regional alliance that has formed between Israel and Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, against Iran. Bennett offered Israel's assistance to Bahrain against Iran whenever called upon.

Bahrain plays a central role in this alliance, not least because it hosts the 5th Fleet of the U.S. Navy. (During Bennett's visit, he discussed security cooperation in a meeting that included both Bahraini officials and Vice Adm. Brad Cooper of the 5th Fleet.) But taking on Iran has proved to be a particularly challenging task for Bahrain. In part that's because of the simple fact of its small size in relation to its powerful competitor.

But Bahrain's government is also suffering the effects of its own paranoia. Warding off Iran's influence in its domestic affairs has turned the Al Khalifa monarchy into ruthless rulers and the kingdom into a brutal place to live for the majority of its population.

Bahrain's Sunni monarchy believes Iran wants to annex its majority-Shiite country or at the very least install a puppet regime. The past comments of Iran's Shiite leaders asserting that Bahrain is the 14th province of Iran, together with Iran's support to Bahrain's Shiite opposition, have magnified Bahrain's fears. It accuses Tehran of not only fomenting the uprising in 2011 but also plotting attacks against state security in successive years and providing militants with financial support and arms training through its militias in Iraq.

Partly in response to these fears, Bahrain has imposed repression at home. In the last decade, death sentences have risen by 600 percent, and the political opposition has been disbanded or thrown behind bars. Some 1,400 political prisoners are incarcerated in a single prison. The right of prisoners to weekly video calls with family members has been suspended in an arbitrary manner, and torture allegations are routine.

Last year Bahrain was accused of detaining 13 children related to protests and threatening some with rape and torture, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), a nonprofit human rights organization based in London. And the alliance with Israel is further

present time, Gamea elaborated, adding that there are distinguished investment opportunities for the Emirati business community to invest in the Egyptian market, especially in the fields of spinning, weaving, leather, furniture, handicrafts, and other crafts.

For her part, Al-Kaabi expressed her country's keenness to develop economic relations for the benefit of the economies and peoples of the two countries.

She also praised Egypt's unique participation in Expo 2020 Dubai with a distinguished pavilion that has been the focus of the world's attention since the start of the expo's activities until now. The Egyptian pavilion is one of the most important pavilions participating in the event, attracting the attention of all attendees and receiving a large number of official visits.

"It is possible for Egypt to make use of the UAE's market as a hub for Egyptian-Emirati joint projects' exports to the markets of the Arabian Gulf and Southeast Asian countries in addition to the UAE benefiting from the Egyptian market as a gateway for Emirati exports to the markets of the African continent and profiting from facilities and preferential transactions offered by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). There is also the possibility of establishing Egyptian-Emirati investments in other countries," Al-Kaabi said.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **44. Russia-Ukraine war casts new shadow over Syria**

Middle East Eye, 7 Mar 22

The Ukraine and Syria conflicts have long been intertwined. One of Russian President Vladimir Putin's motivations for intervening in Syria in the first place was to break out of the diplomatic isolation he faced after annexing Crimea in 2014.

The success of this action, and the lack of western pushback for subsequent atrocities, have led some commentators to argue that the February invasion was emboldened by western passivity over Syria. Today, as Ukraine suffers, the overlap is evident once more as Russian military tactics from Syria are now at the forefront of the Ukraine operation.

Clearly, the Syria war has impacted Ukraine, but how might the current crisis impact the situation in Syria? It is a fair assumption that the crisis will not be resolved soon, meaning it will continue to dominate global media and diplomatic attention. Syria has already been falling down the global priority list and its obscurity will likely continue, despite its civil war being far from over.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's continued domestic repression, ongoing economic suffering, and the sporadic fighting between different extremist factions will get less and less global interest as, like Iraq and Afghanistan before it, Syria becomes yesterday's war. The ongoing suffering in Yemen and Libya could similarly slip further from focus.

This is arguably most significant for the 5.7 million registered Syrian refugees. Already, they were suffering cuts in funding from international donors such as the UK, but the emergence of a new refugee crisis from Ukraine will draw more money and support away from the Middle East and towards Eastern Europe. There are sadly countless examples in history of refugees being forgotten once the conflict they were fleeing drops from public interest, often having miserable consequences for the refugees and the countries hosting them.

#### Drained military resources

Beyond a loss of attention, the geopolitics of Syria's war could be significantly impacted by the fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war. At the most extreme, if this leads to Putin's fall in Moscow, it could radically alter Russia's presence in Syria. Yet, even less dramatic consequences could have an impact. A long, gruelling war that drains Russia's military resources, while western sanctions cripple its economy, might force Putin to pull money and military forces from Syria. An alternative scenario might be for an embattled Putin to double down on Syria, drawing Assad's regime even closer into his network of client states.

Neither of these outcomes is good for Assad. Any Russian military or economic pullback would weaken him, possibly fatally if it emboldens his dormant opponents. Assad also won't want to be sucked into a "Putin-sphere" that's isolated from the rest of the world.

Damascus has been desperately trying to reintegrate into its region. It is already badly sanctioned by western governments, and the last thing it needs is further punishment for its proximity to Putin. A besieged Putin might come to view Assad as he does Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko: indebted to him and obligated to help in his hour of need, whether through statements of support or by sending military aid.

Putin and Assad's other ally, Iran, will also watch closely how events in Ukraine will impact Syria. Less beholden to Moscow than Damascus, it is unlikely Tehran will feel obligated to stand by Putin, although its leadership instinctively blamed the US for the Ukraine crisis rather than Russia. Despite a few wrangles with Russia over the (very few) spoils of Syria's civil war, and Moscow permitting Israel to launch frequent attacks on Iranian positions, Tehran broadly benefits from the status quo in Syria. Any change to Russia's position there - which Iran played a major role in engineering - will not be welcomed.

#### Israel's balancing act

Israel has also become comfortable with the status quo. Though it is alarmed by the numerous Iranian and Hezbollah forces in Syria as a result of the war, Russia's presence alleviates this. Its close ties to Moscow have given the Israeli army a free hand to strike deep into Syria.

The Israeli government has thus walked a fine line since the Ukraine crisis began. It is close to the US, Ukraine, and Russia, and has been sure to condemn Putin's aggression in a relatively muted way, conscious that an angry Moscow could prevent its Syria raids. At the same time, Israel probably doesn't want the conflict to prompt Putin's departure from Syria, as this would leave Iran and Hezbollah unchecked and increase the chances of direct clashes.

Like Israel, Turkey has approached the Ukraine crisis cautiously, having close military, diplomatic, and economic ties with both sides. Both Moscow and Kyiv, as well as its western allies, are courting Ankara, given its control of the Dardanelles.

Turkey could use this favourable position to squeeze greater concessions from either Russia or the US in Syria, where it has clashed with both. Ankara has long wanted to expand the areas of northern Syria that its proxies control, and could conceivably tie its position on the Ukraine crisis with either Moscow or Washington depending on whether it captures Manbij or Kobane.

But Erdogan may choose to hold his cards close. His immediate concern is Turkey's struggling economy and a related decline in his popularity. He is probably more worried about how the war will impact oil and gas prices and the fate of vital gas and wheat supplies from Russia, than about taking advantage of the crisis to boost his position in Syria - for now.

Of course, it remains early days in the Russia-Ukraine war, and it is hard to forecast how great a shadow it will cast over Syria or elsewhere. But given the conflict's global nature and the number of key players in Syria impacted by this new war, it seems unlikely it will avoid the fallout.

*Christopher Phillips is a professor of international relations at Queen Mary, University of London, where he is also a deputy dean. He is the author of *The Battle for Syria*, available from Yale University Press, and co-editor of *What Next for Britain in the Middle East*, available from IB Tauris.*

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#### **45. Blue-eyed refugees first**

Daily Sabah, 7 Mar 22, Ibrahim Karataş

People of the Middle East have been suffering from either civil wars or foreign intervention for decades. It is possible that more than 1 million people have been killed by dictators or invaders during that time. In addition, millions have been displaced and immigrated to neighboring countries or Europe. Surprisingly (or not), the two big invaders, namely the U.S. and Russia, host almost no refugees though they are perpetrators.

While European countries accepted a certain number of migrants, the Russian attack on Ukraine shows that they are prejudiced against certain refugees. When Africans try to cross the Mediterranean or Syrians, Afghans and other migrants attempt to reach Europe via the Balkans, they are not allowed in by European Union members. Plus, many people drown at sea or are left to die by border guards. Greece is so infamous for its treatment of refugees that its mistreatment has led to the deaths of hundreds of people seeking a safe haven.

However, when Ukrainians took refuge in Europe, the mercy of Europeans suddenly overflowed. Welcoming Ukrainians is something that we all appreciate. Yet, helping them just because they are blue-eyed, blonde-haired, European and Christian is unacceptable discrimination. It shows that the European mindset has an Orientalist subconscious that excludes non-Europeans. In their

view, a non-Christian, black or brunette man is not civilized and does not deserve to be accepted as a refugee, except for a select few.

Actually, lovers of the white race have missed some points that contradict their views. First, whether they are aware of it or not, blue-eyed and blonde Ukrainians are displaced by blue-eyed and blonde Russians who are Christians and of Slavic descent just like Ukrainians. In other words, a country is attacked by a relative country, both are European, share the same skin and eye color and have the same faith. Therefore, the oppressor and the victim have the same characteristics. How can we attribute physical factors to civilization then?

Russians are also responsible for the displacement and deaths of Syrians, to which Europe closed its doors. One may think that Russia is an exception among the allegedly civilized world, but it is not. Afghanistan, Iraq and many other countries were invaded by the European/American race. Colonizers were also blonde and had very attractive eyes. Besides, the two world wars were mainly between blonde people.

The disadvantages we learned

Another complicated aspect is that if a person does not belong to Judeo-Christian culture and religion, they are again disadvantaged, as we learned from the Bosnian War when Europe did next to nothing when Bosnians were slaughtered by Serbian nationalists. Thus, a refugee should not be brunette, black or Muslim, which are vivid factors keeping migrants on European borders. We should note that there are millions of people immigrating to Europe from the Middle East and Africa. Yet, it seems that they are not the first choice nor a preference for Europeans, at least when compared to Ukrainians.

Meanwhile, being a local of a country does not mean that you will not be discriminated against in your country. Everyone will accept that minorities and sometimes people constituting the majority might face exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors and regulations. For instance, a black person or a Latino may not be as advantageous as a white man in the U.S. Some secular people in Turkey think of themselves as “white Turks” to differentiate themselves from the conservative community in particular. Needless to say, some Indians are more privileged due to the social classes they belong to. In Syria, the Arab Alawite minority ruled the Sunni majority for decades.

In light of the above argument, it can be concluded that, for some, being white in terms of race is preferable. Yet, claiming that the white race is more civilized is wrong since most crimes against humanity were committed by white people. Even if a person is white and has nothing to do with violence, being a Christian is preferable to Europeans. This is why Europeans welcome a Ukrainian refugee rather than a Bosnian one. Regarding people with darker skin colors, they should either pretend to be white as some Turks, Indians and Arabs do, or acquiesce their hapless destiny.

*Ibrahim Karataş is a holder of a Ph.D. in International Relations.*

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#### **46. Ukrainian-Russian crisis exposes racism in Western media coverage — journalists**

Jordan Times, 7 Mar 22, Batool Ghaith

The Ukrainian-Russian crisis has revealed deep-rooted racism in Western media's coverage of the conflict, according to experts.

Over the past week, multiple Western politicians and journalists have used discriminatory language, based on race and religion while discussing the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, sparking anger globally, especially in the Middle East.

Jordan Press Association member and trainer in human rights Khaled Qudah told The Jordan Times that the war in Ukraine has "proved the opposite of what the West has been presenting to the international community about integrity, impartiality, freedom of expression and human rights".

"These arguments are only used when it serves in their interests, and this was evident in the Western media's coverage of refugees from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, and how different it is to the coverage of refugees from Ukraine," Qudah said.

Qudah emphasised that the principles advocated by the West are "decorative" to serve political goals. "Unfortunately, Western media has abandoned the principles of professionalism, humanity and impartiality," he continued.

He also highlighted social media's spread of misinformation, as a photo of Palestinian girl Ahed Tamimi in confrontation with Israeli soldiers was published, claiming her as a Ukrainian girl resisting Russian soldiers.

"A Ukrainian child resisting the Russians is described as a hero, while a Palestinian child resisting the Israeli occupation is described as a terrorist, even though they are fighting the same fight, living the same issue, but in a different place, with different origins, religion etc," he added.

Heba Obeidat, a journalist from Jordan, noted how "dangerous it is for journalists or public figures to engage in hate speech".

"The influence of these words is much greater coming from officials and journalists than when it is just an opinion of some citizens, as they are addressing millions of people worldwide," Obeidat told The Jordan Times.

She added that the right to asylum is a right guaranteed by international laws to anyone who fled their country due to war or political reasons, without any bias towards white-skinned people.

Obeidat said that the Western media's recent remarks "confirmed the idea that neutral media doesn't exist".

Ahmed Smadi, a humanitarian worker in Jordan, highlighted the role of media during such crises. "Journalism is vital for getting people's voice heard and shedding light on what is

happening. Such reporting, however, should not be at the expense of others, or to undermine other people's suffering," he told The Jordan Times over the phone.

"There are many alleged reports of people of colour being refused entry at border crossings in favour of white Ukrainians, therefore they are stuck at borders for days in terrible conditions. The European Union and European countries' human treatment of refugees should include refugees of different races, religions, and nationalities," Smadi added.

Mohammad Shamma, a human rights journalist, said that some Western media outlets have "double-standard-sympathy", which is a violation of basic journalistic standards.

"Everyone has the right to sympathise, but the content they present must represent the life of all people without double standards or discrimination," Shamma told The Jordan Times over the phone.

Shamma emphasised that some Western media coverage is "a colonialist discourse" which does not necessarily represent Europe, but the journalists should be held accountable.

*Batool Ghaith is a journalist with a history of working in the education industry and has a BA focused in German Language and Literature from the University of Jordan.*

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#### **47. As Kyiv burns, a new world order emerges**

Arab News, 7 Mar 22

If only all humanitarian crises inspired such global unity and resolve! In a few short days we have been living through the traumatic birth pains of an entirely new geopolitical order, with profound and unpredictable reverberations for decades to come.

As cities burn and populations are uprooted, the deep ideological divisions and strategic impotence that have wracked the Western world for years have superficially vanished, as if by magic. This was manifested at the UN General Assembly, where 141 member nations from Europe to the GCC to the Pacific took a unified position on Ukraine, leaving a handful of rogue states — Syria, North Korea and Belarus — on the opposite side. Even close Kremlin allies such as Iran and China could only bring themselves to abstain.

The transformation was most profound in states that have long flirted with Moscow. Germany's abandonment of its long-standing military neutrality and economic alignment with Russia has far-reaching implications, while near neighbors Finland and Sweden are clamoring for NATO membership. After irritating the West with his purchases of Russian defense systems, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suddenly remembered Turkey was also a NATO member, upping sales of drones and other weaponry to Kyiv and restricting Russian shipping's access to the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, Europe's foremost demagogue, Viktor Orban, is being ridiculed by the opposition as "Putin's lapdog" immediately before Hungarian elections. Eastern European states that beat, tortured and blockaded Syrian refugees have opened their doors to over a million Ukrainians.

Beijing anxiously watches developments, knowing the outcomes will affect its own abilities to menace its neighbors and crush citizens' freedoms.

The ramifications of these events will affect the Middle East equally profoundly. One short-term risk is that America and others appear to be rushing toward a quick-fix nuclear deal with Iran, allowing them to focus on Russia. Tehran is exploiting that to seek further concessions, while a panicky Moscow appears to be trying to thwart such an outcome with its own new demands. Flooding the market with Iranian oil to compensate for blocked Russian output is not a viable solution, because Tehran is an equally grave threat to global security.

These negative potential outcomes offer Arab oil producers the opportunity to call the shots to ensure that their security interests are protected. With Russia bombing nuclear power stations, Arab states and Israel may discover that they have an increasingly sympathetic global audience when they highlight the apocalyptic risks of tolerating Iranian nuclearization, its immense ballistic missile program, and the proliferation of Iran-backed militias from Baghdad to the Mediterranean Sea.

Libya and Syria suffered wars of extermination by mercenaries from Moscow, Ankara, Tehran and elsewhere, long after Western interest in these conflicts had dissipated. The sovereignty of Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq has been shredded by years of naked Iranian aggression. Gulf states have been under constant assault from barrages of Iranian missiles and drones. This will worsen if Iran emerges from a deal with billions of dollars of unfrozen funds to invest in regionwide terrorism.

Although in recent days Russian air raids in Syria have decreased, there are concerns that if the Kremlin gets a bloody nose in Kyiv, it may exploit its mercenaries in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere to up the pressure on states perceived as acting against it, particularly as the Middle East has been the arena for proxy conflicts since time immemorial. Indeed, there is evidence that the Kremlin views Syria's current fragmented reality as a model for a future divided and submissive Ukrainian puppet entity.

So catastrophic is the situation that some are hailing Naftali Bennett as the world's best hope for a sane outcome, given Israel's uniquely close ties with both sides. However, Putin appears hellbent on not listening to any voices of reason.

Infinitely worse is yet to come for Ukraine: After humiliating setbacks, Moscow is inflicting indiscriminate levels of destruction last seen in Syria, hoping to starve and crush courageous citizens into submission. International tensions are hence set to further soar, while tensions within Russia will escalate as citizens see living standards plunge for a war they are scarcely allowed to mention. As the Russian economy bleeds to death, irreversible defeat is etched on the grim faces of Putin's generals. The Kremlin can pound cities to dust, but the Ukrainian nation is forever outside its grasp.

On International Women's Day we watch girls and mothers fleeing into exile, while grandmothers grimly manufacture Molotov cocktails in freezing bomb shelters. Ashen-faced youths are given a rifle and taught how to bandage themselves after a limb is blown off. Like

millions of others, my heart bleeds after having lived through such horrors when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 – losing everything, embracing loved-ones we may never see again, knowing our lives are transformed for ever.

Ukrainian dignity and courage in the face of unimaginable evil humble us all, while reawakening the world's long-slumbering conscience and sense of justice.

The Middle East has long been mired in this evil, amid genocide, sectarian cleansing and wars of annexation. Assad, Israel, Iran, Erdogan, Hezbollah, the Houthis and Al-Hashd al-Shaabi must discover that the civilized world will stand with human rights and justice, irrespective of ethnicity or faith. Raw might is never right. Evil is self-destructive and unsustainable. Injustice must never be allowed to prevail.

It has taken a few short days for Europe to reawaken and shake off three decades of strategic complacency. The Western world is no more immune from the implacable, brutal march of history than anywhere else.

The world is relearning that sovereignty, freedom, territorial integrity and international law aren't natural attributes that spontaneously prevail, but are fundamental principles that must be fought for, and that millions of peace-loving citizens are willing to die to protect.

Irrespective of how this crisis ends, history will remember the brave struggle of the Ukrainian people against colossal odds. It will also recall whether the rest of the civilized world reasserts the primacy of international law and national sovereignty, to ensure that aggressor states cannot menace peace-loving nations, throughout Eurasia, the Arab world and everywhere else.

*Baria Alamuddin is an award-winning journalist and broadcaster in the Middle East and the UK. She is editor of the Media Services Syndicate and has interviewed numerous heads of state.*

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#### **48. Russia-Ukraine: Another Cold War?**

The Nation (Pakistan), 8 Mar 22, Dr Atique Ur Rehman

As the Russian-Ukraine war enters its 12th day, there is still no indication of when the conflict will end in the near future. Ukraine forces are unable to face the wrath of the Russian invasion. It is pertinent to analyse the present situation and the effects of this war.

An overview of the situation reflects the division of the world in support of Russia and against it. The US has not been able to influence countries to unanimously vote against Russia for invading Ukraine. In the final tally, 141 countries supported the resolution in UNGA, with just five voting against and another 35 abstaining. Asia Pacific seems to be largely under the influence of the US.

Within this region just two countries voted against the resolution: Russia itself and North Korea. 14 Asia-Pacific countries not only voted in favour but co-sponsored the resolution: Australia, Cambodia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, South Korea, Samoa, Singapore, and Timor-Leste.

Central Asian countries evidently are under Russian influence, which is a big indication for resistance to US desires in the region. None of the five Central Asian republics voted in favour of the motion; all either abstained or did not participate in the vote at all. In South Asia, countries were evenly divided, with four supporting the resolution—Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, and Nepal—and four abstaining—Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

An Islamabad-based think tank, the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) has carried out a discourse analysis of the conflict. They carried out a twitter analysis on March 3-4 of 50 thousand tweets, comparing two opposing hashtags; #IStandWithPutin and #IStandWithUkraine. The findings reveal a bifurcation among social media users. English was the dominant language used across both hashtags.

Tweets in Urdu and Hindi were in support of #IStandWithPutin and tweets originating in German and French were supporting #IStandwithUkraine. The findings clearly reflect a divided world on the Russia-Ukraine war. These distinctions were most marked when comparing user location data, which shows a clearer difference between what is widely understood as the ‘West’ on one side and the ‘Global South’ or the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) countries on the other.

Every state’s stance and position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been carefully calibrated based on a broad range of interests and issues; the digital landscape shows a divided world, or a re-emergence of a new Cold War. The UNGA voting pattern and discourse analysis clearly reflects that the world is divided on the issue.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has manifold ramifications. It has brought global and regional confrontations to the edge and pushed the world once again towards a cold war. The US has already partially sanctioned Russia, but China has refused to abide by the US sanctions. Germany and the rest of the EU is dependent on Russian gas.

OPEC countries are exploiting the conflict and have raised oil prices to over \$100 per barrel, but this looks to be a temporary raise as most Asian countries export oil from OPEC and the consistent rise in prices may jeopardise the market, thus indirectly affecting the national politics of buyer countries. Moreover, if oil consumption is reduced or managed by oil-purchasing countries, it will reverse the effects towards OPEC. The US provocation of Russia in Ukraine has given them some advantages. It has put pressure on Germany and Russia for Nord stream-2 it has brought Russia under pressure for its gas supply to the EU. It might have distracted Russia from China for a while.

The conflict will leave millions of refugees at the mercy of other nations. So far, 1.5 million Ukraine citizens have already fled the country while more are lined up. Mariupol city is besieged and efforts are being made to evacuate the trapped civilians. The situation in Mariupol is extremely dangerous. Meanwhile, Mastercard and Visa operations have been suspended in Russia. The Foreign Minister of Ukraine has asked for fighter jets and air defence systems from the US. NATO’s refusal to implement a no-fly zone over Ukraine is another blow for Kyiv. The IMF has also expressed their concerns on the effects of the war on the global economy.

According to John Meirshiemer, it is the US who is to be blamed for this post-cold war disorder. In pursuit of a liberal hegemony, the frequency of US military deployments has been six times greater in the period between 1990 and 2017 than in the 200 years spanning 1789 and 1989. The seven wars initiated by the administrations of Bill Clinton, George W Bush, and Barack Obama have failed to achieve any meaningful success and it has cost roughly \$5.6 trillion, in addition to an estimated 370,000 civilians and combatants killed.

War has revived the theoretical concept of realism, which might be a big blow to liberalism. The nation states in an anarchic world are responsible for self-defence and nobody else will come to their rescue. The nation states surviving in a vulnerable geo-strategic environment will increase their military spending. Countries will rush for military hardware which will strengthen the military-industrial complex.

India and Japan are already the biggest buyers of military hardware. More EU nations will now come forward to purchase arms and ammunition. Germany has already announced an increase in their defence spending. Supremacy in airpower will remain the priority of nation states to solidify their respective defences. It will definitely hamper the efforts for nuclear non-proliferation.

Pakistan seems to be getting strategic autonomy, at least in this conflict. On Sunday, Prime Minister Imran Khan categorically snubbed the EU demand to oppose the Russian move. He said that Pakistan was not there to serve EU interests. As a sovereign country, we would take a decision which is best for our country.

Pakistan has been a reluctant partner to the US due to the former's keen interest in the South Asian region. But it is China's strategic partner now. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship programme of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pakistan is crafting new relations with Russia. Though US forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan, it still maintains its influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has never lowered its guard and the nation is proud to have ever-vigilant and the most professional armed forces in the world.

*Dr Atique Ur Rehman is a political and defence analyst based in Islamabad and holds a PhD in International Relations.*

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 9, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Financial Times reported that Qatar is mediating directly between the United States and Iran in an attempt to convince both parties to sign a new JCPOA deal. The article notes Qatar is also working to have both countries engage in direct talks about JCPOA and other issues.
- 2) The Wall Street Journal said White House officials unsuccessfully tried to arrange phone calls between President Biden and the leaders of Saudi Arabia and UAE in February immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Before agreeing to take part in an international alliance against Russia, the Saudis said they want more support for their intervention in Yemen, help with their civilian nuclear program, and legal immunity for Prince Mohammed in the U.S. The Emiratis question the restrained U.S. response to recent missile strikes by Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen against the UAE and Saudi Arabia, in addition to concerns about Iran's nuclear program.
- 3) The Associated Press reported Middle East nations are divided concerning events in Ukraine as a result of Russia's increased engagement in the Levant and throughout the region. The article notes Russia has filled some of the void of America's withdrawal from the region, making regional leaders wary of alienating Russia -- or the U.S. and Europe. But Shiite militia factions in Iraq, Lebanon's Hezbollah group and Houthis in Yemen support Russia against Ukraine.
- 4) Wire services reported this morning that Kyiv residents awoke Wednesday to an air raid alert urging them to get to bomb shelters as quickly as possible over fears of incoming Russian missiles, while the strategic port city of Mariupol remained encircled as a humanitarian crisis grew. Other major news concerning Ukraine overnight was the U.S. turning down Poland's offer of MiG-29 fighters to be based at Ramstein AB, Germany for use by Ukraine pilots; the UN stating 2 million people have now fled Ukraine; and the widening economic isolation of Russia's economy.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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#### 1. Qatar mediates between Iran and US in nuclear talks

Financial Times, 8 Mar 22, Andrew England and Najmeh Bozorgmehr

Qatar has stepped up its role in mediating between the US and Iran as western powers have been striving to convince wary Iranian leaders to ink a deal to revive the 2015 nuclear accord, according to people briefed on the talks.

### **2. Saudi, Emirati leaders decline calls with Biden during Ukraine crisis**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Dion Nissenbaum, Stephen Kalin and David S. Cloud

The White House unsuccessfully tried to arrange calls between President Biden and the de facto leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as the U.S. was working to build international support for countering Russia's invasion of Ukraine and contain a surge in oil prices, said Middle East and U.S. officials.

### **3. Ukraine war highlights internal divides in Mideast nations**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Zeina Karam

In a neighborhood of Iraq's capital, a gigantic poster of Vladimir Putin with the words, "We support Russia," was up for few hours before a security force arrived and hurriedly took it down. Then came the security directive: All public displays of Putin's pictures shall be banned.

### **4. Russians pressure Ukrainian cities as fighting continues**

Associated Press, 9 Mar 22, Mstyslav Chernov and Yuras Karmanau

Kyiv residents awoke Wednesday to an air raid alert urging them to get to bomb shelters as quickly as possible over fears of incoming Russian missiles, while the strategic port city of Mariupol remained encircled as a humanitarian crisis grew.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**President Joe Biden; @POTUS (8 Mar):** Today, I'm announcing that the United States is targeting a main artery of Russia's economy. We are banning all imports of Russian oil and gas.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (8 Mar):** Productive conversation today with UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs @ABZayed. We value the close coordination on Ukraine and a strong international response to support Ukrainian sovereignty. The U.S. will continue to bolster strong UAE defenses to deter regional threats.

**Pentagon Spokesman John Kirby; @PentagonPresSec (8 Mar):** We are now in contact with the Polish government following the statement issued today. As we have said, the decision about whether to transfer Polish-owned planes to Ukraine is ultimately one for the Polish government. We will continue consulting with our Allies and partners about our ongoing security assistance to Ukraine, because, in fact, Poland's proposal shows just some of the complexities this issue presents. The prospect of fighter jets "at the disposal of the Government of the United States of America" departing from a U.S./NATO base in Germany to fly into airspace that is contested with Russia over Ukraine raises serious concerns for the entire NATO alliance. It is simply not

clear to us that there is a substantive rationale for it. We will continue to consult with Poland and our other NATO allies about this issue and the difficult logistical challenges it presents, but we do not believe Poland's proposal is a tenable one.

**[Taliban spokesman] Suhail Shaheen; suhailshaheen1 (8 Mar):** On the occasion of International Women's Day, I would like to say, women have all their fundamental rights as per the Islamic rules. They can avail that. The IEA is committed to providing a secure environment to deliver their legitimate needs and demands. We have made commitment to the world that we will not be threat to them and made commitment to our people that their life and property are secure. HE Sirajuddin Haqani. Minister of Interior

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## IRAN

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### **5. U.S. intelligence shows Iran threats on U.S. soil, but Blinken and Schiff say this shouldn't derail new nuclear deal**

CBS News, 8 Mar 22, Margaret Brennan

The U.S. intelligence community has assessed that Iran will threaten Americans — both directly and via proxy attacks — and that Tehran remains committed to developing networks inside the U.S., according to the intelligence community's 2022 Annual Threat Assessment, published Tuesday by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI).

### **6. Iran nuclear deal nears completion, but Russia poses complication**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Steven Erlanger

With negotiators all but finished with their work to restore the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has made an agreement both more urgent and more difficult to get.

### **7. Iran's Revolutionary Guard says it launches 2nd satellite**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Amir Vahdat and Jon Gambrell

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said Tuesday it launched a second reconnaissance satellite into space as world powers await Tehran's decision in negotiations over its tattered nuclear deal.

### **8. Blinken says Russia continues to be engaged in efforts to salvage Iran nuclear deal**

CNN, 8 Mar 22, Jennifer Hansler

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday said that Moscow remains engaged in the effort to salvage the Iran nuclear deal, despite a recent demand by the Russian foreign minister for written guarantees that sanctions imposed for its invasion of Ukraine will not impact future dealings with Tehran.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **9. From Taliban bullets to Russian bombs: War chases Afghan refugee across Europe**

The Guardian (UK), 8 Mar 22, Lorenzo Tondo

A week ago, Masouma Tajik found herself running for her life for the second time in six months. Evacuated from Kabul after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, she was now fleeing another country in another continent, this time to escape Russian bombs and bullets. A software engineer and data analyst, 23-year-old Tajik says the shock and trauma of finding herself in another war zone has shaken her sense of reality.

#### **10. Taliban vow to defend women's rights under Islamic law**

Voice of America, 8 Mar 22, Ayaz Gul

The Taliban pledged Tuesday to protect the rights of women in Afghanistan under Islamic law to mark International Women's Day, even as critics decried the erosion of human rights since the Islamist group retook control of the country nearly seven months ago.

#### **11. The smugglers' paradise of Afghanistan**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Christina Goldbaum, Yaqoob Akbary and Kiana Hayeri

It was just after 1 a.m. in this corner of southwest Afghanistan and a full moon drenched the desert dunes a dim, white glow. Hours earlier, the smuggler struck a deal with an Iranian security guard to send 40 Afghans across the nearby border that night. Now a few miles down the road, the migrants hid in a ravine waiting for his signal to run.

#### **12. Blood drive to mark Women's Day halted, Afghan activists say**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Rahim Faiez and Samya Kullab

The Taliban halted a blood donation drive by women activists to mark International Women's Day on Tuesday, activists said.

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### PAKISTAN

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#### **13. Islamic State claims Pakistan bombing that killed 5 troops**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for an attack on a security convoy in southwestern Pakistan early Tuesday that killed at least five soldiers, according to a monitoring group.

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### EGYPT

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#### **14. Ukraine calls on Egypt to support it, abandon neutrality**

Al-Monitor, 8 Mar 22, Rasha Mahmoud

Ukraine is calling on its trade partners to support it with weapons, fuel and financial and humanitarian assistance, and to abandon their neutral position toward the Russian invasion.

Ukrainian Charge d’Affaires in Egypt Ruslan Nechai noted in a press conference Feb. 28 that his country had sent a memorandum to the Arab League asking it to take its side against Russia.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **15. Jordan says prince apologizes over last year’s palace feud**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22

The royal court in Jordan said Tuesday that the half-brother of King Abdullah II has apologized for his role in a rare palace feud last year and is seeking the king’s forgiveness. Prince Hamzah was accused of involvement in a plot to destabilize the Western-allied kingdom and was placed under house arrest last April. In a video statement at the time he denied the allegations, saying he was being punished for speaking out against official corruption.

### **16. Turkish, Israeli presidents to meet for first time after fractious decade**

Reuters, 8 Mar 22

Turkey and Israel will seek to overcome years of animosity and insults when their presidents meet for the first time in more than a decade this week, expanding a recent Turkish charm offensive with regional rivals.

### **17. U.S. urges Saudis to review cases of ‘prisoners of conscience’**

Reuters, 8 Mar 22, Stephanie Nebehay

The United States urged ally Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to review cases of "prisoners of conscience" and lift travel bans and other restrictions imposed on women's rights activists previously released from jail.

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## CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

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### **18. Turkmenistan will get a new president on March 12. Will it matter?**

The Diplomat, 9 Mar 22, Catherine Putz

Turkmenistan’s presidential election is only a few days away. Early voting has already begun. If you happen to look at the Wikipedia page for the election ([here](#)) you’ll see nine candidates listed, but only one has a picture available: Serdar Berdimuhamedov, the son of current Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **19. Pentagon says Poland's jet offer for Ukraine 'not tenable'**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Vanessa Gera, Lolita C. Baldor and Amer Madhani

The Pentagon on Tuesday rejected a surprise announcement from Poland that it would give the United States its MiG-29 fighter jets for use by Ukraine, a rare display of disharmony as NATO

allies seek to boost Ukrainian fighters while avoiding getting caught up in a wider war with Russia.

#### **20. US and UK ban Russian oil and gas imports in drive to punish Putin**

Financial Times (UK), 8 Mar 22, James Politi, Myles McCormick, Jim Pickard and Andy Bounds

President Joe Biden has banned imports of Russian oil and gas into the US as Washington steps up economic sanctions on Moscow over the invasion of Ukraine in an attempt to deprive it of revenue. The move was matched by a UK phase-out of Russian oil imports, but the EU did not follow suit and instead unveiled a plan to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds within a year.

#### **21. Biden calls for legislation to help sick veterans who served near burn pits**

Washington Post, 8 Mar 22, Seung Min Kim and Matt Viser

President Biden repeatedly declared on Tuesday that the United States needs to take better care of veterans who became ill after being exposed to toxic chemicals during their military service, and he called on Congress to pass legislation granting benefits and comprehensive health care to those sickened.

#### **22. Spy agencies cite Russia's setbacks but say Putin is 'unlikely to be deterred'**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Julian E. Barnes

Top U.S. intelligence officials said on Tuesday that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had been surprised and unsettled by the problems that have hampered his military in Ukraine, issues that will make it more difficult for Russian forces to control the country. But Mr. Putin is determined to succeed in Ukraine, and will try to double down and use ever more brutal tactics, the officials said during an appearance before the House Intelligence Committee.

#### **23. Biden Administration altered rules for sharing intelligence with Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Warren P. Strobel and Michael R. Gordon

The White House last week modified existing guidance for the Pentagon and U.S. spy agencies on sending intelligence data to the Ukrainian government to clear the way of any bureaucratic roadblocks to information sharing, a senior Biden administration official said.

#### **24. Russia's military losses in Ukraine are a gold mine for US intelligence**

Newsweek, 8 Mar 22, Naveed Jamali and Tom O'Connor

Russian military equipment seized by Ukrainian forces throughout an explosive conflict poised to enter its third week may prove a gold mine for U.S. intelligence looking to get a rare look at Moscow's weapons and the encrypted command and control data they contain, current and former U.S. military personnel told Newsweek.

#### **25. Russian oil embargo pushes OPEC to take sides**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Rochelle Toplensky

A Russian oil embargo ramps up pressure on the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to increase production or side with Russia. As the war in Ukraine becomes a proxy conflict in a new Cold War, the cartel can't hope to maintain its current studied neutrality.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **26. US spy chiefs warn Putin may escalate war**

TIME Magazine, 8 Mar 22, Vera Bergengruen

Twelve days into his invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has “no sustainable political endgame,” the heads of U.S. intelligence agencies told Congress in a somber assessment Tuesday. That military reality means even greater humanitarian costs lie ahead, they said. “Putin is angry and frustrated right now,” Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns told lawmakers at the House Intelligence Committee’s annual hearing on worldwide threats. “He’s likely to double down and try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties.”

### **27. NATO members mount huge operation to resupply Ukrainian fighters**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Matthew Luxmoore, Drew Hinshaw and Nancy A. Youssef

In the space of two weeks, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has set off one of the largest and fastest arms transfers in history. By road and rail, the Czech Republic sent 10,000 rocket-propelled grenades to Ukraine’s defenders last week alone. In Poland, the provincial airport of Rzeszow located about 60 miles from the Ukrainian border has been so crowded with military cargo jets that on Saturday some flights were briefly diverted until airfield space became available.

### **28. Arctic winds in Ukraine ‘will turn Russian vehicles into 40-tonne freezers’**

The Times (UK), 9 mar 22, Larisa Brown

A severe cold snap could stall Russian advances further, analysts believe, with troops forced either to abandon their vehicles or sit in “40-tonne iron freezers”. Arctic air moving through Russia and Ukraine will combine with an easterly wind to make temperatures drop to as low as minus 10C (14 degrees Fahrenheit) overnight around Kyiv and the northern city of Kharkiv in the coming days. When wind chill is taken into account it could feel as cold as minus 20C (-4 degrees Fahrenheit), according to forecasts.

### **29. Hints of a Ukraine-Russia deal?**

Foreign Policy, 8 Mar 22, Michael Hirsh

With Russia’s bloody aggression in Ukraine apparently bogged down, there are hints this week that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky may be tentatively opening themselves to compromises that might halt the 12-day-old war.

### **30. Europe's unified welcome of Ukrainian refugees exposes 'double standard' for nonwhite asylum seekers: Experts**

ABC News, 8 Mar 22, Deena Zaru

Before Russian attacks on Ukraine led to mass displacement, Europe was already grappling with the Syrian refugee crisis — an issue that had bitterly divided European Union nations in recent years over what to do with the 1.1 million Syrians who sought refuge in Europe.

### **31. Satellite images show activity at North Korean nuclear site**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Kim Tong-hyung and Jon Gambrell

Commercial satellite images suggest a resumption of construction activity at North Korea’s nuclear testing ground nearly four years after leader Kim Jong Un declared the site’s closure and invited foreign journalists to observe the destruction of tunnels ahead of his first summit with then-U.S. President Donald Trump.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **32. Travels with Milley: The general brings his ‘big green map’ to NATO’s flank**

Washington Post, 8 Mar 22, David Ignatius

CONSTANTA, Romania — Gen. Mark A. Milley carries what his staff calls the “big green map” of Ukraine with him everywhere he goes — inside the Pentagon, at White House meetings with President Biden and on foreign trips such as the five-day tour of NATO front-line nations that he just completed. Milley’s map is a compendium of U.S intelligence about Russia’s pitiless assault on Ukraine.

### **33. The Syrian White Helmets are ready to help Ukraine**

Washington Post, 8 Mar 22, Josh Rogin

As Russian President Vladimir Putin expands his murderous attacks on civilians across Ukraine, regular citizens are becoming front-line troops. Syrians, who have been facing Russian military attacks for seven years, are ready to help Ukrainians organize their first responders. Ukrainians will need all the help they can get to save as many innocent lives as possible in what could be a long struggle.

### **34. Putin has no good way out, and that really scares me**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Thomas L. Friedman

If you’re hoping that the instability that Vladimir Putin’s war on Ukraine has wreaked on global markets and geopolitics has peaked, your hope is in vain. We haven’t seen anything yet. Wait until Putin fully grasps that his only choices left in Ukraine are how to lose — early and small and a little humiliated or late and big and deeply humiliated.

### **35. The curious case of Russia’s missing air force**

The Economist, 8 Mar 22

Billions of dollars have been poured into Russia’s warplanes over the past decade. Between 2009 and 2020 the air force gained around 440 new fixed-wing aircraft, as well as thousands of drones. At the outset of war, it was widely assumed by defense analysts and officials that Russia

would quickly destroy its enemy's air force and roam freely over the country, using its air superiority to pick off Ukrainian forces at will. Yet in the first two weeks of combat, Russia's air force has played a minimal role.

### **36. New rules for a new world**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Bret Stephens

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is being described as the end of the post-Cold War era. This isn't quite accurate. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, we've seen three different eras. Each of them lasted about a decade.

### **37. The Information War isn't over yet**

The Atlantic, 8 Mar 22, Charlie Warzel

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not yet two weeks old and yet a dozen headlines from major media outlets now suggest that Ukraine is "winning the information war" across much of the world (Russia and China may be notable exceptions). A primary reason for Ukraine's success, they argue, is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former actor whose leadership style, media savvy, and earnest, emotional appeals have helped channel sympathy and aid for his country. He is, as one headline put it, "a respected war hero and a cultural icon."

### **38. The suffering of Afghan women is the suffering of Afghanistan itself**

The Globe and Mail (Canada), 8 Mar 22, Khorshied Nusratty and Lauryn Oates

On March 8, as the world recognizes International Women's Day, we would do well to recall the catastrophe that has all too recently occurred in Afghanistan. It has only been six months since the Taliban took back Kabul, a tragic day marked by chaos and terror after a days-long campaign in which province after province in the country fell like dominoes.

### **39. Pakistan broaches 'Hijab Day' for International Women's Day**

Foreign Policy, 8 Mar 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Pakistan's minister of religious affairs has called for events marking this year's International Women's Day to be canceled and for March 8 to be rebranded as "Hijab Day" to celebrate a garment that faces no threat to its existence in this overwhelmingly Muslim country.

### **40. Keeping the Pressure on ISIS**

Voice of America, 8 Mar 22, Editorial Board

"ISIS, and those inspired by it, continue to engage in heinous attacks wherever and however they can," declared U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis, Senior Advisor for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations. "The group attempts to exploit humanitarian crises, and recruit and radicalize to violence members of vulnerable populations and attack civilians."

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

comfortable with". He added that Rob Malley, the US's top negotiator, has for a long time had a "very good relationship" with Sheikh Mohammed, Qatar's foreign minister.

"Qatar's relationship with Iran changed post the regional embargo and so all the stars aligned for the Qataris to step in," Vaez said. "There was no one else who had the personal ties to both sides and was better placed geo-strategically at this point in time to play the role."

Iranian officials have said outstanding issues include Tehran's demands for guarantees from the US, as well as disagreements over which sanctions would be lifted if Iran reverses its nuclear activity to agreed limits. Tehran wants all Trump-era sanctions lifted, including those related to alleged human rights abuses and terrorism allegations, not just those related to economic activity.

The diplomat briefed on the Qatari talks said Tehran initially wanted its differences with the US lumped together within an agreement to revive the nuclear accord. But the message from Europeans, Qataris and other mediators was "that is going to be very difficult, agree on the JCPOA, which both sides need urgently, and either keep other topics in separate talks or continue talks on other issues, like other sanctions, after the deal is signed," the diplomat said.

Experts said it is almost impossible for Biden to guarantee that no future administration would withdraw from the accord. "The worry with no guarantee is the Iranians will go into it with one eye open and be prepared that in two years the US could leave again," the diplomat said. "The Iranians could use these two years to develop trust and relations with the EU and Asia, and build further institutional trust and other negotiations with the US."

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## **2. Saudi, Emirati leaders decline calls with Biden during Ukraine crisis**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Dion Nissenbaum, Stephen Kalin and David S. Cloud

The White House unsuccessfully tried to arrange calls between President Biden and the de facto leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as the U.S. was working to build international support for countering Russia's invasion of Ukraine and contain a surge in oil prices, said Middle East and U.S. officials.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the U.A.E.'s Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan both declined U.S. requests to speak to Mr. Biden in recent weeks, the officials said, as Saudi and Emirati officials have become more vocal in recent weeks in their criticisms of American policy in the Gulf.

"There was some expectation of a phone call, but it didn't happen," said a U.S. official of the planned discussion between the Saudi Prince Mohammed and Mr. Biden. "It was part of turning on the spigot [of Saudi oil]."

Mr. Biden did speak with Prince Mohammed's 86-year-old father, King Salman, on Feb. 9, when the two men reiterated their countries' longstanding partnership. The U.A.E.'s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the call between Mr. Biden and Sheikh Mohammed would be rescheduled.

The Saudis have signaled that their relationship with Washington has deteriorated under the Biden administration, and they want more support for their intervention in Yemen's civil war, help with their own civilian nuclear program as Iran's moves ahead, and legal immunity for Prince Mohammed in the U.S., Saudi officials said. The crown prince faces multiple lawsuits in the U.S. including over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

The Emiratis share Saudi concerns about the restrained U.S. response to recent missile strikes by Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen against the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia, officials said. Both governments are also concerned about the revival of the Iran nuclear deal, which doesn't address other security concerns of theirs and has entered the final stages of negotiations in recent weeks.

The White House has worked to repair relations with two key Middle Eastern countries it needs on its side as oil prices push over \$130 a barrel for the first time in almost 14 years. Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. are the only two major oil producers that can pump millions of barrels of more oil—a capacity that, if used, could help calm the crude market at a time when American gasoline prices are at high levels.

Brett McGurk, the National Security Council's Middle East coordinator, and Amos Hochstein, the State Department's energy envoy, both traveled to Riyadh late last month to mend fences with Saudi officials. Mr. McGurk also met with Sheikh Mohammed in Abu Dhabi in a bid to address Emirati frustrations over the U.S. response to the Houthi attacks.

One U.S. official said the Biden administration has worked diligently to beef up Saudi and Emirati missile defenses, and that America would be doing more in the coming months to help the two Gulf nations protect themselves. It may not be all the two countries want, the official said, but the U.S. is trying to address their security concerns.

But Saudis and Emiratis have declined to pump more oil, saying they are sticking to a production plan approved between their group, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and a group of other producers led by Russia. The energy alliance with Russia, one of the world's top oil producers, has enhanced the power of OPEC while also bringing the Saudis and Emiratis closer to Moscow.

Both Prince Mohammed and Sheikh Mohammed took phone calls from Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, after declining to speak with Mr. Biden. They both later spoke with Ukraine's president, and a Saudi official said the U.S. had requested that Prince Mohammed mediate in the conflict, which he said the kingdom is embarking on.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said earlier this week that there were no plans to talk to Prince Mohammed anytime soon about oil, and that there were no plans for Mr. Biden to travel to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. forged deep ties with former President Donald Trump, who sided with them in a regional dispute with Qatar, pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal that they had opposed, made his first trip abroad to Riyadh in 2017 and stood by Prince Mohammed after the killing of Mr. Khashoggi. But Mr. Trump's decision not to respond to an Iranian drone and

missile attack on major Saudi oil sites in 2019 rattled Gulf partners who have relied for decades on the promise of U.S. security protection. Iran denied involvement in the oil facility attacks.

The rift between Mr. Biden and Saudi Arabia's crown prince stretches back to the 2020 presidential election, when the Democratic candidate vowed to treat the kingdom as a "pariah" state after a Saudi hit team killed Mr. Khashoggi in 2018 in Istanbul.

There is "very little social redeeming value in the present government in Saudi Arabia," Mr. Biden said during a presidential debate in 2019.

After taking office, Mr. Biden released a U.S. intelligence report that concluded that Prince Mohammed had approved the plan to capture or kill Mr. Khashoggi, who had been an outspoken critic of the young Saudi ruler.

Prince Mohammed has denied knowing anything about the plot, even though people close to the crown prince were convicted by a Saudi court of taking part in murdering the journalist.

Mr. Biden also publicly castigated Saudi Arabia over its protracted war in Yemen and cut off the flow of some weapons Riyadh could use to target Houthis. The president also reversed a move by his predecessor that put the Houthis on America's official list of global terrorist groups, a move that Saudi leaders said had emboldened the Yemeni force and thwarted efforts to broker a cease-fire.

On Monday, Ms. Psaki said the president stood by his view that Saudi Arabia should be treated like a "pariah" state and that the leadership had little redeeming social value.

When asked in an interview with the Atlantic magazine released last week if Mr. Biden misunderstood the Saudi leader, Prince Mohammed responded: "Simply, I do not care."

Prince Mohamed said alienating the Saudi leaders would hurt the U.S. president. "It's up to him to think about the interests of America," he said. "Go for it."

One U.S. official acknowledged that Prince Mohammed is the key Saudi decision maker, and that the Biden administration will have to find ways to work with the crown prince on everything from energy policy to normalizing relations with Israel.

Along with Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. has urged the U.S. to put the Houthis on its list of terrorist groups and to send more military aid to help defend the country from more attacks. But the U.S. hasn't moved to address those Emirati concerns, according to Gulf officials.

Last month, Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command, flew to Abu Dhabi for a series of meetings with Emirati leaders to discuss ways to beef up security in the wake of the Houthi missile strikes. Gen. McKenzie wanted to meet with Sheikh Mohammed, but was unable to get time with the Emirati leader, according to a Middle East official.

Last week, Yousef Al Otaiba, the U.A.E. ambassador to the U.S., said that relations between the two countries were strained.

“It is like any relationship,” he said in Abu Dhabi. “It has strong days where the relationship is very healthy and days where the relationship is under question. Today, we’re going through a stress test, but I am confident that we will get out of it and get to a better place.”

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### **3. Ukraine war highlights internal divides in Mideast nations**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Zeina Karam

In a neighborhood of Iraq’s capital, a gigantic poster of Vladimir Putin with the words, “We support Russia,” was up for few hours before a security force arrived and hurriedly took it down. Then came the security directive: All public displays of Putin’s pictures shall be banned.

In Lebanon, the powerful Hezbollah militia railed against the government’s condemnation of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, calling for neutrality.

Such wrangling shows the deep divisions over the Ukraine war in the Middle East, where Moscow has embedded itself as a key player in recent years, making powerful friends among state and non-state actors while America’s influence waned.

Political elites closely allied with the West are wary of alienating Russia or the U.S. and Europe. But other forces — from Shiite militia factions in Iraq, to Lebanon’s Hezbollah group and Houthi rebels in Yemen — vocally support Russia against Ukraine.

These groups are considered to be Iran’s boots on the ground in the so-called anti-U.S. “axis of resistance.” Putin won their backing largely because of his close ties with Tehran and his military intervention in Syria’s civil war in support of President Bashar Assad.

They see Putin as a steady, reliable partner who, unlike the Americans, does not drop his allies. In their circles, they even have an affectionate nickname for Putin — “Abu Ali” — which is a common name among Shiite Muslims and meant to portray a certain camaraderie.

Meanwhile, governments are walking a tightrope.

“Iraq is against the war but has not condemned it nor taken a side,” said political analyst Ihsan Alshamary, who heads the Political Thought Think Tank in Baghdad. Iraq needs to remain neutral because it has shared interests with both Russia and the West, he said.

He said Iran’s allies in the region are outspokenly with Russia “because they are anti-American and anti-West and believe that Russia is their ally.”

Russia has invested up to \$14 billion in Iraq and the northern Kurdish-run region, mainly focusing on the energy sector, Moscow’s ambassador Elbrus Kutrashev told the Iraqi Kurdish news agency Rudaw in a recent interview.

Among the major oil companies operating in the country are Russia’s Lukoil, Gazprom Neft and Rosneft.

Iraq also maintains close ties with the U.S., but Western companies have steadily been plotting to exit from Iraq's oil sector.

Iraq's strongest move so far came after its central bank advised the prime minister against signing new contracts with Russian companies or payments in light of U.S. sanctions. The decision will impact new Russian investment in the country, but little else, Russian industry officials said.

Last week, Iraq was among the 35 countries that abstained from a U.N. General Assembly vote to demand that Russia stop its offensive and withdraw troops from Ukraine. Lebanon voted in favor, while Syria, where Russian ties run deep, voted against. Iran also abstained.

In Lebanon, an unusually blunt Foreign Ministry statement denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused an uproar and upset the Russians, forcing the minister to clarify that Lebanon did not intend to take sides and would remain neutral.

"They distance themselves and claim neutrality where they want, and they interfere and condemn where they want," Hezbollah lawmaker Ibrahim Moussawi wrote on Twitter, taking aim at the Foreign Ministry. "What foreign policy does Lebanon follow, and what is Lebanon's interest in that? Please clarify for us, foreign minister."

Hezbollah, which also sent thousands of fighters to neighboring Syria to shore up Assad's forces, has seized on Russia's invasion of Ukraine to portray it as an inevitable result of U.S. provocations and yet another betrayal by the United States of its allies — in this case, Ukraine.

In Syria, where Russia maintains thousands of troops, billboards proclaiming, "Victory for Russia" popped up in areas of Damascus this week. In opposition-held areas, which still get hit by Russian airstrikes, residents hope pressure will ease on them if Russia gets bogged down in fighting in Ukraine.

In Iraq, the Ukraine war is highlighting divisions in an already fractured landscape during stalled efforts to form a new government, five months after parliament elections were held.

The huge billboard in support of Putin was briefly put up in a Baghdad neighborhood considered a stronghold of powerful Iranian-backed militias. After it was removed, the Russian Embassy in Baghdad tweeted an image of it.

"The poster was provocative, I am against it," said Athir Ghorayeb, who works at a nearby coffee shop. Iraq is only just emerging from decades of war and conflict, he said. "Why do they insist on involving us in new problems?"

Many Iraqis see in Russia's invasion of Ukraine echoes of Saddam Hussein's invasion of neighboring Kuwait and subsequent years-long economic sanctions placed on Iraq. It was only a few days ago that Iraq finished paying reparations to Kuwait which totaled more than \$52 billion.

On social media, Iraqi pages on Facebook with millions of followers have posted news of what is happening in Ukraine, sharing their views. “Our hearts are with the civilians, as those who have tasted war know its catastrophes,” posted one user, Zahra Obaidi.

“We have tents for refugees and internally displaced people, so you’re welcome to come use them,” Hafidh Salih posted.

Toby Dodge, a professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics, said Iraq’s moves — abstaining from the U.N. vote while limiting economic activity — were prudent, managing the short-term risks without taking an ideological stance.

But the longer the war drags on, the harder it will be to maintain this strategy.

“Iraq is deeply divided politically amongst players between pro-Iran and those that are anti-Iran trying to assert autonomy. The Ukraine becomes another performance, another example of where either side can burnish their credentials,” he said.

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#### **4. Russians pressure Ukrainian cities as fighting continues**

Associated Press, 9 Mar 22, Mstyslav Chernov and Yuras Karmanau

Kyiv residents awoke Wednesday to an air raid alert urging them to get to bomb shelters as quickly as possible over fears of incoming Russian missiles, while the strategic port city of Mariupol remained encircled as a humanitarian crisis grew.

Kyiv regional administration head Oleksiy Kuleba issued the air raid alert saying there was a “threat of a missile attack” on the Ukrainian capital. “Everyone immediately to shelters,” he said, later lifting the alert as the all-clear was given.

For days, as Moscow’s forces have laid siege to Ukrainian cities, the fighting has thwarted attempts to create corridors to safely evacuate civilians.

Air raid alerts are common, though irregular, keeping people on edge. Kyiv has been relatively quiet in recent days, though Russian artillery has pounded the outskirts.

Kuleba said the crisis for civilians was growing in the capital, with the situation particularly critical in the city’s suburbs.

“Russia is artificially creating a humanitarian crisis in the Kyiv region, frustrating the evacuation of people and continuing shelling and bombing small communities,” he said.

Across the country, thousands of people are thought to have been killed, both civilians and soldiers, in nearly two weeks of fighting. Russian forces have seen their advances stopped in certain areas — including around Kyiv — by fiercer resistance than expected from the Ukrainians.

But Russian troops have advanced deep along Ukraine's coastline in what could establish a land bridge to Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

The city of Mariupol has been surrounded by Russian soldiers for days and a humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the encircled city of 430,000.

Corpses lie in the streets of the city, which sits on the Asov Sea. Hungry people break into stores in search of food and melt snow for water. Thousands huddle in basements, trembling at the sound of Russian shells pounding this strategic port city.

"Why shouldn't I cry?" Goma Janna demanded as she wept by the light of an oil lamp below ground, surrounded by women and children. "I want my home, I want my job. I'm so sad about people and about the city, the children."

Tuesday brought no relief: An attempt to evacuate civilians and deliver badly needed food, water and medicine through a designated safe corridor failed, with Ukrainian officials saying Russian forces had fired on the convoy before it reached the city.

Mariupol, said Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk, is in a "catastrophic situation."

In other developments in the Russian invasion:

— Poland offered to give all of its MiG-29 fighter jets to the U.S., apparently agreeing to an arrangement that would allow them to be used by Ukraine's military. But Pentagon press secretary John Kirby later said the plan is not "tenable" and raises serious concerns for the NATO alliance. He said the U.S. would discuss it further with Poland.

— U.N. officials said that 2 million people have now fled Ukraine.

Russia's economic isolation deepened as U.S. President Joe Biden announced a ban on Russian oil imports and Shell said it will no longer buy oil and natural gas from the country. Also, Adidas and McDonald's said they are suspending their operations in Russia.

For days, as Moscow's forces have laid siege to Ukrainian cities, attempts to create corridors to safely evacuate civilians have stumbled amid continuing fighting and objections to the proposed routes. Ukraine has rejected Moscow's offers of corridors that lead civilians to Russia or its ally Belarus.

The Russian military has denied firing on convoys and charged that the Ukrainian side is blocking evacuation efforts.

One evacuation did appear successful Tuesday, with Vereshchuk saying that 5,000 civilians, including 1,700 foreign students, had been brought out via a safe corridor from Sumy, an embattled northeastern city of a quarter-million people where overnight strikes killed 21, including two children.

Natalia Mudrenko, the highest-ranking woman at Ukraine’s U.N. Mission, told the Security Council that the people of Mariupol have “been effectively taken hostage,” by the siege. Her voice shook with emotion as she described how a 6-year-old died shortly after her mother was killed by Russian shelling. “She was alone in the last moments of her life,” she said.

Authorities in Mariupol planned to start digging mass graves for all the dead. The shelling has shattered buildings, and the city has no water, heat, working sewage systems or phone service.

Theft has become widespread for food, clothes, even furniture, with locals referring to the practice as “getting a discount.” Some residents are reduced to scooping water from streams.

With the electricity out, many people are relying on their car radios for information, picking up news from stations broadcast from areas controlled by Russian forces or Russian-backed separatists.

Ludmila Amelkina, who was walking along an alley strewn with rubble and walls pocked by gunfire, said the destruction had been devastating.

“We don’t have electricity, we don’t have anything to eat, we don’t have medicine. We’ve got nothing,” she said, looking skyward.

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## NOTABLE TWEETS

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**President Joe Biden; @POTUS (8 Mar):** Today, I’m announcing that the United States is targeting a main artery of Russia’s economy. We are banning all imports of Russian oil and gas.

**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (8 Mar):** Productive conversation today with UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs @ABZayed. We value the close coordination on Ukraine and a strong international response to support Ukrainian sovereignty. The U.S. will continue to bolster strong UAE defenses to deter regional threats.

**Pentagon Spokesman John Kirby; @PentagonPresSec (8 Mar):** We are now in contact with the Polish government following the statement issued today. As we have said, the decision about whether to transfer Polish-owned planes to Ukraine is ultimately one for the Polish government. We will continue consulting with our Allies and partners about our ongoing security assistance to Ukraine, because, in fact, Poland’s proposal shows just some of the complexities this issue presents. The prospect of fighter jets “at the disposal of the Government of the United States of America” departing from a U.S./NATO base in Germany to fly into airspace that is contested with Russia over Ukraine raises serious concerns for the entire NATO alliance. It is simply not clear to us that there is a substantive rationale for it. We will continue to consult with Poland and our other NATO allies about this issue and the difficult logistical challenges it presents, but we do not believe Poland’s proposal is a tenable one.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for an attack on a security convoy in southwestern Pakistan early Tuesday that killed at least five soldiers, according to a monitoring group.

Pakistani police said the explosion in Baluchistan province was caused by a roadside bomb but the claim of responsibility cites an IS suicide bomber as carrying out the attack, according to the U.S.-based SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant messaging.

The conflicting reports could not be immediately explained.

It was the second attack in less than a week claimed by the IS regional affiliate known as Islamic State in Khorasan Province. The militant group is headquartered in neighboring Afghanistan.

Last week, an IS suicide bomber targeted a Shiite mosque during Friday prayers in the northwestern city of Peshawar, killing 63 worshippers and wounding nearly 200.

In Tuesday's attack in the district of Sibi, police also said that 28 people, mostly police officers, were wounded. Wazir Murree, a local police official, said rescuers transported the dead and wounded to hospitals, where an emergency was declared. He said some of wounded were in critical condition.

Local media said the bombing happened near an open area where an annual cultural show was being held. Earlier in the day, Pakistan's President Arif Alvi attended the festival. The targeted convoy was part of the security deployment surrounding Alvi's visit. The bombing took place hours after he had left the area.

Baluchistan has been the scene of a long-running insurgency by various Baluch secessionist groups that for decades have staged attacks on security forces and police to press their demands for independence.

Although authorities say they have quelled the insurgency, violence has continued in the province. Local militants and IS also have a presence there.

According to the claim of responsibility, the attacker was a Pakistani national who "detonated his explosive vest amid a gathering of soldiers and policemen," SITE said.

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EGYPT

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#### **14. Ukraine calls on Egypt to support it, abandon neutrality**

Al-Monitor, 8 Mar 22, Rasha Mahmoud

Ukraine is calling on its trade partners to support it with weapons, fuel and financial and humanitarian assistance, and to abandon their neutral position toward the Russian invasion. Ukrainian Charge d'Affaires in Egypt Ruslan Nechai noted in a press conference Feb. 28 that his country had sent a memorandum to the Arab League asking it to take its side against Russia.

In an exclusive interview with Al-Monitor, Nechai said, "Egypt's commercial and economic interests with Ukraine and Russia will be threatened and disrupted if the war waged by the Kremlin is not ended. Egypt and Ukraine have long-standing relations in terms of food security. Egypt imports wheat, corn and sunflower seed oil from Ukraine. As we speak, cargoes can no longer be transported via the Black Sea, which catapulted prices of imported materials to unprecedented levels. The price of a ton of wheat almost doubled from \$230 to \$450."

He noted, "Vessel insurance companies also raised their prices. Moreover, cooperation in the field of tourism will take a bad hit. In 2021, around 1.3 million Ukrainian tourists visited Egypt. Now, the Ukraine airspace is closed for civil aviation and there will be no Ukrainian tourism to Egypt. Meanwhile, the Russians will be under great economic pressure in light of the imposed economic sanctions, which would block the flow of Russian tourists to Egypt."

Nechai explained, "Ukraine submitted an official request to Egypt that includes a list of demands. It urged Egypt to affirm its solidarity with it by supplying it with weapons, defense equipment, ammunition, fuel and all supplies necessary to confront the largest army in the [European] continent. Ukraine also called on Egypt to provide it with financial support in addition to humanitarian aid, and to record all cases of violations of the provisions of international humanitarian law."

He added, "It is in Egypt's best interest that the war ends. We need Egypt to offer us humanitarian and medical aid, and help us with weapons, at its own discretion. Egypt's food security depends on Ukraine to a large extent."

Egypt is the largest importer of wheat in the world, and Russia and Ukraine are the main source of Egyptian imports, which exceed 50% of its annual consumption. In light of the chronic gap, wheat is among the strategic commodities that were directly affected by the war.

On Feb. 26, Egypt relaunched an international wheat tender to import wheat from April 13 to April 26, just 48 hours after canceling a tender that received a single offer as a result of the war.

Egypt had confirmed in a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the invasion launched by the Russian forces, "The Arab Republic of Egypt is following with deep concern the successive developments regarding the situation in Ukraine, and affirms the importance of upholding dialogue and diplomatic solutions, as well as endeavors that would hasten the political settlement of the crisis in a manner that preserves international security and stability, and ensures that the situation does not escalate or deteriorate, and thus to avoid aggravating humanitarian and economic conditions, with their impacts on the region and worldwide."

On March 2, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) overwhelmingly adopted a resolution condemning the Russian attack on Ukraine and calling on Russia to withdraw all its forces immediately. The majority of Arab countries voted for the resolution, while one Arab country opposed it and three countries abstained. Two Arab countries were absent.

The Arab countries favoring the resolution were Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Comoros, Mauritania, Somalia and Oman.

During a March 3 press conference in Cairo, Nechai praised the Egyptian-Ukrainian relations at all levels, expressing appreciation to Egypt's efforts since the crisis erupted and its condemnation of the Russian invasion during the UNGA meeting.

Karim Mostafa, Egyptian researcher specializing in international relations, told Al-Monitor that the Egyptian position was balanced. "Egypt is weighing all possible scenarios. It is vouching for ending the war in Ukraine as soon as possible, because this is in its best interest. A prolonged war will have severe adverse effects on its economy and on the global economy. On this point, Egypt agrees with the stance of the European community and the G-7," he said.

He noted that Egypt has intertwined economic, tourism and political interests with the two parties to the conflict. "These include the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam that is nearing settlement with the approaching third filling operation. The EU had issued statements assuring it will tend to this issue after the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war," he said.

Mostafa added, "Egypt has fixed stances based on the need to respect international law and to settle disputes by peaceful means. It also asserts the need not to employ economic sanctions outside the framework of the international system."

Political researcher in international affairs Muhammad al-Omari ruled out the possibility of putting pressure on Egypt and the Arab countries to modify their stance on the crisis and abandon their neutrality by using the food security trump card. He told Al-Monitor, "The rise in gas prices in Europe could provide an opportunity for Egypt and gas exporting countries. This could relatively compensate for the damage they will sustain from the rise of the price of grains."

Nader Saad, spokesman for the Egyptian Council of Ministers, told Al-Monitor that his country has 14 approved countries for the supply of wheat, some of which are outside the European continent. "We are safe to a large extent. Last year, the supply of wheat to the government by farmers was 3.4 million tons and we expect production to hit 4 million this year," he said.

He pointed out that the wheat cultivated area in Egypt is estimated at about 1 million feddans (1.03 million acres), each producing more than 3 million tons, and that the country has a silo storage capacity of 3.8 million tons.

"Egypt's current strategic reserve of wheat amounts to 4.3 million tons. The country is diversifying its sources of supply and trying to increase the productivity of the feddan in the supply season in April. The strategic stock is sufficient for nine months, i.e., until the end of this year," Saad noted.

The tension caused by the Russian war on Ukraine lifted the wheat ton prices in Egypt by about 1,000 Egyptian pounds (\$63.65) while the supply of mills for flour production in the local market was not affected.

shoulder or pulling the strings from backstage. We don't know enough about the Berdimuhamedov family dynamics to quite know whether and how father and son might work together. The possible bifurcation of power between the elder and the younger Berdimuhamedovs may invariably introduce the kind of instability the early election is designed to pre-empt in the first place.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **19. Pentagon says Poland's jet offer for Ukraine 'not tenable'**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Vanessa Gera, Lolita C. Baldor and Aamer Madhani

The Pentagon on Tuesday rejected a surprise announcement from Poland that it would give the United States its MiG-29 fighter jets for use by Ukraine, a rare display of disharmony as NATO allies seek to boost Ukrainian fighters while avoiding getting caught up in a wider war with Russia.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Poland's declaration that it intended to deliver the 28 jets to the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany raised the concerning prospect of warplanes departing from a U.S. and NATO base to fly into airspace contested with Russia in the Ukraine conflict.

"We will continue to consult with Poland and our other NATO allies about this issue and the difficult logistical challenges it presents, but we do not believe Poland's proposal is a tenable one," Kirby said in a statement.

The proposed gift of more warplanes would be a morale booster for Ukrainians now under Russian assault for nearly two weeks. But it also raises the risk of the war expanding beyond Ukraine.

Russia has declared that supporting Ukraine's air force in this way would be tantamount to participating in the war, and would possibly spur retaliation.

White House officials were blindsided by the Polish government announcement on the MiGs. The proposal did not come up during talks with Secretary of State Antony Blinken when he was recently in Poland, according to a U.S. official familiar with the talks.

The U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said White House officials did not think the proposal would easily solve the logistical challenges of providing aircraft to Ukraine.

U.S. Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland told lawmakers at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the Ukraine crisis Tuesday she learned of Poland's plans only while driving to the hearing.

"To my knowledge, it wasn't pre-consulted with us," Nuland told senators.

Ukraine has been pleading for more warplanes as it puts up a tough resistance against stronger Russian forces. Washington has been looking at a proposal under which Poland would supply Ukraine with the Mig29s and in turn receive American F-16s to make up for their loss. Ukrainian pilots are trained to fly the Soviet-era fighter jets.

The Polish Foreign Ministry announced the plan in a statement, which said the jets would be delivered to Ramstein free of charge.

“At the same time, Poland requests the United States to provide us with used aircraft with corresponding operational capabilities,” it said.

The Polish government also appealed to other owners of MIG-29 jets to follow suit.

Former Soviet-bloc NATO members Bulgaria and Slovakia also still have Soviet-made fighter jets in their air forces.

Poland’s decision to publicly float its plan came the day before Vice President Kamala Harris was scheduled to depart for Warsaw for talks with Polish officials. The disconnect is likely to add an awkward layer to the talks, which were expected to focus largely on U.S. efforts to help Poland and other eastern European nations that have taken in some 2 million refugees since the war started.

The handover of Poland's 28 Soviet-made MiG-29s would signal Western resolve to do more to deter Russia. Militarily, it would be unlikely to be a game-changer. The number of aircraft is relatively small. The MiG-29s are inferior to more sophisticated Russian aircraft and could be easy prey for Russian pilots and Russian missiles.

A senior U.S. defense official has said Ukrainians are flying relatively few of their existing aircraft, for relatively little time, as it is. The defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the U.S. assessment, said it's possible that Ukraine does not need more planes and would benefit most from addition types of the weapons it uses effectively every day, including anti-aircraft Stinger and anti-tank Javelin missiles.

The official also said that Russia currently has the capacity to reach almost the entire country of Ukraine with its surface-to-air missiles, including from within Russia and from ships in the Black Sea.

Any MiG transfer is fraught with complications as neither NATO nor the European Union want to be seen as directly involved in such a transaction, which would sharply raise already extreme tensions with Russia.

In order to maintain the pretense that NATO and the EU are not direct participants in the Ukraine conflict, U.S. and Polish officials have been considering a variety of options. One begins with the “donation” of Poland’s MiGs to the United States, as Poland announced on Tuesday.

Under one scenario that has been floated, Poland would deliver the fighter jets to the U.S. base in Germany, where they would be repainted and flown to a non-NATO, non-EU country. Ukrainian pilots would then come to fly them to Ukraine.

No country has been publicly identified as a transit point, but Kosovo, a non-aligned country that is very friendly with the United States, has been mentioned as one of several nations that might be willing to serve as a middle point.

Poland's proposed gift would also weaken Poland's own air force at a time of heightened danger in eastern Europe.

Poland had been asking for the U.S. to provide it with F-16 fighter jets to replace the MiGs.

F-16 production is backlogged, however, and the next recipient in line for new deliveries is Taiwan, which is facing renewed threats from China and has strong support from both parties in Congress.

In its statement, the Polish government specifically asked for "used" planes, a distinction that would allow the Biden administration to bypass congressional opposition to making Taiwan wait to receive its F-16s.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said any decision about delivering offensive weapons must be made unanimously by NATO members.

"This is why we are able to give all of our fleet of jet fighters to Ramstein, but we are not ready to make any moves on our own because ... we are not a party to this war," he said.

Some U.S. lawmakers support answering Ukraine's appeals for more warplanes. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday that he believed the aid that Congress hopes to approve later this week for Ukraine will include loan guarantees to help NATO allies replenish their air forces after giving MiGs to Ukraine.

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## **20. US and UK ban Russian oil and gas imports in drive to punish Putin**

Financial Times, 8 Mar 22, James Politi, Myles McCormick, Jim Pickard and Andy Bounds

President Joe Biden has banned imports of Russian oil and gas into the US as Washington steps up economic sanctions on Moscow over the invasion of Ukraine in an attempt to deprive it of revenue.

The move was matched by a UK phase-out of Russian oil imports, but the EU did not follow suit and instead unveiled a plan to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds within a year.

The US decision opens a new front in efforts to isolate Moscow from the global economy, following moves to impose sanctions on key Russian banks, top government officials and oligarchs, as well as its central bank.

“Russian oil will no longer be acceptable at US ports and the American people will deal another powerful blow to [Vladimir] Putin’s war machine,” Biden said, speaking from the White House.

But a ban on US and UK imports will be far less disruptive to global markets than a full international embargo as only a small proportion of Russian shipments goes to those two markets.

The Kremlin responded by issuing an edict on Tuesday saying it would restrict the export of some commodities following the western oil bans, but did not specify details.

The ban came after days of debate within the Biden administration and between the US and western allies about the merits of banning Russian energy to punish President Vladimir Putin for the attack on Ukraine, as well as the risk that it could trigger a new shock to global energy markets.

UK prime minister Boris Johnson’s government said it would phase out the import of Russian oil by the end of the year.

Kwasi Kwarteng, UK business secretary, said the British government would organize an “orderly transition” away from Russian oil imports. But Rishi Sunak, UK chancellor, told a cabinet meeting that consumers would pay a price for the ban, with lower-income households particularly hard hit.

The UK is less dependent on Russia than much of mainland Europe, with Russian supplies making up 8 per cent of overall oil imports into the UK. Johnson is expected to make a statement later this week on reducing British imports of Russian gas.

Germany has resisted any EU prohibition on buying Russian crude. Olaf Scholz, Germany’s chancellor, said on Monday that he preferred to apply “sustainable” pressure on Moscow that would not impose too big a cost on German consumers. Developing alternatives to Russian energy, he said, “cannot be done overnight”.

Biden said: “We’re moving forward this ban understanding that many of our European allies and partners may not be in a position to join us. But we’re working closely with Europe and our partners to develop a long-term strategy to reduce their dependence on Russian energy as well.”

Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, tweeted on Tuesday evening: “Thankful for US and @POTUS personal leadership in striking in the heart of Putin’s war machine and banning oil, gas and coal from US market. Encourage other countries and leaders to follow”.

Russia, the world’s largest exporter of crude and petroleum products, shipped almost 8mn barrels a day to global markets at the end of last year, according to the International Energy Agency.

About 60 per cent of Russia’s oil exports go to Europe, including around 2 per cent to the UK, while 8 per cent go to the US. China accounts for about 20 per cent.

Biden had been facing heavy pressure from members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to plough ahead with an import ban on Russian oil, but had been resisting in an attempt to keep energy flowing around the world and prevent petrol prices from rising sharply at home.

Biden warned that “defending freedom” would bring costs to America as well in the form of higher prices, but he told US energy companies to not take advantage of the increases. “Russia’s aggression is costing us all and is no time for profiteering or price gouging,” said Biden.

The White House said Americans would also be prohibited from “financing or enabling foreign companies” that are investing in Russian energy production. A senior Biden administration official said the US was banning new crude purchases immediately and allowing 45 days to wind down existing contracts.

Alexander Novak, Russia’s deputy prime minister, warned on Monday night that a potential ban could cause oil prices to more than double to \$300 a barrel. He also said that Russia had the option of switching off gas supplies to Europe via the original Nord Stream pipeline, but had chosen not to so far because “no one will benefit from it”.

The move earned plaudits for Biden from Capitol Hill. Jeanne Shaheen, a Democratic senator from New Hampshire, said it was the “right decision”. “The US vowed to hold Putin accountable for any violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty, and this is a result of Putin’s actions,” she said. Republicans said the move should be accompanied by moves to boost US domestic energy production.

Brent crude oil rose 6.5 per cent on Tuesday to about \$131 a barrel as traders reacted to news of the US ban. West Texas Intermediate, the US benchmark, rose by a similar margin to \$127. US petrol prices have climbed rapidly in recent months. On Tuesday, the national average hit a record high of \$4.17 a gallon, according to the AAA, an automobile association.

Mohammed Barkindo, secretary-general of the OPEC producer group, warned that there would be no way of filling the gap left by Russian oil in case of an all-out embargo.

“There is no capacity in the world at the moment that can replace 7mn barrels of exports,” he said at the CERAWEEK energy conference in Houston on Monday.

Oil prices have surged in recent days as many big oil consumers have boycotted Russian oil even before the announcement of any official crude import prohibitions. Brent and West Texas Intermediate both ended 2021 at less than \$80 a barrel.

The EU unveiled a plan on Tuesday to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds within a year. Moscow supplies 40 per cent of the bloc’s gas and a quarter of its crude oil.

Brussels aims to import more liquefied natural gas, increase the amount of wind and solar energy, produce biogas and reduce demand by insulating homes and asking people to turn down their central heating.

the president have suggested he does not want to appear to be setting policy based on his personal emotions or grief over his son.

It was 2016 when Biden first publicly connected the brain cancer that killed his son to the toxic burn pits that Beau had been exposed to, citing a book that had been written about it and had included a chapter on Beau.

In a January 2018 interview with PBS's Judy Woodruff, Biden said he thought burn pits played a "significant role" in his son's death but added that the science was unsettled.

"There's a lot higher incidence of cancer coming from Iraq now and Afghanistan than in other wars," Biden said. "There's been no direct scientific evidence that I'm aware of yet, but a lot of work is being done."

During the campaign, Biden advocated for a law that would allow veterans to get treatment, and he also called on more federal research funding to study the impact of brain injuries and toxic exposures. His budget proposal this year included \$87 million toward such research, with additional funding expected in future years.

Biden had been more cautious on calling for federal legislation until recently. But on Tuesday, he was unequivocal in pushing for the House bill, as well as a similar Senate measure that cleared with unanimous backing this year.

"Both of these bills have bipartisan support," he said. "These are the bills that unite the American people. These are the bills that will deliver necessary care for veterans and their families. And let's get those bills to my desk, so I can sign them immediately."

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## **22. Spy agencies cite Russia's setbacks but say Putin is 'unlikely to be deterred'**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Julian E. Barnes

Top U.S. intelligence officials said on Tuesday that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had been surprised and unsettled by the problems that have hampered his military in Ukraine, issues that will make it more difficult for Russian forces to control the country.

But Mr. Putin is determined to succeed in Ukraine, and will try to double down and use ever more brutal tactics, the officials said during an appearance before the House Intelligence Committee.

America's intelligence agencies, which before the attack released information on Russia's troop buildup and war plans, will work to highlight Russian atrocities and crimes, a continuation of the information war that helped rally the West to impose tough sanctions on Ukraine, the officials said.

Before the invasion, Mr. Putin thought the war would be relatively quick, allowing him to rapidly seize Kyiv and overwhelm Ukrainian forces, Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence, told lawmakers.

“Moscow underestimated the strength of Ukraine’s resistance and the degree of internal military challenges we are observing, which include an ill-constructed plan, morale issues and considerable logistical issues,” Ms. Haines said.

Controlling all of Ukraine will necessitate even more forces than Russia has committed to the fight, she said.

Some allied intelligence services believe that Mr. Putin’s early military problems could cause him to readjust his plans to take control of the whole country, and stop his advance after he captures Kyiv, particularly if military officers highlight how many additional forces it will require to secure Ukraine.

But diplomats are also quick to add that they are not sure how rationally Mr. Putin is viewing the situation. At the hearing, Ms. Haines said Mr. Putin appeared intent on intensifying his campaign, despite his military’s logistical problems.

“Our analysts assess that Putin is unlikely to be deterred by such setbacks,” Ms. Haines said, “and instead may escalate, essentially doubling down to achieve Ukrainian disarmament, neutrality, to prevent it from further integrating with the U.S. and NATO.”

Given the problems the Russian military has faced, and the rising will of Ukraine to fight, intelligence officials predicted the war would intensify. William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, is anticipating an “ugly next few weeks.”

“I think Putin is angry and frustrated right now,” Mr. Burns said. He is likely to “try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties,” he added.

Lt. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said there was a limit to how long Kyiv could hold on as Russian forces encircled Ukraine and tightened the vise. “With supplies being cut off, it will become somewhat desperate in, I would say, 10 days to two weeks,” General Berrier said.

Other estimates are similar. Some allied governments believe Russia will finish encircling Kyiv in a week and, given the strength of Ukraine’s resistance, the city may be able to hold out for another month, a European diplomat said on Tuesday.

While the intelligence chiefs said Mr. Putin felt aggrieved, Mr. Burns said it would be incorrect to view his actions as crazy.

The Russian leader’s increasing isolation and insulation from conflicting views make him “extremely difficult to deal with,” Mr. Burns said. Without aides willing to push back, Mr. Putin entered the war misunderstanding the will of Ukraine to fight back and the West to take action.

Germany, for example, suspended the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, which would have allowed imported Russian natural gas to bypass Ukraine; sent weapons directly to Ukraine; and expanded its defense budget.

“He’s been unsettled by Western reaction and allied resolve, particularly some of the decisions that the German government has taken,” Mr. Burns said. “I think he’s been unsettled by the performance of his own military.”

General Berrier said he had low confidence in reports of Russian casualties, but put Moscow’s losses at 2,000 to 4,000.

Mr. Burns said the American government was keeping a close eye on Mr. Putin’s domestic support. With state-controlled media dominating what the Russian public hears and independent reporting on the invasion essentially being made illegal, it will take time for Russians to “absorb the consequences” of Mr. Putin’s actions.

But, over time, funerals of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine will have an impact, Mr. Burns said.

“You also see, in relatively small numbers, a lot of very courageous Russians out on the street protesting,” Mr. Burns said. “Something like 13 or 14,000 have been arrested since then, which is not a small thing in a deeply repressive society like Russia.”

Other governments said another crucial factor is whether Mr. Putin’s support within the military erodes. Before the invasion, Russian officers complained about the plan, according to intercepts obtained by Western intelligence. The discontent with the Kremlin’s planning now continues, the European diplomat said.

The intelligence community will expand its information war with Russia, working to expose Moscow’s war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine, Ms. Haines said. American spy agencies were working with other agencies to document Russian actions in Ukraine, including war crimes, and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

“Russian forces are at the very least operating with reckless disregard for the safety of noncombatants, as Russian units launch artillery and airstrikes into urban areas as they have done in cities across Ukraine,” Ms. Haines said.

Such an information campaign to expose Russia’s attacks on civilians and other missteps would build on the intelligence released before the invasion, which sought to expose Russia’s war plans, rally allied support for tough financial sanctions and deny Moscow the chance to create a false pretext for an attack.

Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, the director of the National Security Agency, said that the United States had closely tracked three or four Russian cyberattacks on Ukraine, and that reinforced Ukrainian defenses had helped blunt wider Russian cyberattacks.

“In terms of why they haven’t done more, I think that’s obviously some of the work that the Ukrainians have done, some of the challenges that the Russians have encountered and some of the work that others have been able to do to prevent their actions,” General Nakasone said.

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### **23. Biden Administration altered rules for sharing intelligence with Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Warren P. Strobel and Michael R. Gordon

The White House last week modified existing guidance for the Pentagon and U.S. spy agencies on sending intelligence data to the Ukrainian government to clear the way of any bureaucratic roadblocks to information sharing, a senior Biden administration official said.

That change followed complaints from both Democratic and Republican lawmakers that President Biden’s administration wasn’t sharing real-time targeting data that would enable Ukraine’s military to strike back at Russian armored formations bombarding and attempting to envelop its major cities.

“We’re adjusting as circumstances warrant, and we’ll continue to ensure that operators have flexibility to share intelligence as the conflict evolves,” a U.S. intelligence official said of the change, declining to provide additional details.

The U.S. has been sharing battlefield intelligence with Ukraine to help the Kyiv-based government defend itself against Russia’s invasion, while being careful to avoid becoming directly embroiled in the conflict itself, other U.S. officials said.

The intelligence sharing with Ukraine, which isn’t a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is part of broader Biden policy of support for Kyiv that includes billions in military assistance, diplomatic support and joining U.S. allies in harsh sanctions on Russia.

It extends a preinvasion initiative of releasing more intelligence than Washington has previously provided to allies in Europe and to the public to spotlight the Kremlin’s military movements.

In the days leading up to the invasion, the Biden administration warned repeatedly that an attack was imminent, though it didn’t provide details on why it believed Russia was preparing military action. According to an American official, one of the reasons the U.S. grew so certain of Moscow’s plan for an invasion was intelligence showing the Russian military had begun to fuel its missiles, a sign they were about to be deployed.

It couldn’t be determined, however, if that specific detail was provided to the Ukrainians.

U.S. officials said the classified information now streaming across secure communications portals includes detailed, tactical data on Russian troop movements that is designed to help Ukraine formulate a military response. They declined to be more specific, citing the classified nature of the exchange.

One U.S. official said the intelligence data first must be scrubbed to remove clues about how it was collected, leading to delays in sharing it with the Ukrainians.

Rep. Adam Smith (D., Wash.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said last week that the Pentagon wasn't sharing "real-time targeting" information with the Ukrainians because doing so would make the U.S. a participant in the war. "So the Pentagon is really struggling and walking that very fine line," he said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" program.

"We are sending them intelligence. But we have lawyers delaying the process at way, way too many steps. And we shouldn't be letting technicalities get in the way of helping the Ukrainians fight back," Sen. Ben Sasse (R., Neb.), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told National Public Radio.

U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter disputed those characterizations. They said one of the major impediments to sharing classified material with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's government is concerns about Russian moles in Ukraine's security services.

"We are sharing intelligence with Ukrainians as quickly as possible," Sen. Mark Warner (D., Va.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in a recent TV interview. "We also have to realize, unfortunately, many of the Ukrainian services have been penetrated by the Russians over many years, so we have to protect our sources and methods."

Those counterintelligence concerns, officials said, can mean delays in transmitting newly acquired intelligence to Ukraine, while it is sanitized to ensure Russian operatives don't learn the details of American intelligence-gathering methods.

Lack of intelligence-gathering assets over Ukraine is another limiting factor. The U.S. isn't—as far as is known—flying surveillance drones and aircraft over Ukraine's airspace. Additionally, Ukraine, at least until recently, hasn't been a traditional "hot spot" where spy satellites and other collection platforms were consistently trained, another U.S. official noted.

Rep. Tom Malinowski (D., N.J.), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he looked into the intelligence-sharing issue and "my belief is that there are no meaningful restrictions on the sharing of intelligence."

"For example, I personally believe it would be very useful to provide intelligence on the locations of Russian artillery," he said, without stating whether or not that was occurring.

Speaking Tuesday at a House hearing on world-wide threats, the intelligence agency chiefs provided a general picture of how they saw the war in Ukraine going.

Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said Russia is facing serious military shortcomings in its invasion of Ukraine, including morale and logistical problems. Moscow will be hard-pressed to control territory and install a pro-Kremlin regime in the face of a persistent and significant Ukrainian insurgency, she added.

Ms. Haines and other intelligence agency chiefs told the House Intelligence Committee that Russian President Vladimir Putin had hoped to seize the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv within two days in a lightning strike that would have short-circuited attempts by the West to aid the country.

That didn't happen. "His own military performance has been largely ineffective," CIA Director William Burns told House Intelligence Committee chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.).

Ms. Haines and Mr. Burns told the committee that Mr. Putin is likely to double down on his efforts to subdue Ukraine and grind down its military, with increasing disregard for civilian casualties.

It will be "an ugly next few weeks," Mr. Burns said.

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#### **24. Russia's military losses in Ukraine are a gold mine for US intelligence**

Newsweek, 8 Mar 22, Naveed Jamali and Tom O'Connor

Russian military equipment seized by Ukrainian forces throughout an explosive conflict poised to enter its third week may prove a gold mine for U.S. intelligence looking to get a rare look at Moscow's weapons and the encrypted command and control data they contain, current and former U.S. military personnel told Newsweek.

"The gear is huge," Mike Jason, a retired U.S. Army colonel who served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo, told Newsweek. "It's like capturing an enigma machine."

The term refers to the cipher device employed by Nazi Germany during World War II to mask the Third Reich's secret communications, a code ultimately unraveled by the Allies, constituting a major intelligence advantage.

Now as Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to argue today for the "denazification" of Ukraine through what he has deemed a "special military operation" decried by much of the international community as an unjustified invasion of the neighboring country, an opportunity may exist to listen in on Moscow's war effort.

Should Ukraine get its hands on such assets, Jason said there are "immediate implications" and "long-term implications," including those that involve the country's foreign backers.

Among the potential "immediate" impacts would be that Kyiv "can perhaps listen in right now to what is happening, then exploit in real-time," Jason said. One of the possible "long-term" effects he identified was that "the equipment can be reverse-engineered, say, sent to a major foreign intelligence exploitation lab, etc."

Here, Jason said, even seemingly innocuous devices such as radios, if still intact, could contain important so-called "crypto" information, giving an insight into Russia's encoded communications.

"And then," he added, "technology can be developed to jam and/or listen in, etc."

Given the active war effort, U.S. military officials have been reticent in speaking publicly about the extent to which intelligence was being shared between Washington and Kyiv. Reached for comment, a Pentagon spokesperson told Newsweek that "we have nothing to offer, as we do not speak to intelligence assessments."

But one U.S. cyberwarfare officer, who asked to remain anonymous, told Newsweek that "we have covert folks attempting to acquire hardware all the time."

And, though no reliable figures as to the extent of Russia's military losses thus far have been made public, reports indicate they have been relatively substantial. Unverified footage promoted by official Ukrainian outlets has documented Ukrainian captures of the likes of Russian command and control vehicles, a T-72-tank-mounted TOS-1A thermobaric multiple-launch rocket system and a number of Russian aircraft, including the Su-34.

Ukrainian state-owned defense conglomerate Ukroboronprom even claimed Tuesday it would offer sizable rewards for anyone willing to retrieve "stolen combat aviation equipment of the occupiers," including up to \$500,000 for a captured military helicopter and \$1 million for a warplane in working condition.

One particularly important alleged find for Kyiv was the Pantsir surface-to-air missile system, several of which have been said to have been taken intact by Ukrainian units. Jason said this would potentially be "a huge get," as it's assumed such a weapon "talks to friendly aircraft to deconflict friend-or-foe" and "would be tied to command and control systems at a high level."

Asked by Newsweek what the fate of such Russian equipment was once coming under Ukrainian control, a senior Ukrainian defense official who requested to not be named had a simple answer.

"It is recovered and used against the aggressor," he said.

A U.S. military aviator who also asked to remain unnamed gave some examples of the benefits of capturing enemy hardware.

"Getting actual equipment and manuals also helps with the human dynamic: how easy it is to operate, etc," the U.S. military aviator told Newsweek. "Can any 'Joe Shmoe' use this, or does it require a Ph.D. to operate it at the same level as the glossy brochure?"

But this aviator also noted that there were limits to the amount of useful information that could be extracted from these systems alone in the modern era, when a nation like Russia would likely be quick to take action to avoid critical channels being intruded on.

"As systems move from analog to digital, the exploitation game changes a bit," the U.S. military aviator said. "The software and source code are the critical items, because you can find zero-day vulnerabilities and build a tool to attack it if/when the time comes."

As such, the U.S. military aviator said that "crypto gear is less important these days because the value is in the keys, and they change all the time."

But fears of U.S. equipment falling into Russia's hands likely also played into hesitance to send more advanced, expensive weapons systems to Ukraine, beyond the simpler platforms such as Stinger shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile systems, a number of which the Russian Defense Ministry claims to have already confiscated. Ukraine's military also said its navy sunk its own flagship last week, the frigate Hetman Sahaidachny, to avoid capture by Russia.

Attempts by Washington and Moscow to obtain one another's equipment were a central theme of the Cold War, and continue to influence U.S. opposition to allies like Turkey and partners like India acquiring Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile system while also seeking advanced U.S. platforms.

Last month, the Pentagon dismissed Russian news reports that Moscow had recovered a sonar countermeasure device from a U.S. Navy Virginia-class submarine after an encounter with Russian warships in the northern Pacific Ocean, with spokesperson Eric Pahon telling Newsweek at the time that the claims were "nonsense and disinformation."

On Thursday, the Pentagon managed to complete an extensive operation to recover an F-35 fighter jet that had crashed earlier this year into the South China Sea, where the U.S.' stated top competitor on the world stage, China, operates extensively, and which it largely claims as its own territory.

As the war in Ukraine drags on, both Kyiv and Moscow claim successes on a daily basis. But rampant misinformation and the fog of war have obscured efforts to discern the validity of either side's claims.

And despite their ongoing hostilities, representatives of Russia and Ukraine have also engaged in three rounds of talks hosted by Russian ally Belarus. Among the more immediate topics of discussion is the implementation of a ceasefire and humanitarian corridors to allow citizens to flee the conflict, which threatens to soon take on an even deadlier character as Russian troops push to encircle major cities, including the capital.

On Monday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told Reuters that Moscow would end the war "this moment" should Kyiv agree to four core demands: an end to Ukrainian military action, recognition of the independence of the pro-Russia separatist-held Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in the eastern Donbas region, Russia's control of the southern Crimean Peninsula annexed in 2014 and an amendment to Ukraine's constitution to declare neutrality from military blocs, ending its bid to join the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

In an interview with ABC News, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later rejected what he called an "ultimatum" from Russia, but said his government had a "possible solution" to satisfy the conditions. To do so, however, he sought a direct line with Putin, who has not expressed any public plans to engage one-on-one with his Ukrainian counterpart.

## **25. Russian oil embargo pushes OPEC to take sides**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Rochelle Toplensky

A Russian oil embargo ramps up pressure on the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to increase production or side with Russia. As the war in Ukraine becomes a proxy conflict in a new Cold War, the cartel can't hope to maintain its current studied neutrality.

President Biden banned imports of Russian oil on Tuesday, sending the price of Brent crude to an intraday high of \$133 a barrel. The U.K. may soon follow, but the key export market for Russian oil is Europe. Many buyers already were avoiding Russian crude due to fears of breaching financial sanctions or hurting their reputations. European energy giant Shell on Tuesday even announced its own private boycott of Russian oil and gas and apologized for buying a cargo of Russian oil last Friday, after coming under public pressure.

Russia is the world's third-largest oil supplier, producing around 10 million barrels per day of crude, about half for export. The West imported about 4.3 million bpd in January. The lion's share of that went to Continental Europe, with the U.S. importing just 200,000 bpd and the U.K. even less, according to Bjørnar Tonhaugen, head of oil markets at Rystad Energy. But the U.S. embargo may cause others to avoid Russian crude and in the absence of buyers the global market could face a big shortfall. Rystad Energy estimates that cutting four million bpd from global supply would send crude prices to \$200 a barrel.

Alternative suppliers could ease the crunch. OPEC+ has about 4 million bpd of spare capacity, according to Rystad, concentrated in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. But opening their taps would be to take sides against Russia, which co-chairs OPEC+, the wider version of the cartel. At its most recent meeting, in the week after President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, OPEC+ took just 13 minutes to decide they would stick to their production plans. They didn't even discuss the war in what was reportedly their shortest meeting ever.

U.S. shale production also could be profitably ramped up at prices far below current levels, but that isn't a short-term answer; OPEC could produce much more quickly. Also, differences in oil composition can make it difficult for customers to directly substitute one crude for another. For example, U.S. Gulf Coast refineries use heavier Russian oil, which can't be readily replaced with the lighter shale blend.

Europe, Russia's biggest energy customer in coal, oil and gas didn't announce an oil embargo on Tuesday. Instead, the European Union unveiled a plan to cut its "overreliance" on Russian energy. The bloc seems to have finally accepted that its pipeline diplomacy has failed as Mr. Putin weaponizes energy. "We simply cannot rely on a supplier who explicitly threatens us," said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Even if some European companies continue to buy Russian oil, the region faces a potential crisis in gas. Moscow has threatened to stop sending gas through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany in retaliation for a Western ban on its oil. The EU has enough gas to make it through to the summer, but will need to rebuild its inventories before next winter. The bloc has proposed a

legal requirement that gas storage in the EU be at least 90% full by Oct. 1 every year. That would lower the risk of a winter crunch, assuming the gas can be found.

It also promised to reduce its demand for Russian gas by nearly two-thirds before the end of the year by increasing liquefied-natural-gas imports and pipeline gas from the likes of Norway and Algeria as well as pushing energy-efficiency measures and clean-energy installations.

The Saudis demonstrated that energy was a powerful weapon against Moscow in their OPEC+ standoff in 2020, which sent crude prices briefly below zero. It might be that OPEC isn't willing to sacrifice the recent detente to balance the market. Mr. Putin needs energy income more than ever with his war in Ukraine taking longer than expected and Russia's foreign-exchange reserves tangled in sanctions.

Second-guessing OPEC's moves is a mug's game, but the U.S. ban on Russian purchases shrinks its space for trying to play it both ways. OPEC members have an uncomfortable choice to make.

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### **26. US spy chiefs warn Putin may escalate war**

TIME Magazine, 8 Mar 22, Vera Bergengruen

Twelve days into his invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has “no sustainable political endgame,” the heads of U.S. intelligence agencies told Congress in a somber assessment Tuesday. That military reality means even greater humanitarian costs lie ahead, they said. “Putin is angry and frustrated right now,” Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns told lawmakers at the House Intelligence Committee’s annual hearing on worldwide threats. “He’s likely to double down and try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties.”

The U.S. intelligence leaders laid out their most blunt assessment yet of the war that has killed hundreds of civilians and forced more than two million people to flee the country, with testimony from Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Defense Intelligence Agency Director Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone and FBI Director Christopher Wray. Despite the significant losses incurred by the Russian military, which has faced unexpectedly fierce resistance from Ukrainian armed forces, U.S. intelligence analysts “assess that Putin is unlikely to be deterred by such setbacks and instead may escalate,” warned Haines. “Putin feels aggrieved the West does not give him proper deference and perceives this as a war he cannot afford to lose,” she told lawmakers, adding that the Russian military “has begun to loosen its rules of engagement to achieve their military objective.”

But even if the Kremlin pursues a “maximalist plan,” U.S. intelligence analysts judge that it will be difficult for Russians to hold and control Ukrainian territory. Given the current situation, it would prove extremely challenging to “install a sustainable pro-Russian regime in Kyiv in the face of what we assess is likely to be a persistent and significant insurgency,” Haines said. U.S.

and European leaders have made similar warnings in recent days. Tony Radakin, the head of the United Kingdom's armed forces, declared on Sunday that Russian forces were being "decimated" by the Ukrainians. "Ukraine will never be a victory for Putin," President Joe Biden said in a White House address on Tuesday. "Putin may be able to take a city, but he'll never be able to hold the country."

Moscow underestimated the strength of a highly motivated Ukrainian resistance as well as the severity of the Russian military's internal challenges "which include an ill-constructed plan, morale issues, and considerable logistical issues," Haines said. What was meant to be a rapid offensive was almost immediately hampered by supply problems. Hundreds of videos have shown destroyed Russian vehicles and captured Russian soldiers. Between 2,000 to 4,000 Russian soldiers have been killed so far in less than two weeks of fighting, according to Berrier, the DIA Director. The U.S. suffered 2,400 military deaths in 20 years in Afghanistan.

But U.S. intelligence chiefs also offered a frank assessment of Putin's mindset, calling the war on Ukraine a "matter of deep personal conviction" for the Russian leader. "He has been stewing in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition for many years," Burns told lawmakers. He noted that Putin is operating with a very small circle of advisers, and that the COVID-19 pandemic "made it even narrower."

The threat of accidental or intentional nuclear escalation loomed over the hearing. "As Putin's generals are being killed and he's increasingly cornered, I would anticipate he would do increasingly desperate things," said Rep. Jim Cooper, a Tennessee Democrat, echoing concerns expressed by other lawmakers. Putin sparked new fears when he took the unusual step of publicly declaring that he was putting his nuclear forces into "special combat readiness" on Feb. 27. At the same time, Ukraine's nuclear plants have been caught in the crossfire between Russian and Ukrainian forces, and international officials have issued dire warnings about the risks. "We've never had armed conflict, in this way, with boots on the ground in a country with this configuration of nuclear infrastructure," Rafael Mariano Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told TIME March 4, calling it "unprecedented."

The U.S. intelligence officials cautioned against panic. While Putin's announcement was "very unusual" and something U.S. officials said they had not seen since the 1960s, Haines said that they had "not observed force-wide nuclear posture changes that go beyond what we've seen in prior moments of heightened tensions."

The officials also noted the potential fallout for countries that have aligned themselves with Putin. Chinese leader Xi Jinping and other leaders are "unsettled" by what they're seeing in Ukraine, Burns said. "They did not anticipate the significant difficulties the Russians were going to run into," he told lawmakers. "I think they are unsettled by the reputational damage that can come by their close association with President Putin; second by the economic consequences at a moment when they are facing lower annual growth rates than they've experienced for more than three decades."

Xi has adopted a more cautious tone in his recent dealings. In a video conference with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Tuesday, he warned about

the situation “spinning out of control” and said he was “pained to see the flames of war reignited on the European continent,” according to a readout from the Chinese foreign ministry.

The U.S. intelligence agencies are now focused on how Putin will respond to his initial miscalculations about Ukraine, about the West’s response, and about his own military. “He’s been proven wrong on every count,” Burns said, noting Putin’s underlying belief that Ukraine is not a real country. “He’s dead wrong. Real countries fight back. And that’s what the Ukrainians have done quite heroically over the last 12 days.”

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## **27. NATO members mount huge operation to resupply Ukrainian fighters**

Wall Street Journal, 8 Mar 22, Matthew Luxmoore, Drew Hinshaw and Nancy A. Youssef

In the space of two weeks, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has set off one of the largest and fastest arms transfers in history.

By road and rail, the Czech Republic sent 10,000 rocket-propelled grenades to Ukraine’s defenders last week alone. In Poland, the provincial airport of Rzeszow located about 60 miles from the Ukrainian border has been so crowded with military cargo jets that on Saturday some flights were briefly diverted until airfield space became available.

On the country’s highways, police vehicles are escorting military transport trucks to the border, with other convoys slipping into Ukraine via snow-covered back roads through the mountains.

The race to deliver arms to Ukraine is emerging as a supply operation with few historical parallels. Western allies, having ruled out putting troops on the ground in Ukraine, have been attempting to equip the country’s thinly spread and outmatched military, some of its soldiers fighting without boots.

With Russian warships holding the Black Sea coast, and Ukraine’s airspace contested, the U.S. is rushing to truck weapons overland before Russia chokes off the roads as well. Pentagon officials said most of what will total \$350 million in arms and assistance the Biden administration pledged late last month has been delivered. Congress is considering authorizing billions more. The Defense Department has described its efforts as unprecedented.

Governments once reluctant to transfer arms and antagonize Russia are joining the fray. Sweden, though historically nonaligned, has pledged 5,000 antitank weapons. Berlin—which only three weeks ago was blocking Estonia from transferring German-made howitzers to Ukraine—is now sending more than 2,000 antitank and anti-aircraft weapons. Italy, long a passive player in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has also promised weapons, and Spain has offered grenade launchers.

The allied effort is buttressed by ordinary citizens in Europe and the U.S., who say they are buying hunting-grade gear online to circumvent rules against shipping military equipment and funneling it to friends headed into Ukraine. In Warsaw, a 67-year-old woman is in charge of smuggling night-vision goggles to the country’s defenders. Packed hotels near the Polish-

Ukrainian border cater to men asking each other how they can ship body armor to major cities, before Russian troops seize the roads.

Still, Ukrainians say it isn't enough. In videos posted to social media from his office in Kyiv, with the Ukrainian capital almost encircled by Russian forces, President Volodymyr Zelensky has urged the West to send more weapons and enforce a no-fly zone to stop Russia from carrying out more air attacks on civilians. He pleaded last weekend to members of Congress for combat jets and missiles.

Such appeals are coming not just from the top. Frontline fighters in Ukraine's Territorial Defense units have used social media to put out a shopping list of their needs, including helmets, binoculars, range finders along with more basic needs such as instant noodles or Q-Tips.

"We need more," said Andriy Malets, a 53-year-old entrepreneur who signed up to help defend the town of Kryvyi Rih but said he was forced to wait because his local unit has five volunteers for every available gun. Instead, he said, people in Kryvyi Rih now spend their time making Molotov cocktails.

The infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars in weaponry has little precedent in modern times, said Filip Bryjka, a security analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs. There hasn't been a Western arms push of such speed and scale in Europe since President Harry S. Truman asked Congress to send \$400 million in military and economic assistance into Greece and Turkey in the first months of the Cold War, said Mr. Bryjka, who wrote a recent analysis of Poland's role in arms transfers to Ukraine.

The dollar value, U.S. and allied officials say, is almost certain to grow if the war continues. On Capitol Hill, legislators are considering a bill for when the \$350 million designated for Ukraine runs out. That legislation provides \$12 billion for Ukraine and its Eastern European allies, roughly half of which would be dedicated to supporting Ukraine militarily.

Ukrainian officials, in negotiations with Poland and the U.S., have pushed for NATO allies to provide Soviet-era jet fighters that Ukrainian pilots could fly, alongside more antitank missiles, Turkish drones, and heat-seeking missiles capable of shooting down combat helicopters or planes.

"We are happy but we are not satisfied," said one senior Ukrainian official. "What we have is not enough because Russian troops are still in Ukraine."

U.S. officials warn that the pace of resupply would likely slow if Russian forces grab control of the highways and cities of western Ukraine, where the weapons are received from convoys rolling in from Poland, Slovakia and Romania. But judging the pace of Russia's advance and when the supply lines may be cut is hard to assess, defense officials have said.

A large amount of the gear going to Ukraine comes from NATO members in Central Europe that were once part of the former Soviet Union or allied with it. The U.S. says that Washington and its NATO allies have sent 17,000 antitank weapons into Ukraine, mostly provided by the Czech military.

Some of the efforts have been financed by a crowdfunding campaign, which raised \$20 million from individual donors in the Czech Republic. The country's government put up another \$30 million to buy arms that have virtually all been dispatched.

"Everything that Ukraine's allies ask us to do, we do it ASAP," said Czech Deputy Defense Minister Tomas Kopecky. "When it's used in Ukraine it means it's not used in our country."

Although the transport planes and trucks are highly visible, the operation to supply Ukraine in many countries has been shrouded in secrecy. Some Central and Eastern European countries worry overt shipments could provoke Russia. "Most countries prefer not to share details because they are afraid of how Russia could react," said Mr. Bryjka. "And they don't want to make Russia's intelligence work easier."

The shipments are also operating through an area that Washington doesn't expect to stay open much longer. Kyiv, which U.S. officials thought would fall early in the war, has held off Russian advances, allowing western militaries to ship in gear more easily than they expected.

Ukrainians living outside the country are using the same opening to drive in military gear bought with their own money to soldiers fighting in the war. While President Biden was delivering his State of the Union address last week, promising aid for Ukraine, Oksana Prysyazhnyuk, a Ukrainian energy executive in New York state, was watching, while texting friends on the front. "Maybe you can find someone who can provide helmets and bulletproof vests because the demand for them is absolutely huge," a Ukrainian stationed near the front line texted her.

"They are going to war with bare hands," Ms. Prysyazhnyuk said. "They don't even have winter boots."

One senior Ukrainian military official, who spoke Tuesday from his base outside Kyiv, disagreed. He said there were now no major equipment shortages among his troops. Asked what kind of support he would like to see from the West, he backed Mr. Zelensky's call for a no-fly zone over Ukraine and added: "I'd like to see more Russians in graves."

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## **28. Arctic winds in Ukraine 'will turn Russian vehicles into 40-tonne freezers'**

The Times (UK), 9 mar 22, Larisa Brown

A severe cold snap could stall Russian advances further, analysts believe, with troops forced either to abandon their vehicles or sit in "40-tonne iron freezers".

Arctic air moving through Russia and Ukraine will combine with an easterly wind to make temperatures drop to as low as minus 10C (14 degrees Fahrenheit) overnight around Kyiv and the northern city of Kharkiv in the coming days. When wind chill is taken into account it could feel as cold as minus 20C (-4 degrees Fahrenheit), according to forecasts.

Analysts said that this could make the invasion harder for the Russians, especially those stuck in a 40-mile column of stalled vehicles north of the Ukrainian capital. A Ukrainian military source

said: “It will affect those in the long-staying convoys; it means that Russian troops staying alongside the roads will be suffering.”

Major Kevin Price, who served in the British Army for 20 years, said: “Minus 20C will degrade the Russian force, there is no question. It will improve cross-country mobility because there will be less mud but the Russians are not ready for Arctic conditions.” An urban assault without suitable clothing would be “unbelievably tough”, he said.

Any fuel shortages would also mean that soldiers would be unable to run their engines to keep warm. “Imagine being sat in a 40-tonne iron freezer all night,” he said, adding that very low temperatures would also probably affect the vehicle performance if there were no suitable oils and lubricants.

Price said he believed that bad weather would further damage Russian morale and inflict cold-weather casualties. “It’s not a decisive factor but it is a very unwelcome development for Russian commanders,” he said, noting that the temperature was below average for this time of year and so Russian forces would probably be unprepared.

Brigadier Ben Barry, who is now a senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said the weather would affect Ukrainians too. “It will slow things down but it will slow things down for both sides,” he said. “The proportion of troops that start suffering cold injuries like frostbite will go up.”

A Nato military official told CNN that despite using all the forces it had concentrated in and around Ukraine, Russia was making very little progress. The official said: “We see very little change. For the first time, we don’t expect them to make any gains in the next few days.”

British military chiefs believe that Russian commanders are heading farther forward than normal to restore momentum. On Monday last week Major General Andrei Sukhovetsky, 47, deputy commander of the 41st Combined Arms Army of the Central Military District, was killed near Mariupol, in the southeast. Two days ago a second Russian general was reported to have been killed. Major General Vitaly Gerasimov, 45, chief of staff of the 41st Army, served in Syria and Chechnya and took part in the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The Ukrainian defense ministry said that he had died near Kharkiv and broadcast what it said was a conversation between two Russian security service officers discussing his death and saying that their secure communications did not work in Ukraine. Christo Grozev, executive director of the investigative journalism group Bellingcat, said the 41st Army had lost communications and used a local sim card, enabling the interception.

After almost two weeks Russian forces have captured large areas of northeastern and coastal Ukraine and laid siege to cities and cut off food, water, heat and medicine. However, advances have ceased in many areas. For days efforts to create corridors to evacuate civilians have faltered because of continued shelling and objections to the proposed routes. One evacuation attempt did appear to have been at least partially successful yesterday, when a bus convoy left Sumy in the northeast.

Last night the Tass news agency in Russia reported an announcement of new ceasefire this morning and that Russian forces were ready to provide human corridors so people could leave Kyiv and four other cities.

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## **29. Hints of a Ukraine-Russia deal?**

Foreign Policy, 8 Mar 22, Michael Hirsh

With Russia's bloody aggression in Ukraine apparently bogged down, there are hints this week that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky may be tentatively opening themselves to compromises that might halt the 12-day-old war.

Even so, in testimony to the House intelligence committee on Tuesday, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told lawmakers that although Putin has been surprised by Ukrainian resistance and the global reaction to his invasion, he "is unlikely to be deterred by such setbacks and instead may escalate, essentially doubling down."

In a TV interview released Tuesday, Zelensky was asked by David Muir of ABC News how he reacted to proposals from the Kremlin on Monday. "What is your message to Vladimir Putin right now?" Muir asked. Muir noted that to cease hostilities, Moscow was demanding that Ukraine change its constitution to reject any intention to enter NATO as well as recognize Crimea as part of Russia and the two breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states.

Zelensky avoided answering the question directly but indicated he was willing to compromise on most of those points, saying he was "ready for a dialogue." Regarding NATO, Zelensky said, "I have cooled down regarding this question a long time ago, after we understood that ... NATO is not prepared to accept Ukraine. The alliance is afraid of controversial things and confrontation with Russia."

On the question of separatist territories, the Ukrainian president also appeared somewhat conciliatory, at least on the issue of Donetsk and Luhansk. "I think that items regarding temporarily occupied territories and pseudo-republics not recognized by anyone but Russia, we can discuss and find a compromise on how these territories will live on," Zelensky said. "What's important to me is how the people in those territories who want to be part of Ukraine are going to live."

In the Ukrainian government's official release of the full interview, Zelensky also called for a "collective security agreement" that would include Russia, though he added, "We cannot recognize that Crimea is the territory of Russia" and "I think it will be difficult for Russia to recognize that this is the territory of Ukraine."

On Monday, two weeks after Putin declared in a grandiose speech that Ukraine was "an inalienable part" of Russia's "history, culture, and spiritual space," Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Moscow was ready to stop its military campaign "in a moment." The Kremlin's demands, Peskov said, were that Ukraine also halt hostilities,

acknowledge Crimea as Russian territory, accept Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states, and change its constitution to refuse entry into NATO or the European Union. Western-leaning Ukrainians have long sought to join the EU, and Putin's move to annex Crimea in 2014 was triggered by huge protests that led to the ousting of Ukraine's then-Russia-leaning president, Viktor Yanukovich, after he avoided signing an association pact with the EU. Only last week, Zelensky asked for fast-track EU membership to help thwart Russia's invasion.

Putin has falsely suggested he is willing to compromise before, and Russia's demands are not much different from the past. Even so, after a visit to Moscow on Saturday, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett—the only Western leader to have met Putin since the invasion—also indicated that a deal might be possible, according to Israeli news reports. Quoting unnamed sources “privy to details about the meeting,” the Jerusalem Post reported that although Bennett did not go to Russia with specific proposals in hand, the negotiations were “much more serious than what the West has been saying.” It added that Kyiv has not shared the details so as to maintain pressure on Putin. Bennett called Zelensky after his talk with Putin, which Zelensky had requested. “Talked to [Naftali Bennett],” the Ukrainian president tweeted. “Thanked [him] for Israel's mediation efforts. Discussed ways to end the war and violence.”

If Moscow is more open to negotiations, it would signal a change in tone from Putin's Feb. 21 speech, which occurred three days before the invasion. Since then, the Kremlin has appeared stunned that its attacks on major regions—especially Ukraine's capital, Kyiv—have been stymied by Ukrainian resistance; Russia has also been flummoxed by the ferocity and unity of the response by the United States and European Union. Both have imposed unprecedented sanctions, effectively cutting Russia off from the international financial system. On Tuesday, U.S. President Joe Biden also announced he was banning imports of Russian oil, gas, and coal to the United States to further deprive Putin “of the economic resources he uses to continue his needless war of choice,” a senior administration official said.

“Putin's country is already on ropes,” said Richard Andres, a national security expert at the U.S. National War College. “Russia is disconnected almost completely from the world banking system. There are already going to be millions of Russians who won't be able to get enough to eat or enough electricity.”

Marlene Laruelle, director of the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University and an expert on Putin, said that although it is possible Putin is just playing for time so as to regain the military advantage, she believes the Russian leader might be ready to talk.

“I think they are realizing that there is no political solution to the war, and they cannot win in the long run,” she said, adding that Putin probably realizes he can no longer dismiss the charismatic Zelensky as a Western puppet since Zelensky has become an international hero while Putin has been villainized around the globe. “He probably realizes he will have to have direct talks with Zelensky. He has been arrogant, and very often, you lose the war because of your arrogance.”

On Tuesday, both Haines and CIA director Williams Burns said Putin has too much at stake personally to be seen as backing down now. But with Russian discontent in the streets and even

within his government rising, the Russian leader might also have to worry about his staying power for the first time. "We assess Putin feels aggrieved the West does not give him proper deference and perceives this as a war he cannot afford to lose, but what he might be willing to accept as a victory may change over time given the significant costs he is incurring," Haines said.

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### **30. Europe's unified welcome of Ukrainian refugees exposes 'double standard' for nonwhite asylum seekers: Experts**

ABC News, 8 Mar 22, Deena Zaru

Before Russian attacks on Ukraine led to mass displacement, Europe was already grappling with the Syrian refugee crisis – an issue that had bitterly divided European Union nations in recent years over what to do with the 1.1 million Syrians who sought refuge in Europe.

Meanwhile, neighboring European nations have swiftly met the influx of more than 2 million Ukrainian refugees since Russia's invasion on Feb. 24 with a united show of solidarity.

Although it is unclear if disagreements over burden-sharing will follow, according to those who study migration in Europe, experts say Ukrainian refugees face a more welcoming environment because they are white.

Andrew Geddes, Director of the Migration Policy Centre, told ABC News that there's a stark contrast between Europe's "very warm welcome" of Ukrainian refugees, compared to the largely "hostile" response to Syrians and other asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East.

"It's night and day," Geddes said.

"I think the strongest contrast is with a bunch of central European countries that were very hostile to Syrian refugees, and are now quite much more favorable to Ukrainian refugees," Geddes added, referencing Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic – European Union members that were "the most resistant" to welcoming Syrian refugees.

Meanwhile, many nonwhite refugees fleeing Ukraine, including students from Asia and Africa, have reported instances of discrimination on the borders of Ukraine, with some telling ABC News that differential treatment based on race led to difficulties in crossing into countries like Poland. But others from Africans and the Middle East have said they crossed into Poland without any issues.

United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees Filippo Grandi confirmed during a press conference last Tuesday that "there are instances" of differentiation of treatment at the borders based on race, but said he was assured that "these are not state policies."

Grandi said he met with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau last Wednesday, who "affirmed Poland's commitment to continue receiving all those fleeing, without distinction." Meanwhile, Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba responded to reports of discrimination last

Tuesday, tweeting that "Ukraine's government spares no effort to solve the problem." He also added that Ukraine set up an emergency hotline to assist African, Asian and other students seeking to leave Ukraine.

### **'Exclusionary' asylum policies**

European countries host over 1 million of the 6.6 million Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees, but the vast majority are hosted by only two countries – 59% in Germany and 11% in Sweden, according to United Nations High Commission on Refugees data.

But according to Kelly Petillo, coordinator of the Middle East and North Africa programme and the European Council on Foreign Relations, this "didn't come immediately."

"It came after quite a bit of internal back and forth and lack of disagreement," Petillo said, adding that the majority of Syrian refugees were allowed to enter Europe in 2016 -- four years after the war in Syria began -- only after the European Union struck a deal with Turkey, which was facing immense pressure at the time from the surge of migrants and asylum seekers.

The Europe Union provided financial support to Turkey to slow the flow of migrants and asylum seekers crossing into Europe by returning "irregular migrants" attempting to enter Europe through Greece to Turkey, as Turkey works "to prevent new migratory routes from opening," according to the Migration Policy Centre.

As part of the deal, which was intended to slow migration to Europe, "the European Union agreed to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey on a one-to-one basis," per MPC, and the European Union also paid 6 billion euros to aid Turkey's Syrian migrant communities.

"Since the Syria crisis erupted more than 10 years ago, we've seen that there was a high level of reluctance from Europeans to share the burden amongst themselves," Petillo said.

Austria, Greece, the Netherlands and France host between 2 to 5% of Syrian refugees in Europe, and other countries host below 2%, according to UNHCR.

Some of the Eastern European countries that largely rejected Syrian refugees have been at the forefront of welcoming Ukrainians, Geddes said, pointing to Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

"For migrants from outside of Europe ... it's a very, very powerful, exclusionary approach," Geddes said.

"The EU is much more willing to internalize a refugee situation where the people who are being forced to flee are white Europeans, and has been much more reluctant to offer protection for people who are from Africa and the Middle East," he added.

And that "double standard," Petillo said, is not only shaped by race, religion and culture, but also by politics.

Poland received 1.2 million of those fleeing Ukraine, according to UNHCR data, and on Friday Polish President Andrzej Duda toured a border crossing facility in Korczowa, where he met with Ukrainian refugees and told reporters that Poland would welcome them with open hearts.

Geddes said that Poland's handling of the Syrian refugee crisis was the "opposite."

As Poland continued to push back against pressure from the European Union to take in asylum seekers from Syria, Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of Poland's rightwing party and current Deputy Prime Minister, argued in 2017 that doing so would be "dangerous" and would "completely change our culture and radically lower the level of safety in our country."

The European Union's top court ruled in April 2020 that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic broke EU law by refusing to host refugees to relieve some of the burden from countries like Turkey and Greece.

And in November 2021, Poland was "involved in a military standoff" with Belarus to prevent asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East from crossing the Polish border, Geddes said.

More than 2,000 people were trapped in a makeshift camp on the Belarusian side as Poland blocked aid. At least 15 died in the cold last year.

And in January, Poland began building a metal wall on the border of Belarus to block migrants.

"When it comes down to it, Ukrainians are seen as European," Geddes said, saying that there are "very strong" historical and cultural links between Poland and Ukraine -- Many refugees from Ukraine have family and friends in Poland who have taken them in.

Meanwhile, asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East "are fundamentally seen as being different, racially, socially, culturally," he added.

### **Islamophobia and politics**

Those sentiments, which Petillo described as "othering," were evident over the past week in the rhetoric of several prominent political leaders and various Western media figures, who made controversial statements that went viral on social media.

One journalist described Ukrainians as "civilized" in an attempt to differentiate them from other refugees and others suggested that it's more difficult to witness the plight of Ukrainians because they "look like us."

"These people are intelligent, they are educated people," Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov said of Ukrainians earlier this week, according to The Associated Press. "... This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists."

And Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who declared, "we're letting everyone in," regarding Ukrainian refugees, has made an anti-immigration platform a central part of his reelection campaign, arguing that an influx of non-Christian migrants is a threat to the culture.

"We do not want to be an immigrant country," Orban said in January, according to The Associated Press.

In the wake of the global War on Terror following the 9/11 terror attacks, Petillo said that Islamophobic language that "linked terrorism to Islam" became common in a "dangerous" political discourse regarding refugees from the Middle East.

Geddes said those anti-immigrant sentiments have been weaponized by various leaders of "the radical right" in Europe and "played a part in this exclusionary approach to migration."

At the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, Czech President Milos Zeman referred to the influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees seeking asylum in Europe as "an organized invasion."

Meanwhile, the Czech Republic has so far welcomed tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees, per UNHCR.

Slovakia, which has so far taken in more than 140,000 Ukrainian refugees, per UNHCR data, said in 2015 that it would only accept Christians from Syria, according to The Associated Press.

According to Geddes, while other European countries were not as "explicit" as Slovakia in favoring Christians, they did so "implicitly" with their policies.

In a historic vote, the European Union agreed on Thursday to give Ukrainians immediate temporary protective status that allows them to work and live in EU countries and provides them with access to health care and other social services. This marks the first time that the EU has invoked this protection since it became a part of EU law two decades ago, Geddes said.

Although Germany and Sweden have made some efforts to provide protections for Syrian refugees, many remain "stuck in limbo" without access to employment, education or other social services, Petillo said.

"[They're] not coming out officially with policies saying we want Syrians to return, but they're doing anything they can to disincentivize Syrian refugees from staying," Petillo said, adding that ongoing humanitarian crises have led to an ongoing flow of refugees to Europe.

Since 2014, more than 20,000 asylum seekers from the Middle East, Asia and Africa arriving to the Mediterranean by land or by sea in hopes of crossing into Europe have died — some drowning or gone missing, per UNHCR data, including 154 so far in 2022.

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### **31. Satellite images show activity at North Korean nuclear site**

Associated Press, 8 Mar 22, Kim Tong-hyung and Jon Gambrell

South Korea has patrolled waters around the Northern Limit Line for decades after it was drawn up by the U.N. command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. North Korea does not recognize the line and insists upon a boundary that encroaches deeply into waters currently controlled by the South.

The incident came a day before South Koreans vote in a highly contested presidential election. The bitter campaign has been marked by clashes between major candidates over whether South Korea should continue pursuing engagement with North Korea or take a harder line to check its nuclear threat.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **32. Travels with Milley: The general brings his ‘big green map’ to NATO’s flank**

Washington Post, 8 Mar 22, David Ignatius

CONSTANTA, Romania — Gen. Mark A. Milley carries what his staff calls the “big green map” of Ukraine with him everywhere he goes — inside the Pentagon, at White House meetings with President Biden and on foreign trips such as the five-day tour of NATO front-line nations that he just completed.

Milley’s map is a compendium of U.S intelligence about Russia’s pitiless assault on Ukraine. The paper version isn’t actually big or particularly fancy, just a foot-square chart showing the locations, numbers and likely assault paths of the vast Russian force battering Ukraine. But the map documents what Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his top aides believe might be the most comprehensive operational intelligence in the history of warfare.

“The president and the [National Security Council] found it very useful,” concurs a White House official.

The green map was updated daily this week as Milley traveled along NATO’s flank, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. During stops in Belgium, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Romania, he drew on its intelligence to brief NATO allies and consult U.S. commanders about Russia’s advance on Ukraine. In this awful conflict, the intelligence data compiled in the map has been America’s most potent weapon.

Milley talked with U.S. troops and NATO allies about the dilemmas presented by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion. The U.S.-led alliance wants to help beleaguered Ukraine with a flood of arms, whose delivery Milley inspected near the Ukraine border. But America wants to avoid any direct shooting between Russia and NATO nations that could escalate to nuclear war.

This razor’s edge cut in every NATO capital we visited, their streets decorated with Ukrainian flags. In Warsaw, a grim “wanted” poster branded Putin a war criminal. In Vilnius, Lithuania, a skyscraper was festooned with a banner summoning Putin for a trial in The Hague. With Russian

shells pounding Ukrainian cities a few hundred miles away, Milley, at stop after stop, preached readiness combined with caution.

The United States and NATO must “prevent any further aggression by the Russians,” he told troops from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment at our last stop here in Constanta, about 250 miles from Russian-occupied Crimea. But, he warned, “we’re not going to go into Ukraine. We’re not going to fly over Ukraine. We’re not putting ground troops into Ukraine.” The message: Be vigilant, but don’t pull the trigger unless you are forced.

Milley is an archetypal American commander — barrel-chested, gruff, profane, boisterous and sentimental. At every stop, Milley, an Irish American from Boston, took time to banter with soldiers, quiz them about their personal lives or conduct surprise inspections of their prefab “hooches.” Any soldier who shared Milley’s Boston heritage got a shout of “Red Sox Nation” or a jesting offer of instant promotion. But make no mistake: Underlying this bluster is a remarkable war record. Colleagues say Milley has probably seen more combat under fire than any Joint Chiefs chairman in modern times.

Milley doesn’t advertise it, but he’s also a cerebral Princeton University graduate with an encyclopedic knowledge of military history. Talking about the Ukraine war, he will recall campaigns from Valley Forge to Stalingrad. Weighing the dangers of a confrontation with Russia, he quotes war theorists from Carl von Clausewitz to Thomas Schelling.

It’s this intellectual focus that led Milley to demand from his staff a way to visualize the assault that Russia was planning.

Maps are the most basic tools of military strategy. They allow commanders to chart a course through the fog of war; they organize the chaos of the battlefield. Milley huddling with his staff around his battle plan of the Ukraine theater conjures similar scenes through history, as generals from George Washington to Dwight D. Eisenhower leaned over maps to study the enemy’s formation and plot strategy.

Milley ordered aides to begin assembling the map in late October, when startling intelligence reports signaled that Russia was gathering an invasion army on Ukraine’s border. The Russian forces were no exercise; intercepted messages showed that Russia was actually planning an attack.

Milley began quizzing aides about the coming invasion: “How many? Where are they? What can we see? What’s hidden? What’s the intent?” Though Milley doesn’t like using sports analogies for war, he believes the battlefield is not a football game with neat, linear advances. It’s more like the hockey he once played, fluid and dynamic with sudden spasms of action.

Milley took the first versions of his map to the White House in late October, “to paint the picture for the NSC and the president,” one defense official said. The chairman would bring five or six copies of the map, Ukraine in green, and leave them with top officials.

Biden quickly concluded that Russia’s assault planning was for real — and that America needed to lead an effort to stop it. Biden then did something unprecedented. He decided to share much of

the top-secret intelligence with NATO allies — and then, increasingly, with the public through leaks to the press.

On the eve of Russia's Feb. 24 invasion, Biden ordered Milley and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines to brief Congress on what the map showed — and then to give the same briefing, on “deep background,” to the Pentagon press corps. This was a declassified version of code-word intelligence, drawn from communications intercepts, surveillance satellites and spies on the ground. America's best weapon against Putin, Biden decided, was the truth. The administration had found a way to weaponize intelligence.

Milley's trek across Europe sometimes had the feel of a NATO pep rally. He met for strategy talks with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the defense chiefs of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Romania. And he visited U.S. troops across Europe, whose numbers have jumped since the Ukraine threat surfaced in October from a normal 65,000 to about 100,000.

Though it's largely invisible to the public, the United States has moved an astonishing military presence forward in Europe, from a mere 200 in Hungary and 350 in Bulgaria to 2,500 in the Baltic states, 10,000 in Poland and 38,500 in Germany — forces in 17 countries, bolstered by 11,000 in ships at sea. It's a forbidding display of force.

At one stop near the Ukrainian border, we watched one of the 14 widebody cargo planes that arrive at the local airfield each day with Western weapons; near the runway stood a rack of Javelin antitank missiles, awaiting shipment into Ukraine. If you want to see where they end up, just watch the videos on social media of Russian tanks and trucks exploding into fire.

Milley can't resist jousting with American troops. It's like the trash talk on a sports team; he'll ask soldiers what's wrong with their officers; he'll take instant polls on whether an officer is a good leader. He introduces by name the senior generals traveling with him, the local commanders and even the local squad leaders. “I'm running for public affairs officer,” he muttered during a stop at the Nowa Deba training camp in Poland.

Milley hands out dozens of “commander's coins” at every stop and presses them into the palms of wide-eyed soldiers. He advises them to study the coin's representation of the U.S. Constitution. To an Indian American soldier in Poznan, Poland, and a Panamanian American soldier in Constanta, he repeats the same message: They're all American citizens, equal under law, and will be judged by “the content of their character.” It's corny, but it's also moving, every time.

Nations appear eager for this sort of American leadership, and passionate about the Ukraine fight — from the northernmost tip of NATO to the southern edge. Artis Pabriks, the defense minister of Latvia, told us proudly that his country was the first to send Stinger antiaircraft missiles to Ukraine. “They are fighting our fight for us,” he said. As for the Russians, he predicted, “many of them will end up as sunflowers, I am sorry to say,” meaning they will die. “We will make a second Afghanistan for Russia.”

NATO troops have been fighting together in Afghanistan since 2001, and this shared combat experience resonates. In Romania, U.S. Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Earl Pickett told us how a Romanian rescue team saved his life after a firefight east of Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2006 that wounded him in the head, chest and knee.

Milley's army is preparing for a war he hopes it will never have to fight. It's eerie, traveling this NATO arc, to see U.S. and NATO forces arrayed like a picket line. NATO, once a seeming anachronism, is reenergized. Putin is cornered with his reckless adventure in Ukraine.

As Milley tells the story conveyed by his map, the Russian leader began a war that he will have great difficulty completing — and any attempt to expand it will summon a devastating response.

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### **33. The Syrian White Helmets are ready to help Ukraine**

Washington Post, 8 Mar 22, Josh Rogin

As Russian President Vladimir Putin expands his murderous attacks on civilians across Ukraine, regular citizens are becoming front-line troops. Syrians, who have been facing Russian military attacks for seven years, are ready to help Ukrainians organize their first responders. Ukrainians will need all the help they can get to save as many innocent lives as possible in what could be a long struggle.

Since 2015, when Putin dispatched his troops to Syria to help President Bashar al-Assad maintain his hold on power, the Russian military has been attacking civilians in opposition-held areas, reportedly committing war crimes on a regular basis by targeting hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure. Those tactics are now being used in several Ukrainian cities, complete with attacks on fleeing families and credible reports of illegal weapons such as cluster bombs. Last week, the International Criminal Court said it would “immediately proceed” with an investigation into alleged Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

The Syrian Civil Defense force, known as the White Helmets, has been working to rescue, evacuate and give emergency care to civilians under attack since 2014. The all-volunteer force says it has saved more than 100,000 civilian lives and that at least 252 of its members have been killed in the process. Now, the White Helmets are turning their attention to Putin's latest victims.

“We are here to help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters in any way we can,” Raed Al Saleh, the leader of the White Helmets, told me in an interview. Putin's goal is to break the will of the civilian population, he said, and there are no limits to the savagery of his troops. “The Russian military has no principles. They respect no human rights. They have no standards or ethics,” Saleh said. “The Ukrainians are facing the most ferocious, unethical, criminal killing machine that exists in the world today, which we have been facing for the last seven years.”

The White Helmets are preparing a series of videos to help Ukrainian civilians learn civil defense tasks, such as how to handle unexploded rockets or how best to evacuate a building under attack. They are also preparing lists of supplies and equipment Ukrainian rescue and evacuation teams will need. They're even ready to send in staff.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians can learn from the White Helmets' experience. Saleh recommends, for example, that the Ukrainians organize their civil defense forces inside each city by separating them into small teams of four or five people, dispersed geographically with small, quick vehicles that can easily speed to an attack site. Don't establish any large or permanent headquarters, he warned, because they, too, will become targets for Russian bombs.

Short-range walkie-talkies are best for communications, he said, rather than cellular or Internet communications, which can be tracked by the Russians and might not work in an attack zone anyway. Also, some team members should be deployed to monitor the skies for planes, because that's often a better early warning system than radars or sirens.

Understanding the Russian military's cruel tactics can also save lives, Saleh said. For example, the Russian air force is notorious for what are called "double tap" strikes. Russian planes attack civilians, wait for first responders to arrive and then attack the first responders.

"One thing that we learned is, after the initial attack, you've got about seven to nine minutes, tops, to be able to do anything in that area, before they can hit it again," Saleh said. "So, those seven to nine minutes are really important."

The Ukrainians should establish small medical outposts around the city that can handle minor injuries and take the pressure off larger hospitals, Saleh said. But keep those secret and move them often, he warned, or they will be targeted by the Russian military as well.

Despite being widely recognized in the West for their heroism and bravery, the White Helmets have been the constant target of a massive disinformation campaign by the Russian government and the Assad regime, falsely accusing them of being terrorists. Saleh said Putin hates them not just because they save lives, but because they document Russian war crimes in the process.

"The GoPro camera is the best way to fight Russian disinformation," he said. "Remain truthful. Report the reality on the ground. Because at the end of the day, the facts are the facts."

There are some things the Syrians have learned not to do. Do not give GPS locations of medical facilities to the United Nations, which may claim it needs the information to keep them safe. The Russians will use that information to target them. Never let Moscow have any say or control over how humanitarian aid is distributed, even when it's a U.N. program. The Kremlin will use that power to starve out civilian populations, as it is doing in Syria now.

So how do you persuade thousands of people to put their own lives on the line to help others? "There is no greater honor than doing this work," Saleh told me, adding that it's the duty and privilege of the rescue workers to save people who represent the future of their country.

Even though some Syrians are reportedly being recruited to fight for Russia in Ukraine, the vast majority of Syrians are ready to help Ukrainians fight the Russian invaders, he said. Ukrainians are showing impressive strength and bravery. But there's still a long way to go.

"For the last seven years, the Syrian people have stood up to Russia and have yet to be defeated. So we believe the Ukrainians can also resist for a very long time," Saleh said. "At the end of the

day, it is the will of the citizens that is the strongest weapon, even against the mightiest militaries in the world.”

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### **34. Putin has no good way out, and that really scares me**

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Thomas L. Friedman

If you’re hoping that the instability that Vladimir Putin’s war on Ukraine has wreaked on global markets and geopolitics has peaked, your hope is in vain. We haven’t seen anything yet. Wait until Putin fully grasps that his only choices left in Ukraine are how to lose — early and small and a little humiliated or late and big and deeply humiliated.

I can’t even wrap my mind around what kind of financial and political shocks will radiate from Russia — this country that is the world’s third-largest oil producer and possesses some 6,000 nuclear warheads — when it loses a war of choice that was spearheaded by one man, who can never afford to admit defeat.

Why not? Because Putin surely knows that “the Russian national tradition is unforgiving of military setbacks,” observed Leon Aron, a Russia expert at the American Enterprise Institute, who is writing a book about Putin’s road to Ukraine.

“Virtually every major defeat has resulted in radical change,” added Aron, writing in *The Washington Post*. “The Crimean War (1853-1856) precipitated Emperor Alexander II’s liberal revolution from above. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) brought about the First Russian Revolution. The catastrophe of World War I resulted in Emperor Nicholas II’s abdication and the Bolshevik Revolution. And the war in Afghanistan became a key factor in Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms.” Also, retreating from Cuba contributed significantly to Nikita Khrushchev’s removal two years later.

In the coming weeks it will become more and more obvious that our biggest problem with Putin in Ukraine is that he will refuse to lose early and small, and the only other outcome is that he will lose big and late. But because this is solely his war and he cannot admit defeat, he could keep doubling down in Ukraine until ... until he contemplates using a nuclear weapon.

Why do I say that defeat in Ukraine is Putin’s only option, that only the timing and size is in question? Because the easy, low-cost invasion he envisioned and the welcome party from Ukrainians he imagined were total fantasies — and everything flows from that.

Putin completely underestimated Ukraine’s will to be independent and become part of the West. He completely underestimated the will of many Ukrainians to fight, even if it meant dying, for those two goals. He completely overestimated his own armed forces. He completely underestimated President Biden’s ability to galvanize a global economic and military coalition to enable Ukrainians to stand and fight and to devastate Russia at home — the most effective U.S. coalition-building effort since George H.W. Bush made Saddam Hussein pay for his folly of seizing Kuwait. And he completely underestimated the ability of companies and individuals all

over the world to participate in, and amplify, economic sanctions on Russia — far beyond anything governments initiated or mandated.

When you get that many things wrong as a leader, your best option is to lose early and small. In Putin's case that would mean withdrawing his forces from Ukraine immediately; offering a face-saving lie to justify his "special military operation," like claiming it successfully protected Russians living in Ukraine; and promising to help Russians' brethren rebuild. But the inescapable humiliation would surely be intolerable for this man obsessed with restoring the dignity and unity of what he sees as the Russian motherland.

Incidentally, the way things are going on the ground in Ukraine right now, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Putin could actually lose early and big. I would not bet on it, but with every passing day that more and more Russian soldiers are killed in Ukraine, who knows what happens to the fighting spirit of the conscripts in the Russian Army being asked to fight a deadly urban war against fellow Slavs for a cause that was never really explained to them.

Given the resistance of Ukrainians everywhere to the Russian occupation, for Putin to "win" militarily on the ground his army will need to subdue every major city in Ukraine. That includes the capital, Kyiv — after probably weeks of urban warfare and massive civilian casualties. In short, it can be done only by Putin and his generals perpetrating war crimes not seen in Europe since Hitler. It will make Putin's Russia a permanent international pariah.

Moreover, how would Putin maintain control of another country — Ukraine — that has roughly one-third the population of Russia, with many residents hostile to Moscow? He would probably need to maintain every one of the 150,000-plus soldiers he has deployed there — if not more — forever.

There is simply no pathway that I see for Putin to win in Ukraine in any sustainable way because it simply is not the country he thought it was — a country just waiting for a quick decapitation of its "Nazi" leadership so that it could gently fall back into the bosom of Mother Russia.

So either he cuts his losses now and eats crow — and hopefully for him escapes enough sanctions to revive the Russian economy and hold onto power — or faces a forever war against Ukraine and much of the world, which will slowly sap Russia's strength and collapse its infrastructure.

As he seems hellbent on the latter, I am terrified. Because there is only one thing worse than a strong Russia under Putin — and that's a weak, humiliated, disorderly Russia that could fracture or be in a prolonged internal leadership turmoil, with different factions wrestling for power and with all of those nuclear warheads, cybercriminals and oil and gas wells lying around.

Putin's Russia is not too big to fail. It is, however, too big to fail in a way that won't shake the whole rest of the world.

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### **35. The curious case of Russia's missing air force**

The Economist, 8 Mar 22

More than 60 new planes would be delivered to the Russian air force by the end of the year, boasted Lieutenant General Sergei Dronov, its deputy commander, last summer. These would include Su-30, Su-35 and Su-57 fighter jets and Su-34 bombers—as advanced as anything the rest of Europe has to offer. All had been “tested in combat conditions” in Syria, he assured the discerning readers of *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the official newspaper of Russia’s defense ministry.

Billions of dollars have been poured into Russia’s warplanes over the past decade. Between 2009 and 2020 the air force gained around 440 new fixed-wing aircraft, as well as thousands of drones. At the outset of war, it was widely assumed by defense analysts and officials that Russia would quickly destroy its enemy’s air force and roam freely over the country, using its air superiority to pick off Ukrainian forces at will.

Yet in the first two weeks of combat, Russia’s air force has played a minimal role. Air activity is difficult to track and Russian air strikes may have increased in both number and complexity in recent days. It is clear, though, that the Russian air force has held back its full capabilities. “Fast jets have conducted only limited sorties in Ukrainian airspace, in singles or pairs, always at low altitudes and mostly at night,” notes Justin Bronk of the Royal United Services Institute, a think-tank in London.

When hostilities began, Russia sent a volley of cruise and ballistic missiles towards Ukraine’s air bases in an attempt to ground its planes and air-defense systems, and to hobble its radars and anti-aircraft missiles. That effort failed. Ukraine had wisely dispersed its air-defense systems, making them harder to find. American defense officials say that Ukrainian air and missile defenses consequently “remain effective and in use” a claim that can be corroborated with open-source intelligence.

A recent example comes from Kharkiv, which sits 30km from the Russian border. Russian forces failed to take the city with a raid in the first days of the war. Since then, they have surrounded and bombarded it with air, artillery and missile strikes. But Ukraine is not defenseless.

Thomas Withington, an air-defense expert, says that the first missile seems to miss the target, its fuse detonating. The second, though, is a direct hit.

The interception was probably the work of a medium-range surface-to-air missile like the Buk, a mobile system that can shoot and scoot, emerging to fire and then hiding away again. Because these sort of systems use radar to find their targets, and radar cannot see over the curvature of the Earth, one countermeasure is for pilots to fly low. That is what Russian forces seem to have been doing.

But it solves one problem by creating another. In recent weeks, America, Latvia and Lithuania have sent Ukraine smaller, shoulder-fired Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which home in on the hot engines of aircraft flying below roughly 3,500m. The weapon rose to prominence during the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, when CIA-supplied Stingers were used by the Afghan mujahideen to take down more than 300 Soviet helicopters and 100 jets. Video footage posted by

Ukraine's defense ministry shows a Stinger-type missile streaking into a helicopter flying low over a field supposedly near Kyiv.

There is another reason why Russian pilots may be forced closer to the ground, and thus within range of shoulder-fired missiles. In its war with Georgia in 2008, Russia's air force was almost entirely limited to firing unguided or "dumb" bombs. Now it has precision-guided munitions, which can hit targets using satellite-navigation and other means. But it is still using the older weapons, too.

Images which appear to show the wreckage of a Su-34 attack jet shot down over Chernihiv suggest it was armed with unguided bombs. This is telling, says Mr Bronk, because Russia's Su-34 regiments are "the most proficient and regular users" of precision munitions in the air force when available. Images released by Russian state media show other Su-34s parked on a runway armed with more unguided weapons; others reportedly from Chernihiv and Kharkiv show exploded unguided bombs littering urban areas, including one that landed in a house.

One theory is that Russia's stock of precision-guided munitions is running low. More likely, argues Michael Kofman of CNA, an American think-tank, is that Russia is holding some in reserve, either for later in this war or in anticipation of a bigger one. Either way, the use of dumb bombs creates a dilemma. As Tim Robinson of Britain's Royal Aeronautical Society notes, pilots can either fly low to see targets and risk getting shot down or bomb from high or medium altitude with less accuracy.

The result is that Russia has lost substantial numbers of aircraft. Stijn Mitzer, an Amsterdam-based analyst and his colleagues at Oryx, a blog, have studied imagery available on social-media sites to establish the number of proven Russian losses. These currently run to 11 fixed-wing aircraft, 11 helicopters and two drones. Ukraine's government claims to have destroyed at least 39 planes and 40 helicopters, though these figures are unverified. By way of comparison, America lost 40 or so fixed-wing aircraft during the entire five-week air war with Iraq in 1991.

Russia's failure to take out Ukrainian air defenses "is becoming a serious hindrance", says Rob Lee of King's College London. It will probably be regarded as one of the "key mistakes" of this war, he reckons. It means that Russian planes cannot freely patrol the skies to ward off Ukrainian ones, and that attack aircraft cannot provide proper air support to troops on the ground. Ground-surveillance and airborne early-warning aircraft must stay back from the battlefield, reducing the flow of intelligence.

There may be a lesson for NATO. Russia's initial failure to gain air superiority could be explained away by the Kremlin's secrecy over the decision to go to war and a lack of planning time, says Mr Bronk. But in his view, the air force's passivity could also reflect inexperience or incompetence. Russia's air force, with less flying time per pilot and lacking in the advanced simulators and extensive training ranges available to Western air forces, "lacks the institutional capacity to plan, brief and fly complex air operations at scale". The coming weeks will clarify whether that is so.

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### 36. New rules for a new world

New York Times, 8 Mar 22, Bret Stephens

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is being described as the end of the post-Cold War era. This isn't quite accurate. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, we've seen three different eras. Each of them lasted about a decade.

There were the End of History years of the 1990s, when Washington thought the main task of foreign policy was to usher the world into a more democratic, free-market, rules-based order. Those priorities faded after 9/11, when no international issue mattered more to policymakers than the fight against militant Islamism. A decade later, after Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011, Barack Obama effectively called an end to the war on terror, saying it was time to "focus on nation building here at home."

This was a decade whose animating instincts were typified by two telling reactions by two presidents to two crises — both involving Ukraine.

The first was Obama's tepid response to Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea, after which he refused to provide Kyiv with lethal military aid on the theory that Ukraine's future was a core Russian interest but not an American one. The second was Donald Trump's attempted shakedown of Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019, in which he tried to hold up security assistance to Ukraine in exchange for dirt on the Biden family.

In other words, Obama looked at Ukraine and asked, "What's in it for us?" Trump looked at Ukraine and asked, "What's in it for me?" For neither president was the question of staving off another Russian invasion, much less of encouraging Ukraine's democratic development, a particular priority.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin looked at Ukraine and concluded: "It's all for me."

The Russian president may have had various motives for invading Ukraine. But it would be foolish to suppose that he wasn't also enticed — by our seeming indifference to Ukraine's fate; by the willingness of successive American presidents to continue to do business with him even as he invaded neighbors, poisoned dissidents, hacked our networks and meddled in our elections; by Europe's military weakness and growing reliance on Russian energy; by the coalescing of an Axis of Autocracy bent on overthrowing the American-led liberal order.

All of this made Putin's Ukraine gambit seem like a good bet — except for his failure to reckon with the courage of the Ukrainian people, their magnificent president, and his own military's ineptitude. That courage has given the West time to regroup to help save Ukraine. It should also be an opportunity to rethink the way in which we look at foreign affairs for the next decade. We need new rules for a new world.

What should they be? A few ideas:

**Free trade for the free world.** Economic nationalism never works. De-linking the Russian economy from the rest of the world is already painful. And the only long-term hope for

decoupling from China is through deeper economic integration of free and allied nations. That means the revival of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and a free-trade agreement with the European Union and another one with Britain.

**Help those who help themselves.** If a lesson of the past 20 years is that we cannot fight for the freedom of those who won't fight for it themselves, the lesson of Ukraine is that we can at least give those who will fight the tools so they can finish the job. One model is the deal for nuclear-powered submarines that the U.S. and Britain signed last year with Australia, which the administration needs to accelerate if it's going to be a deterrent to China. Another model is Israel, which we arm with American jets so that we never need defend it with American troops.

**Parallel global institutions.** China has trashed the World Trade Organization by refusing to meet its commitments. Russia trashed Interpol by using the agency to persecute political dissidents. The Biden administration may not want to exit those legacy organizations, but it can downgrade their relevance by investing in new or nascent organizations in which democracy buys membership.

**Be honest about energy.** The world will need carbon-based fuels for decades to come. And we are better off extracting more of it in North America — including on U.S. federal land — than by asking Saudi Arabia to ramp up production or hoping to get more from Venezuela and Iran with sanctions relief. The alternative to increasing domestic oil and gas production isn't only clean alternative energy. It's also filthy petrostate energy.

**Get serious about defense.** The dumbest debate in foreign-policy circles is whether China or Russia is the graver threat. The real answer is that we don't have the luxury of choosing. But we do have the luxury of spending more on defense, which, at less than 4 percent of gross domestic product, is about half of what we spent in the prosperous 1980s. A 500-ship Navy — an increase of 200 ships — should be a national priority.

**Play to win.** “Here's my strategy on the Cold War,” Ronald Reagan once told his adviser Richard Allen: “We win, they lose.” He said that in 1977, when it seemed like a pipe dream. Twelve years later, it was a fact. Let's aim for a world unhaunted by the likes of Vladimir Putin.

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### **37. The Information War isn't over yet**

The Atlantic, 8 Mar 22, Charlie Warzel

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not yet two weeks old and yet a dozen headlines from major media outlets now suggest that Ukraine is “winning the information war” across much of the world (Russia and China may be notable exceptions). A primary reason for Ukraine's success, they argue, is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former actor whose leadership style, media savvy, and earnest, emotional appeals have helped channel sympathy and aid for his country. He is, as one headline put it, “a respected war hero and a cultural icon.”

Zelensky's performance of wartime leadership has been remarkable for the way it has made use of a new media environment and shaped public opinion. Still, we should be wary of declaring

winner and loser of the information war so soon. Like the war on the ground, its scale is dizzying and dynamic: Momentary success in online conflict is not necessarily indicative of future success. I've been struck by how the conflict's digital footprint has both confirmed and upended some long-held understandings and expectations of information warfare. Over the past half decade, activists, journalists, and academics around the world have studied and documented how information flows across the internet and how it is manipulated. Over the past two weeks, some have learned that their conclusions are of less use in wartime.

The first surprise is that, despite a lot of noise, a strong signal has been coming from the front lines. On an internet where propaganda and conspiracy theorizing flourish, you'd expect a land war involving Russia to result in a bewildering barrage of online garbage and falsehoods that render the current state of the conflict truly unknowable. But documentation of the actual military action has emerged with clarity throughout the West. We've seen plenty of examples of misinformation, disinformation, and media manipulation: Opportunists are attempting to pass off historical clips, or even video gameplay, as fresh war footage, for example. Yet digital fakes are also being debunked in real time, while real footage is verified by a cohort of trained investigators from newsrooms and volunteer organizations. Across apps such as Telegram, there are channels with thousands of people—an "army of hackers," as a *Forbes* article calls them—attempting to report and take down information from Russian state media and coordinate cyberattacks against Russia.

"There've been moments at this early juncture where it's felt like the first time the information war was won by the disinformation fighters," Eliot Higgins, one of the founders of the Bellingcat project, told me this week. Higgins, who got his start covering global conflicts online in 2012 during the Syrian war, helped pioneer the field of open-source investigation, which uses public footage and imagery posted on social media to find and organize evidence of fighting and atrocities. Higgins and Bellingcat have focused much of their attention on Russia and Ukraine since 2014, when they began looking into the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in Donetsk Oblast. "There is a preexisting network in this region that stretches back to 2014 and that has not gone away," he said. "Journalists are following this network; policy makers are following it. And so you have videos rapidly geolocated and preserved for war-crimes evidence, and it makes it extremely hard for false Russian narratives to take hold." Higgins believes that Bellingcat's work has influenced others too. Many newsrooms now incorporate open-source investigation into their war reporting. (The *New York Times*' visual-investigations team is one notable example.)

Jane Lytvynenko, a senior research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, argues that online audiences, especially those who monitor breaking news, are a bit more skeptical than they used to be, and better able to spot influence attempts. She told me that open-source investigators like those working at and alongside Bellingcat "have made Russia's motivations much clearer" than Vladimir Putin would like. "Not only can we untangle their false-flag operations and disinformation, but we can show how poorly executed these propaganda attempts really are," she said.

That's the second surprise: Russia's online propaganda and influence apparatus is not nearly as sophisticated or effective with non-Russian audiences as many thought (at least to this point). Russia's early attempts to falsely portray Ukraine as a nation of neo-Nazis have been lazy,

recycling old material, Higgins told me. “There’s been so much talk of how amazing Russia is at disinformation. But we see it’s not that they were good, but that the rest of us weren’t prepared for it. We weren’t good at verifying or debunking, and we confused our own incompetence for Russian genius.” Still, some Kremlin fake-news campaigns have been successful, and it’s certainly possible that Russia’s propaganda apparatus was merely caught flat-footed by the invasion, and hasn’t yet revved up.

And then there’s the opposite side to all of this: the information war Russia is waging on its own citizens—both the information it broadcasts and the outside information it blocks from its public. Of all the elements of this crisis, this may be the most difficult for outsiders to evaluate effectively. It is also a reminder to be humble in our predictions—what might appear to our eyes as ineffective propaganda may read differently to audiences at home. Despite the remarkable footage of Russians protesting the war, reporting also suggests that Kremlin messaging has deceived some Russians into denying the very existence of the conflict.

We may be seeing just how hard it is to wage a successful information war when you are very clearly the villain. Russia’s invasion and the harrowing images of destruction of Ukrainian cities have created a global crisis and a moral consensus that is unusual in the internet era. Lytvynenko said that Ukrainians have also excelled at telling the world what’s happening to them. Their message of resilience, she argued, has been amplified by a large Ukrainian diaspora across the web. “Right now, during a shooting war, you would expect to see Russia attempting to create chaos and confusion and to demoralize the people in the war zone,” Renée DiResta, a computational-propaganda expert, told me this week. “And there is both a leader who is very adeptly keeping up morale and maintaining trust, and a cadre of volunteers working against that.”

Universally accepted narratives can be fleeting, though, especially when media scrutiny fades. The world is tuning in to the hourly news from Ukraine right now, says Mike Caulfield, a researcher at the University of Washington’s Center for an Informed Public, but attention is always fickle. “I do worry, when the attention isn’t so intense, there could be more attempts to muddle the narrative,” he told me. Caulfield pointed to the events of January 6, and argued that the constant airing of footage initially led to a widespread condemnation of the insurgency, but that, with some distance from that intense coverage, many participants and Republicans tried to rewrite the story.

Ukraine, of course, has its own propaganda aims. Official government accounts have helped amplify stories of questionable veracity, such as a debunked anecdote about the reported deaths of the soldiers stationed at Snake Island. Some of these stories have been amplified uncritically by those affected by the scenes coming from Ukraine, leading to what The New York Times has called a “blend” of fact and mythmaking. One Russia and Ukraine expert suggested that large chunks of the information we are seeing across our feeds at any given moment are “unverified or just flat out false.” Errors in our understanding of what is happening on the ground may, at times, be less a product of malice or incompetence than of the size of the conflict and the magnitude of our biases. For example, a recent video allegedly showing a Ukrainian man smoking a cigarette and calmly carrying an unexploded land mine to safety quickly made the rounds on Twitter.

While some observers delighted in the man's bravery and nonchalance, others saw evidence of impending doom.

Obsessing over winners in an information war can be fraught, even dangerous. Peter Pomerantsev, a senior fellow at John Hopkins University's SNF Agora Institute and a scholar of Russian propaganda, argued in 2019 that the information-war lens risks "reinforcing a world view the Kremlin wants — that all information is just manipulation." On Twitter, Pomerantsev speculated that too much focus on information warfare could flatten what he sees as a crucial difference between Russian and Ukrainian approaches to information. "Collaborative communication is when you engage people, treat them as equals," he wrote. "Sure the Ukrainian army do all sort of psyops to survive. But Ze[lensky] is treating people as equals, trying to engage and inspire them — that's not 'information war'. It's the opposite."

Brandon Silverman, the creator of the digital-transparency tool CrowdTangle, has been studying and tracking the way that information moves around the internet's biggest platforms. He's learned to be extremely cautious in making any broad judgments about what he's seeing online, he told me. When I asked for his early observations on the conflict's digital side, he demurred without having the hindsight of a more forensic examination. "I'm not going to feel like I have an epistemically confident understanding of what has happened for probably about six to nine months," he said.

Silverman is focused on the nuances of the information war from the platform side, where social networks have begun to shut out Russian state-media channels such as RT. He's less concerned about the content and far more worried about process and transparency. Social-media platforms have been taking down and fully deleting Russian state media channels, he warned, instead of archiving them to study later. "If you are looking back a year from now, researchers and historians and those investigating war crimes will want to know, what were these channels doing leading up to this invasion?" he said. "How can we learn how effective a piece of propaganda was if we can't go back and study it?"

Speaking with these experts convinced me that we may well have more real-time access to accurate information about conditions on the ground than we have had for any other conflict, but that the status of an information war is much larger than defining the aggressors and the victims. We should not adopt a dangerous post-truth mindset, but we must remember that what is verifiable is likely still surpassed by what we don't yet know or cannot see. In the middle of a so-called information war, as in the middle of a ground war, it is easy to make confident judgments too early and be seduced by simple narratives. What seems to make sense now may not make sense tomorrow. And the footage we see, no matter how indelible, could be interpreted quite differently through another's eyes.

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**38. The suffering of Afghan women is the suffering of Afghanistan itself**  
The Globe and Mail (Canada), 8 Mar 22, Khorshied Nusratty and Lauryn Oates

The Israeli attack targeted the outskirts of Damascus on Monday, killing IRGC colonels Ehsan Karbalaipour and Morteza Saednejad, the IRGC said in a statement carried by state media.

“Undoubtedly, the Zionist regime will pay for this crime,” the statement said.

Iran rarely acknowledges deaths of its forces in Syria by Israel, which carries out airstrikes targeting Iranian and Iranian-backed forces in Syria regularly. Tehran typically attributes deaths of its forces in the war-torn country to fighting against extremist groups, such as ISIS.

Syrian state news agency SANA had reported on Monday that Israeli missile strikes killed at least two civilians near Damascus.

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## IRAQ

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### **44. US, Iraq discuss rising oil prices and war in Ukraine**

Kurdistan 24, 8 Mar 22

A US diplomatic delegation on Monday met with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in Baghdad and discussed the economic and security ramifications of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war on the Middle East and the world.

The US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq and Iran Jennifer Gavito attended the meeting along with Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Tueller and White House National Security Council Director for Iraq and Syria Zehra Bell, according to a statement from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

They also discussed the ongoing Iran nuclear talks in Vienna that aim to revive the JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, that the US pulled out of in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump.

Hussein said he hopes the parties reach an agreement soon, according to the statement.

Iraq is also expected to host the next round of negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Baghdad soon, the country’s national security advisor said in late February.

Iraq has hosted a series of talks between the two regional rivals in an effort to reduce tensions in the region.

### **Rising oil prices**

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has also driven up the price of oil. On Monday, a barrel of Brent crude oil traded for nearly \$140.

American and Iraqi officials discussed the results of the increase in prices and how they affect hydrocarbons-reliant and non-oil economies alike, the statement added.

An estimated 75 percent of global sunflower oil exports come from warring Russia and Ukraine. The closure of ports since the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24 has resulted in a dramatic increase in the cost of cooking oil globally.

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#### **45. US-led coalition highlights contributions of female Kurdish soldiers**

Kurdistan24, 8 Mar 22, Wladimir van Wilgenburg

The Peshmerga reflects the breadth and diversity of the Kurdish people, Col. Todd Burroughs, Deputy Director of the coalition's Military Advisor Group North, said on Tuesday in light of International Women's Day 2022.

“Today we celebrate and highlight the contributions of women and their enduring commitment on this International Women’s Day,” he said in a tweet.

The Twitter account of the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), the official name for the US-led coalition, also paid tribute to Kurdish, Iraqi, and Syrian women fighters on Tuesday.

“We applaud the women in Iraq & Syria who stood resolute in the face of adversity & appreciate their contribution to the strengthening of the regional security & stability,” read the coalition’s tweet.

Also, on Mar. 6, coalition advisors met with an all-female unit of the Peshmerga forces, and discussed recent operations and training.

Last March, a female Kurdish Peshmerga officer, was the first from the Kurdistan Region, to graduate from a course at the British Royal Military Academy Sandhurst along with other female officers.

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## SYRIA

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#### **46. At Russia request: Shabih begins recruiting members to fight in Ukraine**

Syrian Observer, 8 Mar 22

Russia asked the National Defense Militia to provide it with fighters for its war on Ukraine, according to Baladi News.

The leader of the National Defense Militia in the town of al-Suqaylabiyah in the Hama countryside, Nabel al-Abdullah, announced his support for Russia in the invasion of Ukraine, appreciating what he described as the friendship between Bashar al-Assad and Vladimir Putin.

In a statement carried out by pro-government media, he said the Assad regime was one of the first supporters of the independence of two regions from Ukraine.

Abdullah praised the Russian military's fighting capability, and what he called the Russian president's statesmanship in political and economic issues, and that he was able to change the world's dominant unipolar policy.

According to sources for Baladi News, the Russian base Of Hemeimeem asked Abdullah to register the names of members wishing to go to Russia to fight in its ranks in Ukraine. The members would go under semi-annual contracts providing for the dispatch of the mercenary to guard public and military facilities, with a monthly salary of \$1,500.

The sources added that Abdullah and other mediators started a campaign to convince young people to go and fight in Ukraine alongside the Russians. However, there is a lack in the willingness to register and fight alongside the Russians in Ukraine after they implicated soldiers to fight in Libya and returned without giving them the amounts agreed upon in their contracts.

On Monday, the National Defense Militia in Suqaylabiyah and Mhardeh organized a ceremony in front of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Suqaylabiyah. Celebrations came in support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where Christian clerics participated in the celebration which was covered dramatically by Russian television.

Last Friday, activists circulated a picture showing the leaders of the National Defense Militia in Suqaylabiyah and a pig with the name Zelensky written on its body.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **47. Afghan, Iranian forces clash in Nimroz**

TOLOnews, 8 Mar 22

Residents and local officials said that a clash erupted between the Islamic Emirate's border forces and Iranian border guards in Kang district of Nimroz province on Monday evening.

Local officials confirmed the clash and said it started due to a misunderstanding between the forces of the two sides.

However, sources said that the clash began when the Iranian border forces entered Kang district to interfere with local Afghan farmers who were working on a canal at the Kamal Khan dam.

According to the sources, Iranian forces crossed onto the Afghan side in Kang district where they faced Afghan border forces and two Iranian force members were killed as a result of the clash. Their vehicle was left behind.

"Yesterday evening (Monday), a clash occurred between Afghan and Iranian border forces in Kang district of Nimroz," said Hussain Khpalwak, a farmer in Nimroz province.

Local officials have not yet commented over the casualties of the clash.

balances is neither potent nor functional. Our power elites do not like public officials exhibiting autonomy and independence.”

Finally, Pakistan would have to adopt a policy of non-interference in neighboring countries' internal matters, and boost intraregional trade and connectivity. In this regard, Pakistan should first secure its economic interest before meddling into non-consequential regional conflicts. Of course, Kashmir is necessary; however, restoring trade ties with India is equally important to open new avenues for bilateral engagement. Recently, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Dawood Razak suggested restoring trade ties with India to improve Pakistan's dismally low trade figures.

If followed in letter and spirit, the new strategic shift can help Pakistan recast its image as a peace-loving nation and make it a valuable member of the international community. But the million-dollar question is: Are we ready to address the core issues at home?

*Durdana Najam is an op-ed writer based in Lahore. She writes on security and policy issues.*

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### **57. Syria and Russia see eye to eye**

Al Ahram Weekly, 9 Mar 22, Bassel Oudat

Syria was one of five countries that opposed last week's UN General Assembly Resolution condemning Russia's military operation in Ukraine. The resolution urged Moscow to immediately halt the use of force against Kyiv and immediately withdraw all its military forces from Ukraine. By opposing the resolution, the regime led by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad took a contrary position to 141 other UN countries.

Syria believes the West provoked Russia and forced it to resort to military action in Ukraine. It has pledged to support Russian President Vladimir Putin, with Al-Assad declaring his support for the Russian military operation in Ukraine and describing actions by the West towards Russia as “hysteria”.

Al-Assad said that Russia “is not only defending itself, but the entire world, and the principles of justice and humanity,” according to a read-out of a telephone conversation between the Syrian president and Putin. He claimed that what is occurring is “a correction of history and a restoring of the balance after it tipped when the Soviet Union was dismantled.”

“The enemy that the Syrian and Russian armies are fighting is one. In Syria, it is extremism, and in Ukraine it is Nazism,” Al-Assad said.

The statements were preceded by recognition by the Syrian regime of the secession of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in eastern Ukraine as independent republics. Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad said Syria “supports President Putin's decision to recognise the republics of Luhansk and Donetsk and will cooperate with them.”

The Syrian regime also recognized the independence of the two republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that seceded from Georgia after a Russian military operation in 2008. It recognized the independence of Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The relationship between Syria and Russia is strategic, though it evolved into more than that after Russia began its direct military intervention in Syria in 2015. Russia has gained much influence in Syria as a result, and Syria's leadership is always seeking to repay Russia for the decades of support it has extended to the country since the days of former Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad, Bashar's father.

Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 restored Al-Assad's power after he was close to losing areas under his control and weakened the armed Syrian opposition. According to statements by senior Russian military officials, Russia also took advantage of the Syrian conflict as a testing ground for weapons and tactics it is now using in Ukraine.

Many observers have drawn parallels between what Russia is doing in Ukraine and its actions in Syria. The comparisons have prompted Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba to ask NATO to prevent Putin from transforming his country into another Syria. Addressing the NATO countries, Kuleba said, "act now before it is too late. Do not let Putin turn Ukraine into Syria."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has also expressed concern that "the worst is yet to come" in the Russian-Ukrainian war. "We should fear a siege, which the Russians are accustomed to doing. Remember Aleppo and Grozny," Le Drian said, referring to cities in Syria and Chechnya, respectively, bombed by Russia.

Syria's opposition has sided with Ukraine and criticized the West, led by the US, for its relative inaction in Syria. "There is a great difference between the position of the international community towards Ukraine and its position on Syria," said Salem Al-Meslet, head of the Syrian Opposition Coalition.

"The international community must bear responsibility in Syria and in Ukraine," he said, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights criticizing what it described as "the West's double standards towards Russia in Syria and Ukraine."

Meanwhile, the Syrian regime has begun to feel the impact of its support for Moscow, especially after the start of the sanctions against Russia. Within days, the Syrian lira dropped sharply on the international exchanges, and Syrian officials hinted at an imminent crisis in supplies of oil and wheat.

Syria's support for Russia has also been manifested on the political plane. Coinciding with the 11th anniversary of the start of the Syrian conflict, the US Embassy in Damascus has announced that March will be a "month of accountability" for the Syrian regime and that the "impunity will end" in Syria.

The US called a meeting in Washington of the Friends of Syria group on 3 March, which included the US, Turkey, France, Germany, Norway, the UK, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi

Arabia. The attendees reiterated their commitment to seeking a political solution to the Syrian crisis in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Commenting on Washington's new interest in Syria, Syrian opposition member Radwan Ziadeh said that "I expect the Biden administration is working on developing a political and military strategy for Syria after what happened in Ukraine. It could include prioritizing a push for a political transition and removing Al-Assad."

"Neither the Security Council nor the UN can do a thing because Russia is a permanent member [of the Security Council]. On the Syrian issue, Russia used its veto 13 times to paralyse the work of the Security Council, blocking the condemnation of the Syrian regime and preventing the International Criminal Court from investigating war crimes or crimes against humanity committed in Syria," Ziadeh said.

The Syrian regime sent its National Security Chief Ali Mamlouk to Tehran, where he met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Al-Assad also received Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior adviser to Iran's foreign minister, to discuss boosting cooperation between the two countries.

This sent a message that Russia is not the only ally of the Syrian regime, and that Iran is also its stalwart ally. It shows that Tehran is ready to "fill the vacuum" in Syria if Russia is distracted by a long war in Ukraine, especially since Iran is likely to sign a nuclear deal with the international community soon.

For ordinary Syrians, the war in Ukraine has made their lives worse. Amid opposite positions by the Syrian regime and the opposition on the war in Ukraine, there have been reports that the war has become a destination for Syrian young people looking for a "new battle" where warlords are looking to profiter.

Recruiters are active in Damascus and areas under regime control, signing up young people to fight alongside the Russian army in Ukraine. They include 23,000 combatants who have fought alongside the Syrian regime as part of militias affiliated with the Syrian president's cousin and National Defense Forces.

The young people are said to be being paid \$7,000 over seven months to "defend facilities" in Ukraine, which suggests that the Russian Hmeimim Base in Syria, the main hub of recruitment, anticipates the Ukraine war will last for months, not days.

Other reports say that Syrians have decided to volunteer to fight alongside Ukrainian forces, especially after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky opened the door for volunteers from around the world to join his army's fight. It is believed that some have already arrived in Ukraine from Turkey and camps in northern Syria.

Syrian political analyst Saeed Moqbel said that "the Syrian situation has become more complicated with the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Syria's future is not clear because its fate depends on the volition of countries battling and interfering in the country. Syria has become a weapon in the hands of players in global wars."



## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

March 13, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) The Wall Street Journal led global media reporting on a missile strike in Erbil that allegedly targeted a new U.S. Consulate building that was soon to be opened. No injuries to U.S. military personnel or civilians were reported. Media quoted various U.S. and Kurdish officials who said the missiles were likely launched from Iran, following threats of Iranian retaliation for the Israeli strike in Syria Tuesday that killed two IRGC colonels.
- 2) The New York Times was one of several media outlets stating the war in Ukraine has prompted a U.S. reassessment of its foreign policy, the largest since the same undertaking took place following the 9-11 attacks. The article notes the Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela. Despite concerns a renewed focus on Europe could divert attention from Asia, several White House officials said the U.S. can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.
- 3) The Los Angeles Times published the latest news from Ukraine late Saturday night, emphasizing Russian forces intensified their bombing in cities including Mariupol, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, while also positioning for a possible siege of Kyiv. Earlier Moscow warned the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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**1. Missiles from Iran struck in vicinity of U.S. Consulate in Northern Iraq, officials say**  
Wall Street Journal, 12 Mar 22, Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon

A missile strike early Sunday that landed in the vicinity of a new American consulate under construction in northern Iraq originated from Iran, according to U.S. officials. The attack comes as the U.S. is edging closer to cementing a deal to revive the 2015 agreement with Tehran that constrains Iran’s nuclear program.

## 2. Ukraine War ushers in ‘new era’ for U.S. abroad

New York Times, 12 Mar 22, Michael Crowley and Edward Wong

The war in Ukraine has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.

## 3. Russia intensifies assault, warns U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine are ‘legitimate targets’

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Nabih Bulos and Jenny Jarvie

Russian forces kept up their bombardment of cities across Ukraine on Saturday, capturing the eastern outskirts of a key southern port and waging an increasingly violent campaign with an eye to encircling the capital even as they sought to bring a political veneer to their occupation in cities they have captured. Moscow also signaled it could soon expand the war to embroil Kyiv’s allies, warning the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

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### NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Secretary of State Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (12 Mar):** I have authorized a drawdown of up to \$200 million for additional arms and equipment to Ukraine. This unprecedented fourth drawdown in less than a year will bring total U.S. security assistance provided to Ukraine to more than \$1.2 billion since January 2021.

**Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi مصطفى الكاظمي; @MAKadhimi (12 Mar):** The aggression which targeted the dear city of Erbil and spread fear amongst its inhabitants is an attack on the security of our people. I discussed these developments with the KRG PM. Our security forces will investigate and stand firm against any threats towards our people.

**Kurdish Prime Minister Masrour Barzani; @masrour\_barzani (12 Mar):** I strongly condemn the terrorist attack on Erbil and strongly call on its resilient people to keep calm and follow the guidance of the security services. -- mb

**Iraqi cleric Muqtada al Sadr; @Mu\_AlSadr (12 Mar):** In the Name of God, Erbil under the fire of loss and betrayal. And under pain of starvation. As if the Kurds were not Iraqis. Rather, they are the lung of Iraq and its indivisible part. Erbil will not kneel except for moderation, independence and sovereignty...Peace and love to you, O Erbil, and you Kurds. And, patience until a national majority government is achieved. Your brother, Muqtada alsadr

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### IRAN

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## 4. US seizing tankers has failed to stop Iran’s oil exports, minister says

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

The US seizure of Iranian tankers in recent months has not stopped sanctions-hit Tehran from increasing oil exports, Iran's oil minister was quoted as saying on Saturday.

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## IRAQ

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### **5. Missiles strike near US consulate in north Iraq; no injuries**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Qassim Abdul-Zahra

As many as 12 missiles struck Iraq's northern city of Irbil on Sunday near the U.S. consulate, Iraqi security officials said. A U.S. defense official said missiles had been launched at the city from neighboring Iran.

### **6. U.S. looks into Iraq attack after Iran says Israel killed colonels in Syria**

Newsweek, 12 Mar 22, Tom O'Connor

The U.S. military is tracking reports of a missile attack near Washington's consulate in northern Iraqi city of Erbil days after two Iranian colonels were reportedly killed during an airstrike in Syria that was blamed on Israel.

### **7. Iraq to host another round of Iran-Saudi Arabia talks**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22, Amina Ismail

Iraq will host another round of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the foreign ministry in Baghdad said on Saturday, without giving further details.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **8. Two held over murders of polio vaccinators in Afghanistan: police**

Agence France-Presse, 12 Mar 22

Two suspects have been arrested in Afghanistan in connection with the killing of seven polio vaccinators last month, police said Saturday, putting the blame on a group opposed to Taliban rule.

### **9. Video of Taliban shooting of man provokes outcry**

Deutsche Welle (Germany), 12 Mar 22

A disturbing video showing a man being gunned down by Taliban forces in the north of Afghanistan has provoked a strong reaction on social media. The victim is wearing a uniform of the former Afghan national army but claims he is a civilian before being shot down.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **10. Russian footholds in Mideast, Africa raise threat to NATO**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Ellen Knickmeyer and Zeina Karam

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine dominates world attention. But with less global scrutiny, Putin is also busy advancing Russia's presence in the Middle East and Africa -- an expansion that military and civilian leaders view as another, if less immediate, threat to security in the West.

### **11. Saudi Arabia says it has executed 81 convicts in single day**

Associated Press, 12 Mar 22, Jon Gambrell

Saudi Arabia executed 81 people Saturday convicted of crimes ranging from killings to belonging to militant groups, the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

### **12. Iraq to host another round of Iran-Saudi Arabia talks**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

Iraq will host another round of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the foreign ministry in Baghdad said on Saturday, without giving further details.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **13. 'Rest now, while we can.' At Estonian NATO base, troops prepare for Putin's next move**

Politico, 13 Mar 22, Charlie Duxbury

At NATO's Tapa military base in central Estonia, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sparked a heightened sense of purpose among the troops. On a recent weekday, and despite heavy snow, there were plenty of signs of activity in and around the frontline camp — just 160 kilometers from the Russian border — as soldiers wondered what Russian President Vladimir Putin's future plans might be.

### **14. Military briefing: fear of deployment of chemical weapons in Ukraine**

Financial Times, 12 Mar 22, Daniel Dombey, John Paul Rathbone and Erika Solomon

As the west steps up its warnings that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, a broader fear lurks beneath the surface: the same poison gases that killed thousands on the front lines of the first world war could become an ever more familiar part of 21st century conflict.

### **15. What to know about Javelin antitank missiles could play in Ukraine's fight against Russia**

Washington Post, 12 Mar 22, Claire Parker, Alex Horton and William Neff

The United States and allies have surged weapons to Ukraine in recent weeks in the face of the Russian invasion. Images of destroyed Russian tanks on social media have drawn attention to one particular weapon: the Javelin missile. The U.S. and other NATO countries sent more than 17,000 antitank weapons, including Javelin missiles, overland to Ukraine via Poland and Romania in the span of less than a week this month, the New York Times reported.

## **16. Moon battle: New Space Force plans raise fears over militarizing the lunar surface**

Politico, 12 Mar 22, Bryan Bender

The battle is on for the moon. The U.S. military is investing in new technologies to build large structures on the lunar surface. It's designing a spy satellite to orbit the moon. And it just announced plans for a surveillance network — what it calls a “highway patrol” — for the vast domain between Earth's orbit and the moon, known as cislunar space. Top military strategists and documents, meanwhile, now consistently refer to this region as a new realm of operations.

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### ADJACENT AORs

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## **17. The new legion of foreign fighters: who are they and where do they come from?**

Sunday Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Peter Conradi and Hugo Daniel

In happier times, Anton Bondarenko, 22, gave online English lessons. Now he is an unlikely but vital cog in Ukraine's war machine. From the bedroom of the modest flat in central Kyiv that he shares with his mother, Bondarenko and 100 or so of his colleagues elsewhere in the capital form a virtual call center. Their task? Fielding inquiries from people across the world who have answered an appeal by President Zelensky to join a new Ukrainian foreign legion to help repel the invaders.

## **18. U.S. commission urges Biden to designate Ukraine, Georgia as major non-NATO allies**

Foreign Policy, 12 Mar 22, Amy Mackinnon

The Helsinki Commission, an independent U.S. government agency tasked with promoting human rights and security in Europe, has called on the Biden administration to upgrade the United States' defense relationship with Ukraine. The commission seeks to help facilitate military and economic assistance to Kyiv as Russian forces move to encircle the Ukrainian capital.

## **19. Nerves on edge in Poland as war next door in Ukraine revives fears of Russia**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Patrick J. McDonnell and Rima Marrouch

Military enlistments are spiking, demands for passports are surging, and memories of the bad old days of the Cold War are fraying the collective nerves of the Polish people.

## **20. Tiny kingdom in Nigeria celebrates as threat from Boko Haram fades**

Sunday Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Richard Assheton

The king rose early on the biggest day for his people in years. By 9am the walled center of the village was abuzz with the chatter of thousands who had come from the hills around. The celebrations that greeted the king were the first of their kind in nearly a decade. For much of that time the people of Sukur, a little-known, UNESCO-listed kingdom 3,000 feet up in the highlands of northeast Nigeria, lived in fear.

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### ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **21. Any new Iran deal would likely only be temporary**

National Review, 12 Mar 22, Carine Hajjar

There was speculation that earlier this week, the eleven months of negotiations in Vienna would finally end in a completed Iran deal. Indeed, EU foreign minister, Josep Borrell Fontelles, tweeted that the final text of the agreement is “essentially ready and on the table.” As of Thursday, however, the deal has stalled – most notably due to Russian demands for protection from sanctions on its trade with Tehran.

### **22. Don't embrace Saudi Arabia and the UAE because of the Ukraine crisis**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, William D. Hartung

The Biden administration is reportedly reaching out to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to urge them to increase their oil output to counterbalance disruptions in the global market sparked by sanctions on Russia. In doing so, it is crucial that the administration doesn't excuse their crimes in Yemen or bolster their militaries with additional arms sales or other military support.

### **23. 'A serious failure': scale of Russia's military blunders becomes clear**

Financial Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Sam Jones, John Paul Rathbone and Demetri Sevastopulo

The outcome of Russian president Vladimir Putin's war is still far from certain: little information exists on Ukrainian forces' rates of attrition, while Russia's military still outmans and outguns that of its neighbor. The chances of escalation have meanwhile increased as the Russian leadership looks to regain the front foot. But in the first phase of its offensive, the Kremlin's military story is one of failure.

### **24. For the sake of our national security, Congress must end its budget battles**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, Mike Rogers

On Tuesday, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued its Annual Worldwide Threats report. If you weren't already unsettled by the state of the world, reading this sobering report will certainly leave you concerned. From Russia to China, health security to transnational threats like drugs and terrorism, and more, the ODNI report shows just how unsettled the world is today and what it's anticipated to be over the course of the next year.

### **25. Nostalgia and Kalashnikovs: Why Russia wins some sympathy in Africa and the Middle East**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

In 2019 Vladimir Putin welcomed 43 African leaders to the inaugural Russia-Africa summit, a higher turnout than Britain or France attracted to similar shindigs. At the bash in Sochi the Russian president lambasted the West for how it imposed “political or other conditions” on African countries, a reference to chiding about human rights. “We have a lot to offer to our African friends,” said Mr Putin.

**26. Will China offer Russia financial help? A bit. But it will mostly seek to learn from Russia's mistakes**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

If you believe China's diplomats, relations with Russia are "rock solid" and the friendship between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin has "no limits". Western sanctions are about to put those warm words to the test. Russia needs an economic and financial lifeline. It would like to use China as a conduit through which to continue trading with the rest of the world. China, however, must strike a delicate balance between helping Mr Putin stand up to their joint rival, America, and retaining its own access to the global financial system. No doubt to Mr Putin's regret, its financial aid to Russia is likely to be qualified at best.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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**27. Saudi Arabia executes 81 people in a single day**

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including "allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations" and holding "deviant beliefs", state news agency Saudi Press Agency said, in the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

### IRAN

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**28. Iran-Saudi talks to be resumed this week in Baghdad**

Shafaq News, 12 Mar 22,

On Saturday, the Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Hussein revealed that the fifth round of Iranian-Saudi talks would be renewed in Baghdad this week.

### IRAQ

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**29. Rocket attack strike hits Erbil**

The National, 12 Mar 22, Simon Rushton

Twelve rockets were fired at Erbil in northern Iraq early on Sunday, the state news agency and local leaders said. Multiple explosions were heard but Erbil International Airport, where US military forces are stationed, was not believed to be the target, Deputy Minister Hiwa Afandi said.

**30. Iraqi PM condemns Erbil attack, talks to PM Barzani**

Kurdistan24, 13 Mar 22, Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi condemned the Erbil attack on Sunday.

### **31. Iraq's Sadr rebuilds alliances, holds talks with Maliki**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 12 Mar 22

Head of Iraq's Sadrist movement, cleric Moqtada al-Sadr surprised his partners and rivals alike when he telephoned former Prime Minister and head of the State of Law coalition Nuri al-Maliki in an effort to ease the political impasse in the country.

### **32. Coordination Framework to visit al-Hannana later today; source**

Shafaq News, 12 Mar 22

The Coordination Framework on Saturday is poised to visit the headquarters of the Sadrist movement's leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, in Najaf later today, Saturday, a source revealed.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **33. Taliban hopeful for deal on Kabul Airport with Turkey, Qatar**

Anadolu Agency, 12 Mar 22, Sahin Demir

While attending the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister told Anadolu Agency on Saturday that he is "hopeful" on reaching an agreement with Turkey and Qatar on operating the airport servicing the Afghan capital.

### **34. Muttaqi urges world community to contribute to stable, self-reliant Afghanistan**

Khaama Press, 12 Mar 22, Najibullah Lalzoy

Acting Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi asked the International Community to do their part in building a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan as an unstable and weak Afghanistan avail no one.

### **35. Foreign style govt must not be imposed on Afghans: Muttaqi**

TOLOnews, 12 Mar 22

The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov said that the current situation in Afghanistan has a direct impact on the region.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **36. Pakistan seeks joint probe into Indian missile fiasco**

Pakistan Express Tribune, 12 Mar 22, Kamran Yousaf

Pakistan has sought a joint probe to accurately establish the facts surrounding the 'accidental' firing of an Indian missile into its territory, saying an internal court of inquiry ordered by New Delhi is not sufficient.

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## YEMEN

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### **37. Dozens of children killed, maimed in Yemen in two months: UNICEF**

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 22

At least 47 children were “killed or maimed” in Yemen’s civil war in January and February following a surge in violence, the United Nations children’s fund said on Saturday.

### **38. Arab Coalition conducts 21 targeted strikes in Yemen against Iran-backed Houthis**

Al Arabiya, 12 Mar 22, Ayush Narayanan

The Arab Coalition has conducted 21 targeted strikes in Yemen’s Hajjah and Marib to deter the Iran-backed Houthi militia, the official Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday.

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## EGYPT

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### **39. Sisi commends ‘efficient’ efforts of armed forces**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 12 Mar 22

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi praised on Friday the efforts of the Armed Forces in carrying out their tasks “efficiently and competently on all strategic fronts of the Egyptian state.”

### **40. Egypt condemns targeting of Riyadh oil refinery**

Arab News, 12 Mar 22, Mohammed Abu Zaid

Egypt has condemned in the strongest terms a drone strike targeting an oil refinery in Riyadh.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **41. Israel's growing role in CENTCOM**

Jerusalem Post, 12 Mar 22, Abraham Rabinovich

‘There will be 10 generals and 10 admirals in the audience,’ said the American colonel on the telephone. “They’ll be sitting right opposite you.” I was being invited to participate in a symposium on Israel at US Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Florida last October but I found that phalanx of brass intimidating. As a draftee in the American army decades before, I had spent two years at Fort Benning (“Home of the Infantry”) without ever seeing a general. But the invitation was too intriguing to pass up.

### **42. A strategy to help Iraq find more missing persons**

Arab News, 12 Mar 22, Hassan Al-Kaabi & Alistair Burt

The political parties in Iraq are in the process of forming a new government following the October elections. The incoming administration will face enormous challenges. There is one area, however, where the newly appointed authorities can make immediate and significant

progress: They can implement an effective strategy to account for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis missing as a result of four decades of conflict, human rights violations and other atrocities.

#### **43. Sisi in Riyadh...The consolidation of an Arab regional order**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 12 Mar 22, Zuhair Al-Harhi

The Arab scene continues to affirm, with its successive setbacks that reflect its nature par excellence, that the Arab world's problems are deeply rooted and becoming increasingly complex and difficult as time goes on.

#### **44. Who will blink first?**

Pakistan Express Tribune, 21 Mar 22, Imtiaz Gul

If the invisible enemy had a name it would be the Egyptian dislike if not contempt for Israel. Whether a cabbie, a hotel management staff, academic or journalist, the aversion to Israel as a state stands out as the common denominator. Israeli officials know this too; they are at a loss as to why nearly four decades after they made peace with Egypt most of its people are still as distant to us as they were when President Anwar Sadaat signed the Camp David peace accords.

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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#### **1. Missiles from Iran struck in vicinity of U.S. Consulate in Northern Iraq, officials say**

Wall Street Journal, 12 Mar 22, Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon

A missile strike early Sunday that landed in the vicinity of a new American consulate under construction in northern Iraq originated from Iran, according to U.S. officials.

The attack comes as the U.S. is edging closer to cementing a deal to revive the 2015 agreement with Tehran that constrains Iran's nuclear program.

The compound wasn't hit and no U.S. personnel were hurt, said U.S. officials. They added that they weren't sure what was being targeted and that the attack was still under investigation.

The attack involved as many as a half-dozen missiles, and at least one landed more than two kilometers—1.2 miles—from the new compound, according to U.S. officials familiar with the preliminary reports.

While a series of attacks by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq have been carried out in recent years using drones and rockets, it is rare for such strikes to emanate from Iranian territory. Iran's mission to the United Nations didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

U.S. officials said that the missile attack may have been in retaliation for an Israeli airstrike in Syria on Monday that killed two members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iran's

foreign ministry spokesman said after the Israeli strike that Iran would take steps to hold Israel accountable.

Israel has been carrying out airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias and Iranian personnel in Syria as it seeks to prevent Iran from transferring weapons to Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia group. The campaign includes placing mines on ships carrying oil and other goods that are bound for Syria.

The Iranians have previously sought to pressure the U.S. to constrain its Israeli ally.

In October, Iran directed five drones at the al-Tanf garrison in southern Syria, which is defended by a small contingent of U.S. forces and American-trained Syrian fighters. The Iranians said in a confidential message to the U.S. at that time that the attack was in response to an Israeli airstrike that killed two Iranian officers in Syria, U.S. officials said.

In January, the massive U.S. Embassy complex in Baghdad was struck by four rocket attacks that injured at least two individuals but no U.S. personnel were hurt. That attack originated from inside Baghdad and was believed to have been carried out by an Iranian-backed militia group.

A State Department spokesman didn't provide details of the new rocket attack, its origins or say what the targets may have been.

"The incident is being investigated by the government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government," according to a State Department statement. "We condemn this outrageous attack and display of violence."

The U.S. has a consulate inside Erbil, the capital of the semiautonomous Kurdish region in Iraq, and is building a new one 8 miles from the center of the city.

The strikes come as Washington has been rushing to complete talks to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran. That agreement, which could also lead to the release of U.S. detainees, was close to being completed until Russia raised a fresh demand that its trade with Iran be exempted from Ukraine-related sanctions, Western officials say.

In January 2020, Iran fired ballistic missiles at the Al Asad base in western Iraq where U.S. troops were deployed. That was meant to avenge President Trump's decision to order a drone strike that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's paramilitary Quds Force.

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## **2. Ukraine War ushers in 'new era' for U.S. abroad**

New York Times, 12 Mar 22, Michael Crowley and Edward Wong

The war in Ukraine has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.

The Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela.

And it has re-energized Washington's leadership role in the democratic world just months after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan ended 20 years of conflict on a dismal note.

But the new focus on Russia will come with hard choices and internal contradictions, similar to ones that defined U.S. diplomacy during the Cold War, when America sometimes overlooked human rights abuses and propped up dictators in the name of the struggle against communism.

"It feels like we're definitively in a new era," said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a former deputy national security adviser in the Obama White House. "The post-9/11 war on terror period of American hubris, and decline, is now behind us. And we're not sure what's next."

The attack by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on his neighbor has become a prism through which nearly all American foreign policy decisions will be cast for the foreseeable future, experts and officials said.

In recent weeks, Western officials have spoken in terms that often echo the grand declarations that followed the 2001 terrorist attacks. On Friday, President Biden said that "the free world is coming together" to stand up to Mr. Putin — a phrase reminiscent of President George W. Bush's talk of how "the entire free world" was at war against terrorism.

In the near term, Russia's aggression is sure to invigorate Mr. Biden's global fight for democracy against autocracies like Moscow, making vivid the threats to fledgling democracies like Ukraine. Yet three increasingly authoritarian NATO nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — play key roles in the coalition aiding Kyiv. And the United States is grappling with internal assaults to its own democracy.

The war lends urgency to Mr. Biden's climate change agenda, reinforcing the need for more reliance on renewable clean energy over the fossil fuels that fill Russian coffers. Yet it has already generated new pressure to increase the short-term supply of oil from the likes of Venezuela's isolated dictatorship and Saudi Arabia's authoritarian monarchy.

And it creates a powerful new incentive for the United States to find ways of prying President Xi Jinping of China away from Mr. Putin, who is likely counting on diplomatic and economic lifelines from Mr. Xi amid crushing Western sanctions. But some administration officials see China as a lost cause and prefer to treat China and Russia as committed partners, hoping that might galvanize policies among Asian and European allies to contain them both.

While some experts warn that a renewed focus on Europe will inevitably divert attention from Asia, several top White House officials say the United States can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.

“What we are seeing now is an unprecedented level of Asian interest and focus,” Kurt M. Campbell, the top White House official on Asia policy, said at a talk hosted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

“And I believe one of the outcomes of this tragedy will be a kind of new thinking around how to solidify institutional connections beyond what we’ve already seen between Europe and the Pacific,” he said.

America’s approach to the world was already undergoing a major shift, with the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq concluded, and conversations over Islamist terrorism no longer at the fore. Many war-weary Americans welcomed calls for a reduced military footprint overseas by President Donald J. Trump, who questioned NATO’s relevance and even flirted with withdrawing from the alliance.

Mr. Biden sought to rebuild American alliances, but did so largely in the name of confronting China. The Russian invasion has expanded his mission dramatically and urgently, setting the stage for a seismic geopolitical shift that would pit the United States and its allies against China and Russia at once if they form an entrenched anti-Western bloc.

But it also gives Washington a new and nobler sense of purpose, Mr. Rhodes said. “We’ve been trying to get to a new era for a long time,” he said. “And now I think Putin’s invasion has necessitated an American return to the moral high ground.”

Early signs of how the new American priorities are creating diplomatic quakes have already emerged.

On Friday, the United States and its European allies agreed to pause talks with Iran that just days earlier seemed on the verge of clinching a return to the 2015 deal that limited Iran’s nuclear program. Western nations are refusing a demand by Moscow, which is a party to the Obama-era agreement from which Mr. Trump withdrew, for guarantees that its future transactions with Iran be exempted from the sanctions imposed on Russia in recent weeks.

“It’s been clear since last weekend that negotiations to revive the Iran deal could not be walled off from the Ukraine war,” Dalia Dassa Kaye, an Iran expert at the RAND Corporation, said on Friday.

Last year, Mr. Biden made a new agreement a core goal of his foreign policy. It is unclear whether one can be struck without Russia, which is a member of the commission that both supervises compliance with the deal and would take control of Iran’s excess enriched uranium.

The United States is also looking at Venezuela from a new angle. Senior Biden administration officials traveled to Venezuela two weeks after the Russian invasion, becoming the first to visit the country in years. Venezuela, a partner of Russia, is under heavy U.S. sanctions imposed years ago to weaken the repressive government of President Nicolás Maduro. In 2019, the Trump administration imposed additional sanctions on the state oil company, central bank and senior officials to pressure Mr. Maduro to step down.

Now, with Mr. Biden looking to increase global oil supplies to bring down prices, U.S. officials are talking to Mr. Maduro's government about buying his oil again. The idea has drawn some sharp criticism in Congress, however, where Senator Bob Menendez, Democrat of New Jersey and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, fumed that "efforts to unify the entire world against a murderous tyrant in Moscow should not be undercut by propping up a dictator under investigation for crimes against humanity in Caracas."

The same imperative on oil is reshaping U.S. diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two Persian Gulf nations that some Biden administration officials view with suspicion or hostility because of their autocratic systems and leading roles in a war in Yemen that has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. Brett McGurk and Amos J. Hochstein, two senior administration officials, traveled to the Gulf days before the Russian invasion to discuss security and energy issues.

However, Saudi Arabia has declined so far to increase oil production, while the United Arab Emirates waited until Wednesday to ask the OPEC nations to do so. American officials were also furious with the U.A.E. for declining to vote on a United Nations Security Council resolution to condemn Russia, though it did support a similar resolution later in the U.N. General Assembly.

The unreliability of the two nations and Russia's place in the oil economy have increased momentum within the Biden administration to enact policies that would help the United States more quickly wean itself off fossil fuels and confront the climate crisis. This could lead future administrations to devote fewer diplomatic and military resources to the Gulf nations in the long term, even if U.S. officials want them to help on oil now.

"We may see more fundamental questioning about the value of these partnerships," Ms. Kaye said. "These states already believe the U.S. has checked out of the region, but their stance on Russia may only strengthen voices calling for a further reduction of U.S. forces in the region."

Israel, the closest U.S. ally in the Middle East, has also staked out a neutral position on the Ukraine war, largely because of Russia's presence in the region. But American officials have been more forgiving of Israel's stance as Prime Minister Naftali Bennett conducts shuttle diplomacy. He met with Mr. Putin for three hours in Moscow on March 5 and then spoke with Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, by phone before returning home. U.S. officials say Mr. Bennett consulted with them about the talks, and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said this past week that they "appreciate the efforts."

Mr. Zelensky told reporters on Saturday that Jerusalem could be a site for peace talks between the leaders of Ukraine and Russia.

### **Juggling Allies in Europe and Asia**

In Europe, Russia's invasion has supercharged the Biden administration's efforts to restore the morale of a NATO alliance that Mr. Trump undermined.

But the alliance includes three nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — whose democratic backsliding has troubled the Biden administration. Hungary and Turkey were pointedly excluded

from Mr. Biden's global democracy summit in December, and the European Union has cut billions of euros of funding to Poland and Hungary for what it sees as erosions of legal and democratic principles. Now all three countries are participating in the coalition against Russia.

"In times of crisis, there is sometimes a tension between our values and our interests," said Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. "In the short term, we're going to have to prioritize pushing back against Russia, at the risk of taking our foot off the gas on the democracy and human rights concerns that had been at the front and center of the Biden administration's agenda."

In the Asia-Pacific region, several important U.S. partners and allies are working with Washington on sanctions and export controls on technology against Russia. These include Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia. Some Asian nations have agreed to long-term gas swaps with Europe to help relieve a potential Russian shut-off of energy exports. And Australia has committed to spending \$50 million to send weapons to Ukraine, including missiles and ammunition.

However, India — the most populous U.S. partner in the so-called Quad coalition of democracies in Asia — has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion because of decades-old security ties with Moscow. That stance undermines Mr. Biden's insistence that democratic nations band together against autocracies.

But it is the other Asian behemoth, China, that presents the biggest diplomatic challenge for the United States. China is Russia's most powerful partner, and their bond has strengthened in recent years.

Even as the Russian military decimates Ukrainian cities and kills hundreds or thousands of civilians, China has signaled that it stands by Moscow by issuing anti-U.S. declarations and amplifying the Kremlin's propaganda and conspiracy theories.

Mr. Xi's persistent support of Mr. Putin, with whom he shares a drive to dilute American power, has made administration officials wonder whether there is any way to pull them apart on Ukraine.

On Thursday, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, told U.S. senators he believed that Mr. Xi was "unsettled" by the war. Some China analysts say that if Beijing wants to salvage its reputation with Western nations, particularly in Europe, it might agree to take steps to help Ukraine without directly breaking from Russia.

Ryan Hass, a China director on the National Security Council in the Obama White House, proposed testing Beijing with specific requests, such as asking them to provide more humanitarian aid and refrain from recognizing Russian-installed governments in Ukraine or shielding Russia from war crimes investigations.

"If China's leaders take concrete actions to relieve suffering," he said, "then lives would be saved and there would be less centrifugal pressure toward cleaving the world into rival blocs."

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### **3. Russia intensifies assault, warns U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine are ‘legitimate targets’**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Nabih Bulos and Jenny Jarvie

Russian forces kept up their bombardment of cities across Ukraine on Saturday, capturing the eastern outskirts of a key southern port and waging an increasingly violent campaign with an eye to encircling the capital even as they sought to bring a political veneer to their occupation in cities they have captured.

Moscow also signaled it could soon expand the war to embroil Kyiv’s allies, warning the U.S. that it would consider convoys carrying weapons to Ukraine to be “legitimate targets.” A few hours later, the White House announced it would send an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine.

While wide-scale Russian bombing campaigns intensified in cities including Mariupol, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, Russian forces planned to conduct a referendum that would turn the city of Kherson — the first major city captured by Russian forces earlier this month into a vassal breakaway republic, said Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

“Given zero popular support, it will be fully staged,” he wrote on Twitter, warning that it was a repeat of Russia’s

“Severe sanctions against Russia must follow if they proceed. Kherson is & will always be Ukraine.”

Sergey Khlan, a deputy in the Kherson Regional Council, said in a post on Facebook on Saturday that Russian authorities were contacting deputies and asking for their cooperation in holding the referendum to create a putative Kherson People’s Republic.

If the last few years have taught us anything, it’s that affordability is at the top of most people’s wish lists.

“The creation of Kherson People’s Republic will turn our region into a hopeless hole without life and future,” Khlan wrote.

“Do not give them a single vote! Do not give them any opportunity to legitimize [the Kherson People’s Republic]... Enter the history of Ukraine not as traitors whom nobody wants, but truly as citizens whose names will be remembered by the next generations.”

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Saturday that shipments of Western weapons to Ukraine could be attacked by Russian forces, according to Russia’s Itar-Tass news agency. Western nations’ “thoughtless transfer” of portable air defense and antitank missile systems to Kyiv, Ryabkov said, demonstrated “the escalatory component of Washington’s policy.”

The White House announced Saturday it had approved an additional \$200 million in arms and equipment for Ukraine, on top of \$350 million President Biden approved last month.

“We have warned the U.S. that the U.S.-orchestrated inundation of Ukraine with weapons from some countries is not just a dangerous move, but also an action that makes these convoys legitimate targets,” Ryabkov said. The Russian diplomat did not say whether Russian forces would target such convoys in Poland or Romania, NATO countries that border Ukraine.

The tough talk came on a day that Russian forces sustained “heavy losses in manpower and equipment” in areas northeast of Kyiv and were prevented from regaining a foothold on previously captured frontiers, according to the Ukrainian military.

Northwest of the capital, the bulk of Russian ground forces were gathered Saturday about 15 miles from the city center, according to the U.K.’s Ministry of Defense. Parts of the large Russian column north of Kyiv had dispersed, the ministry said, either in an effort to encircle the city or limit its risk of Ukrainian counterattacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said more than 12,700 people evacuated Saturday, taking advantage of humanitarian corridors. But not everyone was allowed safe passage.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense claimed Russian troops shot at a group of women and children who were trying to evacuate Friday from the small village of Peremoga, 18 miles northeast of Kyiv, along a previously-agreed “green” corridor.

“The result of this brutal act was seven dead,” the ministry wrote in a tweet. “One of them is a child.”

Early in the morning, loud explosions reverberated near the capital. Rumbles — louder and closer than the booms of previous days — could be heard throughout the day and well into the night in Kyiv. They served as the calling card of the Russian pincers stretching toward the capital from its northeastern and northwestern flanks.

Despite holding off enemy forces from the capital, Ukrainian officials admitted a bitter defeat, acknowledging that Russia had seized the eastern suburban fringes of Mariupol, a strategic city in the southeastern Donetsk region that could allow it to build a land corridor from pro-Moscow enclaves in the east to Russian-annexed Crimea in the south.

Russian shelling of the city hit a mosque sheltering more than 80 people, including children, according to the Ukrainian government, and repeated efforts to evacuate 430,000 residents have failed as their convoys have come under artillery fire. Dozens of buses loaded with humanitarian supplies were reported to be attempting to reach the city.

“Let’s see whether this one gets here or not,” Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov said in an interview with the BBC, noting that six previous attempts to bring food, water and medicine to his beleaguered city were unsuccessful.

“The convoys were not let through,” he said. “They were bombed, the road was mined, there was shelling in the town.”

“I think we can say we’re in the disaster phase now,” Alex Wade, an emergency coordinator for Doctors Without Borders told CNN, noting that residents had gone a week without access to clean drinking water and were using snow and rain water and breaking into heating systems to extract the water inside.

“The next phase we will see people who potentially could die from dehydration and hunger or ... fleeing from the city trying to find food and water and dying from the violence outside the city,” he said.

Some residents, he said, had taken their neighbors’ bodies and buried them in their yards to ensure they were not left to languish on the street.

In Mykolaiv, another major Black Sea port and shipbuilding center about 300 miles west of Mariupol, Mayor Olexandr Senkevitch claimed in a video posted Saturday on Instagram that eight civilians were injured and more than 160 houses, three hospitals and 11 educational institutions were damaged overnight.

“We will definitely repair and restore everything,” he said. “We heal the wounded. And defeat these damn orcs,” referring to the Ukrainian nickname for Russian forces.

With those forces assembled about 15 miles outside Kyiv, Zelensky struck a confident tone from inside the capital, where citizen militias are armed with missiles, machine guns and Molotov cocktails.

“We know 100% there will be a victory,” he said in a news conference.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, Zelensky said, about 1,300 soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had died — a fraction of the 12,000 Russians that he claimed had died. The numbers could not be independently verified.

“One in 10,” he said.

Asked if Russian troops could enter Kyiv, Zelensky said it was theoretically possible.

“If they carry out a carpet bombing and simply decide to erase the historical memory of the whole region, the history of Kyivan Rus’, the history of Europe, they will enter Kyiv,” he added. “If they destroy all of us, they will enter Kyiv. If this is the goal, they will enter and will have to live on this land alone, without us. They will not find friends among us here.”

Zelensky urged Ukrainians to keep fighting.

“The resistance of the entire Ukrainian people against these invaders has already gone down in history,” Zelensky said. “But we have no right to reduce the intensity of defense. No matter how difficult it is. We have no right to reduce the energy of resistance.”

In Melitopol, 120 miles west of Mariupol, hundreds gathered on the streets Saturday to demand the release of the southern city's mayor, Ivan Fedorov, who the Ukrainian government has said was kidnapped from a government office Friday by Russian forces.

"Fedorov!" the crowd chanted. "Free the mayor!"

After accusing Russia on Saturday of "switching to a new stage of terror" in trying to "physically eliminate" elected officials, Zelensky praised the protesters for their open resistance.

"The invaders must see that they are strangers on our land, on all our land of Ukraine, and they will never be accepted," he said in a video broadcast.

In telephone conversations with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron, Zelensky said he urged them to push for Fedorov's release.

"The demand is simple: to release him from captivity immediately," he said. "We expect them, the world leaders, to show how they can influence the situation. How they can do a simple thing: free one person. A person who represents the entire Melitopol community, Ukrainians who do not give up."

Russia's intensified assault on the cities and villages of Ukraine came as the United States continued to insist that diplomacy still had a role in the conflict.

But prospects of a resolution looked dim after Scholz and Macron unsuccessfully tried in a lengthy telephone call Saturday to persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to an immediate cease-fire or diplomatic talks.

Russia's Itar-Tass news agency also reported Saturday that Ryabkov, Russia's deputy foreign minister, said in an interview that Moscow and Washington were not negotiating or consulting on Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in the disputed Donbas region, the self-appointed head of the Luhansk People's Republic, Leonid Pasechnik, issued a decree Saturday saying the borders of the state would correspond to those declared in May 2014. (Ukrainian forces had clawed back two-thirds of the Donbas before a cease-fire later in 2014.)

The move aims to formalize gains in recent days after Russian forces — backed by separatists advanced into government-held areas of Luhansk province. A day earlier, Pasechnik issued another decree restoring names of streets that had been changed after the Ukrainian government's so-called de-communization drive.

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IRAN

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#### **4. US seizing tankers has failed to stop Iran's oil exports, minister says**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

In 2019, the kingdom beheaded 37 Saudi citizens, most of them minority Shiites, in a mass execution across the country for alleged terrorism-related crimes.

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## **12. Iraq to host another round of Iran-Saudi Arabia talks**

Reuters, 12 Mar 22

Iraq will host another round of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the foreign ministry in Baghdad said on Saturday, without giving further details.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein revealed the development during remarks at a diplomatic forum in Antalya on Turkey's southern coast cited by local media. A foreign ministry spokesman confirmed the comments to Reuters.

The talks will be the fourth round hosted by Baghdad between officials from its two neighbours and mutual adversaries, according to local media.

The Saudi foreign ministry did not respond to request for comment.

Diplomats hope the opening of direct channels between Iran and Saudi Arabia will signal an easing of tensions across the Middle East after years of hostilities that have brought the region close to a full-scale conflict.

Talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal on Friday faced the prospect of collapse after a last-minute Russian demand forced world powers to pause negotiations for an undetermined time despite having a largely completed text. [read more](#)

Negotiators have reached the final stages of 11 months of discussions to restore the deal, which lifted sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on its nuclear program, long seen by the West as a cover for developing atomic bombs.

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## **NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS**

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## **13. 'Rest now, while we can.' At Estonian NATO base, troops prepare for Putin's next move**

Politico, 13 Mar 22, Charlie Duxbury

At NATO's Tapa military base in central Estonia, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sparked a heightened sense of purpose among the troops.

On a recent weekday, and despite heavy snow, there were plenty of signs of activity in and around the frontline camp just 160 kilometers from the Russian border as soldiers wondered what Russian President Vladimir Putin's future plans might be.

In the town of Tapa, north of the base, armed Estonian conscripts practiced street patrols, methodically checking side roads for would-be invaders. Closer to the main camp, a civilian police vehicle skidded to a halt to block oncoming traffic before a convoy of eight hulking military trucks came barreling along on a training exercise. Armored vehicles could also be seen tracking the edge of a forest further off-road.

Inside the camp, Colonel Andrus Merilo, who as head of Estonia's first infantry brigade functions as base commander, said Moscow's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of one of its neighbors had focused people's minds on the task at hand here: national defense and the potential threat Russia could pose toward Estonia.

"Vigilance is the key thing," he said. "We must exercise it now, so we don't miss any indications that the threat will be directed towards Estonia."

He said his troops had long prepared for such a scenario based on lessons from Estonia's history — it was occupied by the Soviet Union for 48 years — and Russia's aggression against its neighbors over recent years.

"Our system is built so that we have already foreseen this situation," Merilo said. "Ukraine is currently under the Russian invasion, but we have prepared for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and all the Baltic Sea region to face the same kind of military incursion."

Indeed, Baltic leaders have been flagging the risk of Russian aggression in the region since at least 2008, when Russia invaded Georgia.

Former Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, now a European commissioner, said this week that Putin would likely target the Baltic states to expand his country's access to the Baltic Sea, if he achieves his military aims in Ukraine.

Baltic leaders have called for NATO troops to be stationed at bases such as Tapa on a permanent basis, but for now they remain on a system of permanent rotation.

Outside Merilo's office, on the edge of the parade ground, British troops could be seen shouldering what looked like a batch of new rocket launchers, testing the sights and getting the feel of the kit.

The flags of NATO, Estonia, the U.K., the EU, France and Denmark — all of which have troops here — flapped atop poles above their heads.

### **Sense of mission**

Across the parade ground, at the camp headquarters of the British Royal Tank Regiment Battlegroup, Lieutenant Colonel Simon Worth, the commanding officer, suggested that if his troops had ever wondered why they had been posted to rural Estonia, Russia's renewed attack on Ukraine had definitively answered that question.

“Right now, the strategic context and the continuous news feed that they see means that there is no explanation necessary about why this is so important,” he said. “A sense of purpose is an amazing thing.”

In a storage facility down a rutted road from Worth’s office, a motor roared and a crane lifted an engine into an armored vehicle while engineers called instructions to each other.

A British Challenger 2 tank parked outside stood ready for its next training exercise. The tank commander in charge of it said he felt his soldiers had put their months in Estonia — his battlegroup arrived in Tapa last September — to good use learning how to operate the vehicle in soggy, more densely forested and colder conditions than they had been used to.

Temperatures here fell to minus 26 degrees in December, forcing the battlegroup to quickly adapt its approach, commanding officer Worth said.

“Just living in that [environment] is challenging, so fighting in it is even harder,” he said.

A precursor to the Tapa base was built by the Soviet Red Army during its occupation of Estonia, which lasted between 1940 and 1941 and again between 1944 and 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

The departure of the Soviet forces took several years and camp commander Merilo — who enlisted in 1992 — said that his first job as a conscript was to guard an Estonian base in case the Russians decided to attack rather than withdraw.

Along with the other two Baltic states, Estonia joined the EU and NATO in 2004, cementing its position among Western nations.

Since then, bases like Tapa and Adazi in Latvia have been modernized and expanded, but Baltic concerns that Russian forces could return have never gone away.

After Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, the Baltics called on NATO to deploy troops across its eastern edges. In 2016, at a summit in Warsaw, NATO leaders decided to rotate troops permanently through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Now, Baltic leaders say NATO troops should be stationed here permanently with more and better equipment as they fear Putin’s ultimate goal lies beyond seizing power in Ukraine.

Merilo said he believes taking Ukraine is only “an intermediate goal” for Putin and that NATO needs to be prepared for him to go further.

Merilo said he sleeps well, but not because he believes trouble isn’t coming.

“What we prepared for for decades is now happening, there is nothing more to wonder about,” he said. “We should get our rest now, while we can.”

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#### **14. Military briefing: fear of deployment of chemical weapons in Ukraine**

Financial Times, 12 Mar 22, Daniel Dombey, John Paul Rathbone and Erika Solomon

As the west steps up its warnings that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, a broader fear lurks beneath the surface: the same poison gases that killed thousands on the front lines of the first world war could become an ever more familiar part of 21st century conflict.

Friday's declaration by US President Joe Biden that "Russia would pay a severe price if they use chemical weapons" came after the White House said "we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false-flag operation using them".

Those statements contrast starkly with the post-cold war hope that such weapons could soon be consigned to history, an aspiration encapsulated by the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention.

"Maybe worldwide there are fewer chemical weapons than there were during the cold war, but there is greater capacity and a willingness to use them," said Filippa Lentzos, joint director of the Centre for Science and Security Studies at King's College London.

She said Russia has an extensive range of chemical weapons – from sophisticated nerve agents to barrels of chlorine gas, the poison that inaugurated the age of chemical warfare in the first world war.

As well as Biden's declaration this week, European officials have referred more privately to the Kremlin's previous use of the nerve agent novichok to try to kill its foes.

One notorious case was the attempted murder in Salisbury in 2018 of Sergei Skripal, a former Russian spy who had defected to the UK. Another was the attempt against Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, in 2020.

"The history is there, with the Navalny and Skripal poisonings, and in Syria," said one official, also referring to chemical weapons used by the regime of Bashar al-Assad, Russia's ally. "So we cannot rule out the use of chemical weapons in an escalation scenario."

Russia, which entered the Syrian conflict in 2015 to help Assad fend off rebel forces, did not directly use chemical weapons against opposition areas itself. However, it provided diplomatic cover, backing Assad's assertion that it was rebels who had set off chemical attacks.

In Ukraine, Russia has said Kyiv, backed by western allies, plans to use chemical weapons. The UN security council on Friday convened at Russia's request to discuss Moscow's claims, presented without evidence, of US "biological activities" in Ukraine.

"Allegedly, we are preparing a chemical attack," Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky said ahead of the meeting. "This makes me really worried because . . . if you want to know Russia's plans, look at what Russia accuses others of."

Analysts said any Russian use of chemical weapons in Ukraine would be very different from the more targeted novichok attacks on Navalny and Skripal, and would mark an alarming shift towards the “normalization” of internationally banned substances.

“We think chemical weapons could be used,” said one western official, while cautioning: “There’s nothing to suggest they would use it [chemical weapons], at this point, in a major escalation of the current conflict.”

Defense officials have said they believe the Russian FSB and GRU intelligence agencies, whose operatives are active in Ukraine, have a relationship with the research institutions that produce chemical weapons.

One of the most prominent is Gosniiookht, the unit that developed novichok, which dates back to the early days of the Soviet era. It was sanctioned by the EU and the UK in 2020 in connection with the Navalny case and by the US the following year.

“What we are looking at is probably not the assassination weapons we have already seen . . . The concern is that there would be similar use of these indiscriminate chemical weapons, as in Syria, to target people who go below ground to their basement to hide from missile bombardment,” said Lentzos.

“You put chemical weapons in and people either die or they come up for air and get bombarded,” she added. “It’s a really horrific scenario, that is why there is so much effort, and extreme transparency on intelligence to call it out.”

She and other analysts see 2013 as being a turning point for chemical weapons. Despite previously claiming the use of chemical weapons by Syria would be a “red line”, the Obama administration that year opted against military action after the Assad regime killed hundreds of people with rockets containing sarin.

Despite a Russia-brokered deal to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons, the UN’s Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons subsequently found that the Assad regime used sarin and chlorine gas in 2017 and 2018.

“The international norm against chemical weapons use is under siege, most prominently by Syria and Russia,” wrote Kenneth Ward, a former US ambassador to the OPCW, last year. “The world is now precariously perched on the knife’s edge of a new era of chemical weapons use.”

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## **15. What to know about Javelin antitank missiles could play in Ukraine’s fight against Russia**

Washington Post, 12 Mar 22, Claire Parker, Alex Horton and William Neff

The United States and allies have surged weapons to Ukraine in recent weeks in the face of the Russian invasion. Images of destroyed Russian tanks on social media have drawn attention to one particular weapon: the Javelin missile.

The U.S. and other NATO countries sent more than 17,000 antitank weapons, including Javelin missiles, overland to Ukraine via Poland and Romania in the span of less than a week this month, the New York Times reported.

The Javelin has taken on a symbolic valence in pro-Ukraine online chatter. Former reporter Christian Borys created an image of a saint clutching a Javelin and its launch unit. The image on stickers and other gear has raised more than \$1 million, Borys said on Twitter, which he said will go to a humanitarian aid charity focused on Ukraine.

As a convoy of Russian military vehicles creeping toward Kyiv captures global attention, the antitank missiles are in the spotlight. Weapons experts say the Javelin could prove particularly effective against Russian tanks, though they caution that the missile systems alone are unlikely to change the trajectory of the war.

Here's what to know about how they work and the role they could play.

### **What is a Javelin?**

The Javelin is an antitank missile system that locks onto a target's thermal picture. The soldier peers through a command launch unit and selects different targets and attack types.

When fired, the missile's launch motor thrusts it out of the tube before its primary motor turns on and sends the rocket flying. The gentler start reduces debris and smoke, making it harder for the enemy to see where it was launched. It makes use of what is known as a "fire and forget" system, which allows the soldier to take cover or load a new missile while the other one is tracking to its target.

While the Javelin can target any kind of vehicle that emits heat, it is most potent against tanks because it can strike from the top. This is why it's called a Javelin, like the spear thrown in track and field events that falls to the earth at a steep angle.

Javelins can also fire directly at a target if there is protection above it, and can be used against low-flying helicopters.

### **How could they help Ukraine fight Russian forces?**

The Javelin is "probably the most sophisticated and most powerful" antitank weapon, said Mark Cancian, senior adviser for the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Ukrainian military shared images of soldiers carrying the Javelin on Twitter on Friday, along with photos of destroyed tanks.

"The very information about the presence of Javelins in the weaponry of the Ukrainian Armed Forces causes panic among the [Russian flag] occupiers," the tweet said.

Ukraine claims that Russia has lost 335 tanks and just over 1,100 armored combat vehicles in the fighting.

But there isn't reliable data on how many Javelin missiles Ukraine has used in battle and to what effect, said Arael Kotlarski, a senior analyst at Janes, an open-source defense intelligence agency.

The Ukrainian defense ministry asked Ukrainians in a Facebook post Wednesday not to share information on the purchase of weapons from foreign partners.

Experts say the Javelin is a powerful addition to Ukraine's existing arsenal of domestically produced antitank missiles.

It's easy to train fighters to use them, Cancian said, which is advantageous in Ukraine, where civilians have signed up for battle. The United States has trained Ukrainian forces in the past on how to operate the weapons.

Javelins are "particularly useful because the Russians seem to be road-bound," Cancian added, which makes it easier for Ukrainian forces to set up ambush sites or strong launch points.

### **What have Russians done to curb Javelins?**

There are few things even the most well-equipped militaries can do about Javelins. Modern tanks are covered with reactive armor, which in some cases is packed with small amounts of explosives that will detonate an incoming warhead.

The Javelin is designed to get past that armor. It uses a tandem warhead, which first either creates a channel into the reactive armor or blows it up, allowing the main warhead to slice right through and explode.

Russian tanks are particularly vulnerable to the weapon, Kotlarski said, because they were designed to be "very small, squat and compact." A Javelin missile hitting the top of the tank usually means "instant destruction," he said.

There is some evidence the Russian military is wary of Javelins, including photos showing metal canopies jury-rigged on top of tanks. There are two theories about what these are intended to do. The first is to shield a commander or the turret itself from drones that can either drop munitions or crash into them, kamikaze style. But there is also speculation the canopies are meant to blunt the Javelin's top-down attack, giving the tank and its crew a slightly better chance of survival.

The design concept is similar to that of slat armor, which U.S. and other militaries have used to surround vehicles in steel cages, to detonate rocket-propelled grenades prematurely.

Social media has been littered with photos of destroyed Russian tanks with cages. The images have acquired a symbolic resonance so quickly that Internet users have coined the term "cope cage," earning a page on the Internet's primary meme directory.

Others have suggested thermal attachments to the tank may be an attempt to complicate the missile's ability to focus on the target.

A Telegram channel associated with pro-Russian forces also published instructions for Russian soldiers on how to use Javelin systems that they capture in Ukraine.

### **What are the Javelin's limitations?**

The Javelin is "not a silver bullet," said Kotlarski, from Janes.

"There is a prevailing narrative in the public mind to sort of lionize certain weapons systems as having a defining impact on certain conflicts," he said, but "the reality is often more complex."

Though potent, particularly in open areas where Russian military vehicles are lumbering toward Ukrainian cities, the Javelin does have some drawbacks.

"It has the disadvantage of all these kinds of antitank weapons, which is that they [the tanks] can shoot back at you and you just have people hiding behind a hill or a bush," Cancian said. "It's not like an armored vehicle where you have some protection."

The weapons systems are also expensive and complicated to produce, with estimates of production costs ranging between \$80,000 and \$200,000 per missile, according to Kotlarski. U.S. weapons makers have the capacity to produce a maximum of 6,500 Javelin missiles per year, according to the Army's estimates, though the existing contract caps production at 2,100.

If the conflict drags on and Ukraine burns through existing Javelin supplies, the U.S. and European countries may worry that handing over more weapons could leave them vulnerable, Kotlarski said.

As its ground forces struggle to make progress amid fierce Ukrainian resistance, Russia is relying on shelling besieged cities and launching unguided bombs from the sky.

After more than two weeks of war, the Russian military grinds forward at a heavy cost.

And with battles expected to play out increasingly in cities, the Javelin — which is tricky to fire safely out of building windows — may not prove especially useful, Kotlarski said.

"A Javelin in itself is not going to be able to allow the Ukrainians to defeat the entire Russian army," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said weapons provided by the West so far are insufficient and called for fighter jets, setting off a fierce debate among U.S. politicians about whether to supply the aircraft. The Biden administration has so far shut down the idea.

"We believe the most effective way to support the Ukrainian military in their fight against Russia is to provide increased amounts of anti-tank weapons and air defense systems," the commander of U.S. European Command, Gen. Tod D. Wolters, said in a statement.

In the meantime, the Space Force is preparing for its moon portfolio to substantially grow.

“I envision lots of other technology development projects focused on this over the next 10 to 15 years if the Space Force decides this is an operational capability they need and we start to flesh that out,” Felt said.

For example, his lab is carrying out a study with the Space Force Warfighting Analysis Center on the additional capabilities that would be needed if the military plans to operate on and around the moon.

“What can be done from the Earth? What needs to be done from a space-based asset?” he asked. “It can’t all be done from the Earth. How do you know where you are? How do you communicate? How do you navigate? How do you autonomously operate up there? What kind of sensors do you need? What kind of logistics support do you need?”

He added: “There are hard problems that need to be solved to make sure we can operate up there.”

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **17. The new legion of foreign fighters: who are they and where do they come from?**

Sunday Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Peter Conradi and Hugo Daniel

In happier times, Anton Bondarenko, 22, gave online English lessons. Now he is an unlikely but vital cog in Ukraine’s war machine.

From the bedroom of the modest flat in central Kyiv that he shares with his mother, Bondarenko and 100 or so of his colleagues elsewhere in the capital form a virtual call center. Their task? Fielding inquiries from people across the world who have answered an appeal by President Zelensky to join a new Ukrainian foreign legion to help repel the invaders.

“We get people from all over,” said Bondarenko, who for now, at least, still ignores the air raid sirens that sound five or six times a day. “Probably the largest number are from America. But also from Australia, Turkey, France. Everywhere.”

In an echo of the International Brigades that drew fighters from across the world to fight on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, nearly 20,000 men from 52 countries had volunteered to fight in Ukraine by last weekend, Dmytro Kuleba, the foreign minister said.

Thousands more are thought to have enlisted in the days since, their determination intensified by the growing brutality of the war unleashed by Putin.

The arrival of the volunteers provides a much-needed boost for Ukrainian morale: especially welcome are military veterans from the British or other western armies with experience of recent conflicts in the Middle East or Afghanistan.

One of the highest profile arrivals is “Wali”, a computer scientist from Montreal who was been dubbed the world’s deadliest sniper after his service with the Royal Canadian 22nd Regiment in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, where he reportedly killed as many as 40 people a day in one case from a record 3,540 meters.

Also in action is Irakli Okruashvili, a former Georgian defense minister, who within days of his arrival in Ukraine reportedly helped his unit capture a powerful Russian BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle, and Juris Jurašs, a member of the Latvian parliament and former policeman.

Yet there are concerns the conflict also risks attracting young adventure seekers whose only experience of battle is on a computer screen in their bedroom. “War is a great recruiting sergeant,” said General Sir Richard Barrons, Britain’s former commander of Joint Forces Command. “If people have solid military experience and some personal equipment and only need arming, then they can become an asset to the Ukrainians. But if they’re only turning up because they fancy it and are really good at Call of Duty, then they will be a burden.”

For those enlisting, the road to war begins at the Ukrainian embassy in their home country, to which those who contact Bondarenko’s call center or get in touch online are asked to report.

After their details are taken, they are interviewed by the defense attaché to judge their suitability to join the new formation, known formally as the International Legion of Territorial Defense of the Ukraine. If accepted, they are advised to travel to one of five Polish cities, from where volunteers will help them reach the border.

Among eight would-be recruits encountered last Thursday by The Sunday Times outside Ukraine’s white stucco-fronted mission in Holland Park, west London, was John, 61, a former Royal Engineer spurred into signing up by Russia’s bombing the previous day of a maternity hospital in Mariupol. With 18 years in the army, including stints in the first Gulf War and in the Balkans, he sees defending Ukraine against Russia as a cause “worth fighting for” — just as fighting Fascism was for those who went to Spain in the 1930s.

“The maternity hospital in Mariupol really had a big impact,” he said. “All these stories of people’s lives being destroyed.” He feared he may be barred from joining because he is too old, “but I’ll find out”.

Alan, 52, a former Para who works in Southampton mooring boats on the Solent, had also packed his kitbag. “I can’t sit at home and watch these evil people do this,” he said. “If it’s down to the people of every other country to go in there and push Russia back, then so be it.”

Among those helping the arrivals when they reach Ukraine is Chris Garrett, 38, a former British army soldier based near the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. Nicknamed “Swampy” because of his work as a tree surgeon in civilian life, he went to fight the pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine in September 2014 and stayed there for three years on and off before returning to his native Isle of Man.

“When Zelensky said he would accept foreigners with military experience, my phone kind of exploded with hundreds of messages from people wanting to join,” he said. “And it got to the

stage where I realized that if I was going to help bring people into the country, then I should be on the ground myself. My phone hasn't stopped ringing for 12 days."

Garrett, who works with another British army veteran who gave his name only as Tony, has based himself alongside the Georgian National Legion, which was founded in 2014 in the Donbas by ethnic Georgians to fight the separatists and has since been incorporated into the 62nd brigade of the Ukrainian territorial defense force.

Over the past week he has personally welcomed 50 or so Britons, a few of whom have gone on to join the new international force, which is still in the process of being set up. Most have opted instead to go with the Georgians, whose legion has always been open to foreign fighters.

Before potential recruits who contact him set off from Britain, Garrett vets them to make sure that they are not serving soldiers or barred for other reasons from fighting for Ukraine. He also establishes whether they have useful military skills.

"It doesn't take long to pick out the people that have come here because they play too many computer games," he said. "And we then ask them to leave because they become more of a hindrance to us and a threat to the other people they are working with."

"People have got to think what they can offer," chipped in Tony. "It's not enough thinking 'I'm a strong lad'. If you don't have any military or battlefield experience then you can become a liability and you can't then turn round and say 'I want to go home now'. It doesn't work like that."

Both men insisted that anyone coming should also be in no doubt about the heavy fighting they are likely to face, which is more reminiscent of Second World War battles than more recent military campaigns. "Even those who have served in the British army have never seen a conflict like this," said Garrett. "There are cruise missiles being thrown at us; air strikes. This isn't Afghanistan or Iraq. It is very different."

Ultimately, the main value of foreign fighters may be the symbolism: the Spanish Civil War is celebrated for the involvement of writers such as George Orwell, who wrote *Homage to Catalonia* about his experiences fighting the Fascists, and Ernest Hemingway, who penned *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Less well known is that the casualty rates among members of the International Brigades were considerably higher than for Spanish fighters, blamed on a lack of training, poor leadership and their use as shock troops.

The presence on Ukrainian soil of such large numbers of foreign fighters "shows solidarity", said Barrons. "It also has a narrative value than can be greater than the military value. We shouldn't underestimate that."

Yet there are already signs the volunteers' presence is being exploited by the Kremlin to justify creating a rival foreign legion of its own: Putin on Friday gave orders that more than 16,000 "volunteers" from Syria loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and elsewhere in the Middle East be brought to fight in Ukraine.

“Even merely rumors that British citizens have joined Ukrainian armed forces can be manipulated by the Russians into claims that British Special Forces are involved and that NATO’s escalating the conflict,” Barrons added. “It doesn’t even have to be true. Just a shred of truth provides enough meat for a propaganda machine to move the narrative to a place they want it to be.”

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### **18. U.S. commission urges Biden to designate Ukraine, Georgia as major non-NATO allies** Foreign Policy, 12 Mar 22, Amy Mackinnon

The Helsinki Commission, an independent U.S. government agency tasked with promoting human rights and security in Europe, has called on the Biden administration to upgrade the United States’ defense relationship with Ukraine. The commission seeks to help facilitate military and economic assistance to Kyiv as Russian forces move to encircle the Ukrainian capital.

In a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden obtained by Foreign Policy, the commission urged the administration to designate Ukraine and Georgia, which was invaded by Russia in 2008, as major non-NATO allies (MNNA) and to reinvigorate U.S. support for the NATO accession of both countries.

“Although the United States has consistently supported Ukraine’s and Georgia’s NATO membership, Russia’s occupations and ongoing invasion expose the tragedy of long-stalled Euro-Atlantic enlargement,” wrote the commission, which is led by Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin and Democratic Rep. Steve Cohen.

“Absent strong and proactive U.S. backing for Ukrainian and Georgian NATO membership, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin will continue to take ample advantage in his aspirations to upend security and cooperation in Europe and his neocolonial agenda,” the letter said.

Both Ukraine and Georgia were promised membership to the defense alliance during the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, in 2008. But despite extensive reform efforts, neither country has been offered a timetable for accession.

The United States has provided billions of dollars of military assistance to Ukraine since it was first invaded by Russia in 2014, with more than \$1.2 billion approved over the past year. “This designation is a fair reflection of our current bilateral defense relationships and does not commit the United States to military action,” the commission letter said, which also recommended that the administration consider extending the status to other non-NATO members along Europe’s eastern flank: Finland, Moldova, and Sweden.

Much of U.S. military aid for Ukraine has been approved through a range of ad hoc government funding mechanisms. Granting the country MNNA status would open a variety of established channels to facilitate arms transfers, financial assistance, and information sharing, smoothing the way for further cooperation. It would also send a powerful signal of support for both Kyiv and

Tbilisi. Unlike NATO membership, MNNA status does not entail any mutual security and defense obligations.

On Thursday, the White House announced it would designate Colombia and Qatar as major non-NATO allies, bringing the total number of countries to receive the title up to 19.

The title has usually been reserved for countries with no ambitions or prospects of joining NATO, which prompted the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, to express wariness about the designation last year. “MNNA is a status for countries that do not plan/can not force political or geographical reasons to join NATO. This is definitely not about us,” she wrote in a Facebook post.

NATO accession is decided between the 30 members of the alliance, and an MNNA designation by the United States would not necessarily impede Ukraine’s membership prospects.

The Helsinki Commission, formally known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, was founded in 1976 as an independent government agency to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords, a major Cold War-era diplomatic agreement that sought to reduce tensions between the Soviet Union and the West as well as establish human rights and security norms. The commission is made up of 18 members of U.S. Congress drawn from both parties and representatives from the U.S. departments of State, Defense, and Commerce.

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### **19. Nerves on edge in Poland as war next door in Ukraine revives fears of Russia**

Los Angeles Times, 12 Mar 22, Patrick J. McDonnell and Rima Marrouch

Military enlistments are spiking, demands for passports are surging, and memories of the bad old days of the Cold War are fraying the collective nerves of the Polish people.

The Russian invasion of neighboring Ukraine has reverberated in Poland well beyond the influx of more than 1.4 million refugees, a wave of mostly women and children that threatens to overwhelm the country’s infrastructure for providing assistance.

Poland’s historical adversary Russia appears to many here to be on an expansionist path that could end up dragging Warsaw into a broader conflict with potentially catastrophic consequences — threatening the post-Cold War order that has seen the nation prosper and develop into a European success story.

A sense of disquiet is plainly evident, even as life appears to proceed at its normal, if hectic, pace in cities such as Warsaw and Krakow.

“Yes, Polish society is terrified,” said Slawomir Debski, a foreign policy expert in Poland who has advised several governments in Warsaw. “The whole society is aware of how awful, how terrible, and dramatic, any kinetic confrontation with Russia can be.”

The fact that Poland is an established member of both the European Union and the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization tempers fears that Moscow's perceived push for a "Greater Russia" could eventually spill into Poland — which was a Soviet satellite state until the fall of Eastern Bloc communism in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down.

Poland shares a 144-mile border with Russia — along with centuries of contentious coexistence and profound mutual suspicion. And to some, especially those who lived through the Cold War, the NATO shield seems not all that persuasive.

NATO "is just a name," said Dorota Karpinska, 61, who runs one of the many street stands offering obwarzanki, chewy, bagel-like breads widely consumed here. "Who knows what they're doing?"

Poles born in the post-communist era appear less likely to fear that the conflict will envelop their country. There is a clear generational split, even if the Russian attack was a kind of wake-up call for the young as well.

"It's the old people like my parents who feel that Russia can attack anytime," said Andrzej Piszczek, 24, a student seated in a cafe thick with cigarette smoke and incense. "They say, 'You never know. We need to prepare ourselves, we need to buy flour, petrol.'"

The current situation, many note, differs greatly from the days of the Cold War, when it was widely believed that neither Russia nor the West would resort to the use of nuclear weapons capable of obliterating much of the planet. With Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and his nuclear threats, no such sense of security exists these days.

"Nuclear blackmail is [now] on the agenda almost every day," said Włodzimierz Marciniak, a political scientist and former Polish ambassador to the Russian Federation. "Right now the war is hot and it is next door."

The streets here in the ancient city Krakow have lately seen a new phenomenon: U.S. soldiers, unarmed but in military fatigues, strolling through downtown, window shopping, visiting tourist sites, stopping for a coffee. Longtime residents say the groups of uniformed GIs have emerged from their bases only in recent days, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a buildup in U.S. forces based in Poland.

On a recent afternoon, Magda, 39, a restaurant worker, requested a selfie with a group of U.S. soldiers. She said she wanted the photo for her son, 15. The soldiers quickly complied. Their presence, she said, offered both a sense of reassurance — that America has Poland's back, so to speak — and a feeling that a broader geopolitical conflict could indeed be on the horizon.

"It's confusing," Magda, who asked that her surname be withheld for privacy reasons, said after the soldiers had moved on. "I want to live through this, to see the world."

The Pentagon did not respond immediately to an inquiry about the soldiers' heightened public profile in Krakow and in the southeastern Polish city of Przemyśl, close to the Ukrainian border and a key transit point for war refugees.

As the war next door rages, some Poles are taking precautionary measures.

The Polish press has reported a run on demands for passports from those who want to be able to leave the country expeditiously if necessary.

Authorities have also seen rising numbers of new recruits for the Territorial Defense Forces, a kind of reserve arm of the military. Demand for slots has increased sevenfold since the Russian invasion, a military spokesman told Radio Krakow.

In a national poll taken just after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Poles were asked how they felt. The most common response: “I am afraid,” the choice of 78% of participants, according to the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. An additional 15.5% described themselves as worried; only 6.5% identified “calm” as their state of mind.

The conflict and its potential consequences for Poland are the prevalent topics of everyday conversation — at shops, on public transport, in parks and households. TV screens in bars, restaurants and homes relay the latest developments to edgy viewers.

“So what is the news today?” a man in line at a grocery store in Warsaw asked a fellow shopper the other day, without even having to mention Russia or Ukraine. “What happened?”

Ukrainian flags and lapel pins are everywhere, as are declarations stenciled on walls affirming “Solidarity” with Ukraine.

“We can say that every single one of us is at war now, and fighting by doing whatever we can to help,” said Mikolaj Szlachta, 19, one of many volunteers in green vests assisting crowds of exhausted Ukrainian refugees at the central rail station in Krakow. “This is how we fight.”

The volunteers seen at train and bus depots throughout the country are part of an extraordinary outpouring of support for the massive influx of refugees who have fled into Poland since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. In the capital, Warsaw, the surge has approached a breaking point, with the mayor on Friday asking for international help. Many see the disastrous scenario unfolding in neighboring Ukraine as something that could also happen in Poland, which has for centuries been caught up in Great Power intrigues involving Russia, Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian empire.

“We still, as a nation, recall the history from World War II, when we were in this situation, when we were asking for help and we were asking for shelter and food,” said Karolina Micolajczyk, who manages a hotel in Krakow’s Kazimierz district.

A Ukrainian flag hangs outside the hotel. Ukrainians filled all 28 rooms on a recent evening, she said.

Traces of the last global conflagration are never far off in Poland. Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded at the outset of World War II, at a staggering cost in human life. The Kazimierz neighborhood was long the heart of Krakow’s Jewish community, which represented about one-quarter of the city’s prewar population before the Nazi mass murder campaign.

The former Jewish quarter is now a shabby-chic haven featuring hip bars, trendy cafes and boutique hotels. Signs in downtown Krakow feature bus tours to the infamous Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, an hour's drive to the west.

The post-invasion fear of Russia has also hit the cultural sphere. A Warsaw orchestra recently decided to dedicate its performance to Ukraine and dropped a planned performance of a piano concerto by Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian composer. The orchestra substituted a concerto by Frederic Chopin, the Polish virtuoso.

There have also been scattered reports of harassment and vandalism. Ukrainians working for a Russian restaurant owner in Warsaw received threatening phone calls urging them to quit, according to reports widely circulated on social media. Meanwhile, Polish police were investigating the destruction of a Red Army monument in the northwestern city of Koszalin.

However, many Poles interviewed were quick to distinguish between the Russian people and its government.

"I don't identify every Russian person with what's happening in Ukraine," said Szlachta, the student volunteering in the Krakow train station.

He, too, was skeptical that the invasion would escalate into Poland.

"I don't think Russia's leaders are dumb enough to attack a NATO country — that would mean a global conflict and World War III," he said. "I hope it won't get to that. But, then, anything can happen. You never know."

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## **20. Tiny kingdom in Nigeria celebrates as threat from Boko Haram fades**

Sunday Times (UK), 13 Mar 22, Richard Assheton

The king rose early on the biggest day for his people in years. By 9am the walled center of the village was abuzz with the chatter of thousands who had come from the hills around.

The celebrations that greeted the king were the first of their kind in nearly a decade. For much of that time the people of Sukur, a little-known, UNESCO-listed kingdom 3,000 feet up in the highlands of northeast Nigeria, lived in fear. Their unique culture, with its own language, calendar and distinctive dry stone walls, was under threat from Boko Haram, the Islamist group that has terrorized the region since 2009. In 2014 militants climbed the steep track to the settlement, razing houses and burning crops. People scattered, abandoning the terraced agriculture that along with a tradition of iron smelting had in 1999 helped win Sukur Africa's first world heritage recognition for a cultural landscape.

Now, though, Boko Haram is weaker, allowing the Sukur Yawal festival to mark the coming rainy season for the first time since 2014. At last, Sukur folk are focusing again on the question that preoccupies them: how do they cling on to their culture?

breakout capability; the deal would only push that up to under six months (well before a new president takes office).

Most crucially, it will gain up to \$130.5 billion in sanctions relief. Iran needs money now. According to Rubin, the country's leaders have "driven their economy into the ground even before sanctions, and the cash infusion really will allow them to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat." This is especially true for Iran's proxies. Rubin, who visited Hezbollah territory in Lebanon last year, reported that "Residents there — including former Hezbollah members said the group was losing its members in droves as the money dried up." Rubin believes that a new deal would "throw a lifeline to Hezbollah."

Given a likely impending red wave, the current deal on the table would likely be scrapped. But that probably doesn't matter to Iran, which gets plenty of goodies in the meantime.

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## **22. Don't embrace Saudi Arabia and the UAE because of the Ukraine crisis**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, William D. Hartung

The Biden administration is reportedly reaching out to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to urge them to increase their oil output to counterbalance disruptions in the global market sparked by sanctions on Russia. In doing so, it is crucial that the administration doesn't excuse their crimes in Yemen or bolster their militaries with additional arms sales or other military support.

As the Wall Street Journal has noted, the de facto rulers of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed, appear to be pressuring the Biden administration over the oil issue to get more support for their devastating war in Yemen. Both men have declined to speak by phone with President Biden in an attempt to draw U.S. attention to the quid pro quo they are seeking — more oil output for more arms and assistance in fighting the Houthi movement in Yemen.

The UAE announced on Wednesday that it would increase its oil output, but it is unclear whether the Biden administration offered anything to the UAE in return. Giving in to the Saudi and UAE demands on Yemen would be a disastrous mistake, both for U.S. interests in the Middle East and, most tragically, for the people of Yemen. There are other ways to get more oil onto the international market, including lifting sanctions on Iran as a revived nuclear deal under the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA) moves closer to fruition.

As the humanitarian suffering caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine has come front and center, it has been all too easy to forget the devastation caused by the U.S.-backed Saudi war in Yemen. The United Nations estimates that there have been at least 377,000 direct and indirect deaths as a result of the war, which was initiated by a Saudi-led coalition seven years ago this month. Saudi air strikes are at their highest levels since April 2018, and the Saudi blockade of Yemen has choked off imports of fuel that are essential for powering hospitals and fulfilling the

needs of daily life, causing further suffering and unnecessary deaths of innocent civilians. This is no time to be stepping up U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Biden administration has ample leverage to pressure Saudi Arabia to end indiscriminate air strikes and lift its naval and air blockade on Yemen. Nearly two-thirds of Saudi combat aircraft are of U.S. origin, and they could not operate for long without U.S. spare parts and maintenance. Cutting off this support and holding off on new arms sales would be an effective tool to change Saudi conduct in Yemen and persuade the regime to participate in comprehensive peace talks to end the war.

Closer U.S. military relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE pose serious human rights issues, which should be reason enough to cut off U.S. military support. But cozying up to these regimes also undermines U.S. security interests in the Middle East and beyond. The war in Yemen has stoked anti-U.S. sentiment there and destabilized that country in ways that may create an opening for a resurgence of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The UAE has supplied weapons to the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar in Libya in violation of a United Nations arms embargo, and has launched drone strikes there that have killed scores of civilians. This reckless behavior by U.S.-armed allies not only diminishes the United States' reputation and influence in the greater Middle East, but it also threatens to pull us into more conflicts there at a time when we should be reassessing our military footprint in the region.

If the Biden administration decides to continue or increase military support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE in exchange for an upsurge in oil production, Congress should push back. It could do so by passing resolutions under the War Powers Act that would end U.S. support for the Saudi and UAE militaries, a move that would get the attention of both regimes and help end their brutal war in Yemen. Last month, Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) and Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) announced that they will be introducing a new Yemen War Powers Resolution.

These efforts should move forward. Embracing Saudi Arabia and the UAE at this moment is the wrong thing to do. Doing it with the excuse that it might cushion the impacts of sanctions on Russia on the U.S. economy is not justified given the damage they are doing, both to U.S. interests and to the people of the Middle East.

*William D. Hartung is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.*

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### **23. 'A serious failure': scale of Russia's military blunders becomes clear**

Financial Times (UK), 12 Mar 22, Sam Jones, John Paul Rathbone and Demetri Sevastopulo

Three weeks into its invasion of Ukraine, the scale of Russia's military blunders is becoming clear.

The outcome of Russian president Vladimir Putin's war is still far from certain: little information exists on Ukrainian forces' rates of attrition, while Russia's military still outmans and outguns that of its neighbor. The chances of escalation have meanwhile increased as the Russian leadership looks to regain the front foot.

But in the first phase of its offensive, the Kremlin's military story is one of failure.

Western defense officials have estimated Russian casualties at between 2,000 and 6,000. Based on ratios in similar conflicts, that implies three to four times as many captured and wounded. At its midpoint, such an estimate is more, in three weeks, than the losses of US and UK servicemen combined during 20 years in Afghanistan.

Russia's losses in materiel are also significant. The Oryx blog has recorded 1,034 Russian vehicles, artillery pieces and aircraft destroyed, damaged, abandoned or captured. These include 173 tanks, 261 armored and infantry fighting vehicles, and 28 surface-to-air missile systems.

Justin Bronk, research fellow at the UK's Royal United Services Institute, who co-wrote a book on Russia's military modernization under Putin, said the losses "are massively more than in any other recent conflict" including Georgia, Chechnya or Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Analysts and western military officials agree on the primary cause of the flaws in Russia's military offensive: a failure of intelligence that skewed military planning.

Flowing from this were failures linked to rash decision-making, logistical unpreparedness, poor maintenance of equipment and the use of young, inexperienced troops that together have culminated in a collapse of front-line Russian morale.

General Sir Richard Barrons, former head of the UK's Joint Forces Command, said: "There is something here that is systemically wrong . . . somewhere in the Russian intelligence architecture, facts on the ground are being converted into an analysis, but that analysis is actually a narrative to support the preconceptions of the senior [Kremlin] leadership."

As a result, Russia's intended campaign — an assault strike predicated on speed and Ukrainian political weakness — has tipped into a joint combat operation requiring logistical and communications planning that does not seem to have been in place, say analysts.

Russia's first failures occurred within the opening 24 hours of the war, when pre-positioned covert spetsnaz troops, whose job it was to cripple the Ukrainian political leadership, were stopped. Airborne forces of the elite VDV, known for their sky-blue berets, that were supposed to secure key sites such as Hostomel airport just north of the capital, were, after initial success, repelled by strong Ukrainian resistance. Two transport aircraft were downed above Hostomel by Ukrainian forces.

"The Ukrainian military as a whole have been expecting this kind of invasion to come since 2014," said Barrons. "And then they were handed the gift of these light forces coming in piecemeal, underestimating them, which they were able to pick off."

The second component of the initial assault — the rapid advance of Russian forces, avoiding cities and intended to quickly encircle regional Ukrainian military units they believed would be paralyzed because of a leaderless central government — further extended Russian vulnerability.

“It is as if they were treating this as a military policing mission, not an actual invasion against a modern military,” said one western military official. Videos on social media even show troops from Rosguardia, Russia’s domestic militia, advancing into towns, unsupported, as the frontline force.

When, several days in, Russian commanders realized they needed to pivot to using more serious firepower, they did so chaotically: huge columns of tanks and artillery moved forward, but the Ukrainians blew up bridges, causing advances to stall. Russian planners appear to have failed to anticipate this basic response, another western military official said, pointing out that engineering units and bridge builders were not even near the front of the advance in some columns.

“What we have seen on the ground is an extremely bad plan coupled with absolutely no warning to operational commanders they were about to throw their troops into operational combat which has created an enormous number of problems for them,” said Rusi’s Bronk. It is, he added, a “serious failure” of “TTPs” — tactics, techniques and procedures.

Even Russia’s feared anti-aircraft systems were left vulnerable to cheap Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones operated by the Ukrainians. Footage on Twitter, for example, shows Ukrainian TB2’s picking off Buk launchers, the same missile system used to shoot down the MH17 commercial aircraft in 2014.

On the ground, meanwhile, the thousands of anti-tank missiles western powers have been supplying to Ukraine for weeks have proved effective, with mobile foot soldiers able to ambush and attack isolated advanced clusters of Russian light vehicles and stationary heavy units stuck in columns with unprotected flanks.

Open-source intelligence suggests that Russia’s military communications infrastructure has performed poorly: the cutting-edge encrypted Azart and Akveduk radios that supposedly began to be rolled out to Russian units in 2017 appear to be in short supply or have inadequate range, noted a Rusi report.

On social media, pictures have been posted of Russians using cheap, unencrypted Chinese radios, and their own mobile phones to contact commanders. As a result even amateur radio enthusiasts hundreds of miles away have been able to tune into real-time Russian military communications, as Twitter threads with dozens of recorded Russian messages show.

Inadequate equipment has been the cause of other failings: images have been shared by Ukrainians of Russian vehicles with shredded tires stuck in mud. Experts say the tires are almost certainly cheap, civilian-grade versions of those the Russian military need, suggesting, as in the case of the radios, endemic corruption in Russia’s defense procurement.

“The Russians are very good at military parades. They spend weeks getting everything shiny. But it’s a facade,” said one European defense official.

The biggest question that continues to perplex analysts, though, is why Russia has still not made use of its vastly superior air power to better protect its forces, and reverse the debacle on the ground.

A senior US defense official said that Ukraine had been “very creative” in how it used its air defenses, making highly effective use of cheap drones, and the country’s forces were staging a much fiercer resistance than Russian intelligence expected. “They are putting resources where they’re most needed [and] they’re doing it quickly. They are being adaptive and nimble . . . in almost a sort of a hit-and-run kind of style,” he said.

Russia’s military has no experience fighting such an extensive joint ground-and-air war, the official said. “This is an operation that they have never conducted before, never meaning since World War two.”

The official said Russia was also having trouble integrating its ground and air forces into a “joint” force. He said that while the Russia had upgraded its military and acquired sophisticated systems, “it doesn’t appear . . . that they have developed the proper operational concepts to use these modern capabilities”.

The failures have resulted in a widespread, if perhaps temporary, collapse in morale, according to the Pentagon and British defense intelligence. There is even evidence of Russian soldiers sabotaging their own equipment, officials have said.

The average age of Russian soldiers in Ukraine is 20-25 years old, according to one western military official, compared with 30-35 for the Ukrainians, who are better-supplied and have a cause on their side.

Many of the young Russian soldiers deployed meanwhile did not even know they were being sent into Ukraine, let alone that they would have to fire on fellow Russian-speakers.

“It has become clear that a lot of Russian infantry are simply not willing to go into the attack,” said Chris Donnelly, an adviser on the Soviet military to four Nato secretaries-general. “Once morale really starts to collapse like this, you don’t have an army any more.”

The Russians have used conscripts and poorly trained junior troops, Donnelly said, in an apparently knee-jerk reversion by operational commanders to the textbook Soviet tactic of sending in expendable forces first to “soak up firepower”.

The question is how Russia will adapt. In recent days, Russian forces have stepped up the use of long-range fire, and have launched more than 800 missiles in total. There were also signs that columns of forces to the north and east of Kyiv were preparing to try a new approach.

Some of the tanks and other vehicles in a long convoy that at its closest point is 15km from Kyiv have also gone off the main road. It is unclear whether they are being sent in a different direction or taking cover under trees.

Elsewhere, Russia’s objectives seem to be to surround and besiege a sufficient number of Ukrainian cities, seize Kyiv and oust the Zelensky government. While Russian forces have struggled in the north, in the south they have had far more success, and can still apply considerable force.

Questions remain about Ukrainian forces' ability to continue to fight and how much in anti-aircraft munitions they have remaining.

Within the Ukrainian military there is also growing dismay over western flip-flopping over additional military support, such as gifting MiG jets or heavier, vehicle-mounted long-range anti-aircraft weaponry.

Russia's use of crude artillery and dumb bombs is meanwhile wreaking a heavy civilian toll. And most signs point towards a further escalation by the Kremlin.

The danger, said one retired senior British intelligence officer, is that in seeking to extricate itself from its tactical disasters in Ukraine, Moscow "blunders into a strategic dead-end with even worse consequences" for Ukraine, and possibly the world.

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#### **24. For the sake of our national security, Congress must end its budget battles**

The Hill, 12 Mar 22, Mike Rogers

On Tuesday, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued its Annual Worldwide Threats report.

If you weren't already unsettled by the state of the world, reading this sobering report will certainly leave you concerned. From Russia to China, health security to transnational threats like drugs and terrorism, and more, the ODNI report shows just how unsettled the world is today and what it's anticipated to be over the course of the next year.

Dealing with threats like these means putting and keeping our budgetary house in order, but too often, we're operating on temporary funding, and we can't keep doing so.

We often talk about how we are a global leader, a guarantor of international security, yet Congress continues to fail to provide regular annual funding for the military. Until Thursday night, as Russia invaded its neighbor — a country slightly smaller than the state of Texas — our military was operating under previous funding levels at a time when it needed to be investing in the future while meeting the threats of today.

For the fourth time since October of last year and for the 12th year out of 13, Congress risked financial catastrophe if it failed to approve an annual funding measure. To make matters worse, if Congress hadn't passed a funding bill (or yet another continuing resolution) by today, the government would have shut down, again.

There are few times more perilous for the government to play chicken with a budget shutdown than when Moscow is marching towards Kyiv and our NATO allies are looking to Washington for leadership. We're rightly sending weapons and humanitarian aid to Ukraine and deploying troops to reassure our allies in NATO, but at home, we were relying on continuing resolutions rather than passing a budget. It's the sheer entanglement of bad politics.

This is no way to run a government and no way to manage our military and security affairs and shouldn't be a partisan issue. The administration controls all three branches of government and struggled to get a budget finalized. There simply isn't any excuse for this political failure. Our country has the need and there is a clear sense of urgency, yet they seemed uninterested or incapable of getting the basic business of government done.

Relying on continuing resolutions is sophomoric and leaves our servicemen and women in the lurch while Congress plays politics. The services cannot plan for long-term acquisition or events, they cannot invest in next-generation systems and they cannot re-arm and re-equip stores that are being rapidly depleted due to foreign support. Failing to manage our fiscal house leaves our adversaries emboldened and allies questioning our seriousness.

And you should be certain that our adversaries are watching our every move. As the ODNI writes, "Beijing, Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang have demonstrated the capability and intent to advance their interests at the expense of the United States and its allies." China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are looking for weaknesses to exploit, and our failure to budget for potential conflict with each is just the kind of opportunity they would seize upon.

What does this look like in practice? "Major adversaries and competitors are enhancing and exercising their military, cyber and other capabilities, raising the risks to U.S. and allied forces, weakening our conventional deterrence, and worsening the longstanding threat from weapons of mass destruction." Just last year, Beijing tested an advanced hypersonic missile over the South China Sea. Defending against that kind of threat and preparing our own capabilities is not cheap, and requires long-term planning. China doesn't need to worry about the budget cycle, but we do and we must get our house in order.

Providing our military with budgetary stability and predictability in an unpredictable world is Congress' first duty and responsibility and too often it is found wanting. It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide and execute strategic guidance when the legislative branch cannot agree on basic funding. We need our eyes and attention on strategic competition, not partisan budget fights. This means passing a budget, not just now, but regularly in the future, and this needs bipartisan leadership.

*Mike Rogers served as the Republican representative in Congress for the 8th District of Michigan from 2000 until 2015, including as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee from 2011-2015.*

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## **25. Nostalgia and Kalashnikovs: Why Russia wins some sympathy in Africa and the Middle East**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

In 2019 Vladimir Putin welcomed 43 African leaders to the inaugural Russia-Africa summit, a higher turnout than Britain or France attracted to similar shindigs. At the bash in Sochi the Russian president lambasted the West for how it imposed "political or other conditions" on

African countries, a reference to chiding about human rights. “We have a lot to offer to our African friends,” said Mr Putin.

The summit stressed Russia’s increasingly muscular approach to Africa. After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and the West imposed sanctions, it boosted efforts to sell arms, extract resources and prop up shaky regimes. Now that Russia is suffering far more sweeping sanctions, it may wish to redouble its activities on the continent. But do African governments think it still has enough to offer?

The vote on March 2nd at the un General Assembly to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine suggests many are hedging their bets. Of the 54 African countries, 28 backed the motion but 17 abstained and eight were no-shows. Eritrea, a gulag state, joined Russia, Belarus, North Korea and Syria in voting against.

Whether these votes reflect ordinary Africans’ views is unclear. Mobile-phone surveys carried out last week in six African states for The Economist by Premise, an American research firm, suggest that governments’ ambivalence is reflected in public attitudes (see chart 1). In Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda pluralities held Russia most responsible for the war. But in Mali and the Ivory Coast, NATO was most often cited as the guilty party.

The votes at the un partly reflect historical ties between Russia and ruling parties, especially in southern Africa. Many of the region’s elite studied in the Soviet Union; some have fond memories of their time there. The liberation parties that still run Angola, Mozambique (whose flag features a Kalashnikov), Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe saw the Soviet Union as an ally in their fight to end white rule, and consider Russia to be its successor. All abstained, even though Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, too.

This nostalgia goes hand-in-hand with latent anti-Western views. Murithi Mutiga of International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think-tank, notes “resentment” in the Horn at “the way the us behaved in its unipolar moment”. NATO’s intervention in Libya in 2011, which ignored the African Union, angered leaders like Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (another abstainer). The subsequent chaos, which spilled over into the Sahel, alienated governments there.

But Africa’s relations with Russia are mainly about self-interest, not history or ideology. This is acutely so for countries that rely on mercenaries from the Wagner Group, which is backed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a chum of Mr Putin. There are an estimated 2,000 Wagner troops in the Central African Republic (car) keeping rebels from toppling President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, reportedly in exchange for gold and diamonds. He is too dependent on them to change tack.

The junta in charge of Mali since a coup last year has also turned to Wagner. About 800 guns-for-hire operate there, says Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, who is withdrawing French forces partly because of the Russian arrivistes. European attention to the Sahel will further diminish because of the war in Ukraine, reckons Paul Stronski of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, another think-tank, leaving a “relatively open door” for Wagner. He adds

that Russia will see the battle for influence in the Sahel as part of a wider contest against Western enemies – an echo of proxy conflicts during the Cold War.

Guinea is another African country unusually dependent on Russia. It is already a “collateral victim” of the war, laments Amadou Bah of Action Mines Guinée, an NGO. Rusal, a huge Russian aluminum producer with three mines in Guinea, has stopped operations at its refinery in Ukraine, which processes bauxite mined in Guinea. Its junta recently suspended an honorary consul from Ukraine, presumably to keep Mr Putin sweet.

On February 24th, as Russian tanks were rolling into Ukraine, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a powerful Sudanese general known as Hemedti, was hobnobbing with Russian officials. Russia has long sought a military presence at Port Sudan on the Red Sea and reportedly buys smuggled gold from the country. But in the coming months Sudanese angry at high bread prices (see earlier article) may renew protests against their Russian-backed junta.

Russia has tried to extend its reach beyond a few rickety states. It is the biggest arms exporter to Africa. Its trade with the continent has increased since 2014, though it still accounts for just 2% of Africa’s trade in goods with the rest of the world. Kremlin-linked firms have formed an Africa-focused trade association. A subsidiary of VEB (a bank under sanctions) has shares in Afreximbank, a development bank.

For most countries Russia is but one player among many. Like many African leaders, João Lourenço, Angola’s president since 2017, has tried to build a “portfolio of foreign-policy interests”, notes Ricardo Soares de Oliveira of Oxford University. Angola sells its oil to China, has an IMF program and digs for diamonds with Alrosa, a Russian miner. “Historically we have relations with all these countries. I don’t see it as a major issue,” says an Angolan cabinet minister.

Ethiopia, which did not vote at the un, is in a similar spot. Russia is its largest arms supplier. At the un Russia has stymied efforts to constrain Ethiopia’s government in a civil war against rebels from its northern region of Tigray. Gazprom bank has shown interest in a project in Ethiopia’s eastern Somali region. However, “I’m not convinced we need [Russia] more than the West,” says an Ethiopian official.

### **The newly fickle Gulf**

Self-interest and fence-sitting prevail in the Middle East, too. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) shocked America by abstaining in the un Security Council on February 25th. The Arab League’s statement on the war three days later did not even mention Russia. Though their governments voted in favor of the General Assembly motion, officials in Egypt and other Gulf states argue that this is not their war: they have no formal alliances with either side.

Oil is one reason. Saudi Arabia is keen to preserve OPEC+, an alliance of big producers of which it and Russia are the biggest. Weapons are another factor. Egypt is the region’s second-biggest recipient of American military aid. But President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has sought to diversify, including by buying Russian fighter jets.

Gulf states have relied on America for protection. But they now think its security umbrella has holes. Diplomats hope staying neutral on Ukraine will send a message to America. “If we can’t count on you, you can’t count on us,” as one puts it.

Western governments are less likely to chastise African countries for abstaining. They know that all states have interests. “It’s very unlikely that African countries will be forced to choose a side,” says Folashadé Soulé, an academic also at Oxford.

But if Russian firms struggle to find dollars they will be less attractive to Africans. “I don’t think the government of Sudan wants rubles,” says a sanctions lawyer. Big energy or mining deals often involve ancillary Western firms, which may not want Russians involved, if only for reputational risk. If the West stops buying Russian hydrocarbons, that too could have knock-on effects on African buyers.

The next Russia-Africa summit is due later this year in Ethiopia. Its VIP list will show how many “African friends” Mr Putin still has. It may well be less than 43.

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## **26. Will China offer Russia financial help? A bit. But it will mostly seek to learn from Russia’s mistakes**

Economist, 12 Mar 22

If you believe China’s diplomats, relations with Russia are “rock solid” and the friendship between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin has “no limits”. Western sanctions are about to put those warm words to the test. Russia needs an economic and financial lifeline. It would like to use China as a conduit through which to continue trading with the rest of the world. China, however, must strike a delicate balance between helping Mr Putin stand up to their joint rival, America, and retaining its own access to the global financial system. No doubt to Mr Putin’s regret, its financial aid to Russia is likely to be qualified at best.

Although China abstained in un votes condemning Russia for invading Ukraine, its rhetorical support has been more fulsome. On March 7th, as civilian casualties mounted, Wang Yi, the foreign minister, called Russia his country’s “most important strategic partner”. It is just a month since Mr Xi and Mr Putin heralded a new era for their countries. As well as preserving relations, China probably wants to undermine the legitimacy of sanctions as a tool of Western policy, given they have been used against it over Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Chinese firms may spot an opening in Russia as Western ones, such as McDonald’s and Shell, close their doors. Bloomberg News says that some are eyeing cheap energy assets.

Yet this embargo-busting brotherhood faces several problems. China’s technical abilities are no substitute for the West’s. CIPS, its payments network, has a small global footprint and low volumes and relies on sending messages through swift, a European body from which some Russian banks are now barred. Another difficulty is that Chinese multinationals with a legal presence in Western-allied countries may fall foul of the existing sanctions regime. China’s international banks are wary. Volvo (based in Sweden but owned by a Chinese firm) and TikTok

(run from Singapore but Chinese-owned) have suspended some operations in Russia. Even Chinese firms without a legal presence in the West could be hit by “secondary sanctions”, which take aim at third countries that help the subject of primary ones. America has not yet used this weapon over Russia, but it might. Chinese banks that dealt with Iran and North Korea were penalized by America.

Given all this, China’s help to Russia is likely to be half-hearted. It may stick to its existing Russian trade arrangements, hoping that America will tolerate them. Chief among these is energy. China received 32% of all Russian crude exports in 2020 and 17% of its exports of liquefied natural gas. China may also conduct trade and financial transactions through smaller banks that do not have a legal presence in the West, using rubles and yuan rather than the dollar. It may also grant Russia’s central bank access to its yuan holdings. Last, China will probably try to limit the overall scale of trade volumes and payment flows so as to avoid provoking a direct confrontation with America.

Chinese officials must juggle several priorities. China wants to see Russia survive these sanctions, to teach America and allies that they are not a magic weapon, but is anxious to limit collateral damage to Chinese interests. In the process, it plans to learn from Russia’s mistakes. If it comes to blows with America, China wants its financial system to be shielded. Its aims will include improving its payments system and diversifying its \$3.2trn of reserve holdings out of Western currencies and accounts by, for example, investing in commodities. It could get foreign firms and governments to issue more securities in China’s own capital markets, creating a new pool of assets for China to buy. Russia may hope for a Chinese bail-out; China’s priority will be to learn from a case study of failure.

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **27. Saudi Arabia executes 81 people in a single day**

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 22

Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including “allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations” and holding “deviant beliefs”, state news agency Saudi Press Agency said, in the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

The number dwarfed the 67 executions reported in the kingdom in 2021 and the 27 in 2020.

“These individuals ... were convicted of various crimes including murdering innocent men, women and children,” SPA said on Saturday, citing a statement from the interior ministry.

“Crimes committed by these individuals also include pledging allegiance to foreign terrorist organizations, such as ISIS [ISIL], al-Qaeda and the Houthis,” it added.



# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, April 15

## OVERVIEW

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan called the sinking of the Moskva, Russia's premier warship, a "setback" for Russia, while Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby added the incident would be a "major morale boost for Ukrainian forces," the *Washington Post* reported. Separately, CIA Director William Burns warned that while the U.S. has not seen any "practical evidence" of nuclear posturing by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the risk of low-yield nuclear weapons usage by the Russian military cannot be dismissed, according to the *New York Times*. Also of note, in an interview, South Korean President-Elect Yoon Suk-yeol told the *Washington Post* that his country's alliance with the U.S. was the "foundation" which would fuel a more active South Korean foreign policy, including more assertive stances towards North Korea and China, while improving relations with Japan.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. Blast sinks Russian warship

*Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A1 | Joanna Slater, Dan Lamothe, Emily Rauhala and Karen DeYoung*

Russia's premier warship in the Black Sea sustained severe damage and sank on its way back to port early Thursday, a major symbolic blow to Moscow as the invasion of Ukraine entered its eighth week and both sides prepare for a potentially devastating battle over the eastern Donbas region. The cause of the explosion on the missile cruiser Moskva remains contested.

### 2. Putin May Be Tempted to Use Small Nuclear Weapon, C.I.A. Chief Says

*New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A8 | David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes*

The director of the C.I.A. said on Thursday that "potential desperation" to extract the semblance of a victory in Ukraine could tempt President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to order the use of a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon, publicly discussing for the first time a concern that has coursed through the White House during seven weeks of conflict.

### 3. South Korea's president-elect unveils foreign policy goals

*Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A7 | Michelle Ye Hee Lee*

South Korea in recent years has been a passive player on the global stage even as its economic and cultural influence ballooned, remaining wary of aggressive neighbors North Korea and China. The country's conservative president-elect vows to change that. South Korea must step up its foreign policy commensurate with its economic and cultural status and become a stronger ally to the United States, he told The Washington Post in his first interview as president-elect.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. U.S. Support Shifts to Offensive Weapons**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A7 | Courtney McBride*

As Ukraine prepares to resist a new Russian military assault in the east, it likely will be doing so with weapons and equipment the U.S. once considered too risky to provide to Kyiv, highlighting how the line between offensive and defensive assistance has blurred in recent weeks.

### **5. Pentagon: Ukrainian troops will need training for some U.S. weapons being shipped**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 14 (1359) | Mike Glenn*

U.S. officials in Europe are setting up training programs to show Ukrainian soldiers how to operate some of the military supplies being sent to them as part of the just approved \$800 million security assistance package as Kyiv gears up for an expected major new push by invading Russian forces. On Thursday, a senior defense official said Ukrainian troops will likely require instruction to use the artillery and radar systems included on the list. Ukraine will receive 18 towed howitzers along with 40,000 artillery rounds, 10 AN/TPQ-36 counter-artillery radars and two AN/MPQ-64 Sentinel air surveillance radars. U.S. and allied supplies are credited with aiding the surprisingly tough resistance the Ukrainians have put up to date against a larger and better-armed Russian invading force.

### **6. Air Force and Space Force Will Now Allow Troops Up to 35 Days Off for Fertility Treatments**

*Military.com, Apr. 14 (1448) | Thomas Novelty*

Airmen and Guardians who undergo fertility treatments to start families can take up to 35 days off from their duty station under a new policy unveiled by the Department of the Air Force, which also oversees the Space Force. The directive, announced Wednesday, would grant the time off -- which doesn't count against a service member's earned number of leave days -- if they undergo treatment at one of six military medical facilities. Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall praised the policy update and said it hits close to home for him.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **7. Republican lawmakers call for reopening U.S. Embassy in Ukraine's capital**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 14 (1213) | Svetlana Shkolnikova*

Republican lawmakers are calling for the U.S. to resume its diplomatic presence in Ukraine and reopen its embassy in the capital Kyiv now that Russia's invading forces have withdrawn from the city's surrounding areas. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Thursday that resuming operations at the embassy would require consultation with the Defense Department. The Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, a brigade-sized organization of the Marine Corps, provides security for U.S. diplomatic missions worldwide. About 2,500 Marines are stationed at more than 150 embassies and consulates, according to the State Department.

### **8. Pressure on U.S. to Give Ukraine More Intelligence on Russia**

*Associated Press, Apr. 14 (1435) | Nomaan Merchant and James LaPorta*

President Joe Biden has called Russia's war on Ukraine a genocide and accused Vladimir Putin of committing war crimes. But his administration has struggled with how much intelligence it is willing to give the Ukrainian forces that are trying to stop the Russian leader.

**9. Lawmakers Demand the Army Come Up with a Better Plan for Alaska-based Soldiers After String of Suicides**

*Military.com, Apr. 14 (1346) | Steve Beynon*

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is raising the alarm over an ongoing suicide crisis among troops in Alaska, saying the Army needs to rapidly pour more resources into those rural bases. Alaska Republican Sens. Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski, along with Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., sent a letter to Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth outlining troubling findings of delayed mental health care and poor economic situations isolating junior enlisted troops as key points the service needs to fix.

## **EUROPE**

**10. EU closes loophole allowing multimillion-euro arms sales to Russia**

*Reuters, Apr. 14 (0515) | Francesco Guarascio*

The European Union has closed a loophole that allowed EU governments to export weapons worth tens of millions of euros to Russia last year alone despite an embargo which took effect in 2014 after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region.

**11. Soviet-Era Missiles Now Guard Ukraine's Skies**

*New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A1 | Andrew Higgins*

Driving back to his village near the Ukrainian border last Thursday, the mayor had to stop to let a train pass, and assumed he wouldn't have to wait long. But the flatbed wagons, stacked high with military equipment, just kept coming. He waited for nearly half an hour. The train that delayed Mr. Csoma's drive home was not only unusually long but also signaled a singular escalation in Western efforts to help Ukraine defend itself. It carried an air defense system made up of 48 surface-to-air missiles, four launchers and radars to guide the rockets to their targets, which in Ukraine means Russian warplanes and missiles.

## **RUSSIA**

**12. CIA head calls Bucha killings 'crimes,' takes aim at Putin**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A11 | Shane Harris*

In his first public speech as director of the CIA, William J. Burns on Thursday called the killings of Ukrainian civilians in Bucha "crimes" and said Russia had "inflicted massive material and reputational damage on itself"

following the invasion ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin. “While we’ve seen some rhetorical posturing on the part of the Kremlin about moving to higher nuclear alert levels, so far we haven’t see a lot of practical evidence of the kind of deployments or, you know, military dispositions that would reinforce that concern,” Burns said. “But we watch for that very intently. It’s one of our most important responsibilities at CIA.”

**13. Russia warns of nuclear, hypersonic deployment if Sweden and Finland join NATO**

*Reuters, Apr. 14 (1622) | Guy Faulconbridge*

One of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s closest allies warned NATO on Thursday that if Sweden and Finland joined the U.S.-led military alliance then Russia would deploy nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles in a European exclave. Medvedev also explicitly raised the nuclear threat by saying that there could be no more talk of a “nuclear free” Baltic - where Russia has its Kaliningrad exclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania.

**14. Russia accuses Ukraine of helicopter strike on border town**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 14 (1155) | Not Attributed*

Russian officials on Thursday accused Ukraine of sending helicopters to bomb a town in the southern Bryansk region about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the border, after reporting eight injured in shelling.

**15. Russia’s Sunken Warship Dents Both Its Pride and Capabilities**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 15 (0225) | Marc Champion*

The loss of the flagship vessel of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet goes beyond wounded pride, robbing the military of important protection and capabilities as the war in Ukraine enters a crucial phase for Moscow.

**16. Russians planted thousands of land mines and booby-traps to ‘kill or maim’ civilians, Ukrainians say**

*New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A9 | Cora Engelbrecht*

As ordinary Ukrainians emerge from basements and bunkers into the ruins of their hometowns, many are being confronted with a new horror: thousands of mines and unexploded bombs left behind by retreating Russian troops.

**17. Developing World Quiet on Putin**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A8 | Joe Parkinson, David Luhnow and Juan Forero*

Western leaders seeking to build a global coalition to isolate Russia over its war on Ukraine are facing pushback from the world’s largest developing nations, including the democracies of India, Brazil and South Africa. The resistance, much of it from economic self-interest, limits the pressure on President Vladimir Putin and spotlights factions in the global community that recall the Cold War, when many countries tried to steer clear of the rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet Union.

## CHINA

### **18. China holds drills around Taiwan as U.S. lawmakers visit**

*Reuters, Apr. 15 (0259) | Ben Blanchard and Yew Lun Tian*

China said it conducted military drills around Taiwan on Friday as a U.S. Congressional delegation visited the island in a show of support to a fellow democracy, with Beijing blaming the lawmakers for raising tensions with their “provocative” trip.

## INDO-PACIFIC

### **19. Document reveals \$14 billion backlog of U.S. defense transfers to Taiwan**

*Defense News Online, Apr. 14 (1058) | Bryant Harris*

Pandemic-related acquisition issues have sparked a backlog in the U.S. delivering \$14.2 billion worth of military equipment to Taiwan that the island has purchased since 2019. With much of Washington’s attention focused on how to rapidly deploy a steady stream of military aid to Ukraine, some lawmakers are concerned the Taiwan delay is undermining its ability to deter a potential Chinese invasion.

### **20. Australia, US grapple with Solomon Islands tilt to China**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 (1045) | Colin Clark*

It’s symbolic. The American embassy in Honiara, capital of the Solomon Islands, has been shuttered since 1993. Now, the US is scrambling to reopen as quickly as it can in the face of China’s increasingly successful campaign to tighten relations with the tiny but incredibly strategic island state.

## MIDDLE EAST

### **21. UN Envoy Sees Light At ‘End of the Tunnel’ in Yemen’s War**

*Associated Press, Apr. 14 (1259) | Edith M. Lederer*

The U.N. special envoy for Yemen told the Security Council on Thursday that he believes there is “a light at the end of the tunnel” in the more than seven-year war in the Arab world’s poorest country. But Hans Grundberg also warned that the two-month cease-fire underway in Yemen is fragile and that reports of military operations around the oil-rich central province of Marib should be addressed urgently.

## AFRICA

### **22. ‘Down With France’: Africa Wants Influence Of an Old Power Gone**

*New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A5 | Ruth Maclean*

Over the past few years there has been a sharp rise in criticism of France across its former colonies in Africa, rooted in a feeling that colonialist practices and paternalistic attitudes never really ended, and propelled by a tide

of social media posts, radio shows, demonstrations and conversations on the street. This is a stark turnaround from a decade ago. When jihadists took over its northern cities in 2012, Mali appealed to France for military help. And when French soldiers arrived, Malians greeted them as liberating heroes.

**23. U.S. State Dept. approves \$1 billion sale to Nigeria, delayed over human rights concerns**

*Defense News Online, Apr. 14 (1637) | Joe Gould and Bryant Harris*

The U.S. State Department has cleared the sale of 12 AH-1Z Cobra attack helicopters to Nigeria worth nearly \$1 billion, apparently after U.S. lawmakers lifted objections over human rights concerns.

## **AIR FORCE**

**24. Air Force's nuclear modernization bill is cramping fighter jet procurement**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 (1443) | Valerie Insinna*

With two major nuclear programs ramping up, the Air Force had to make hard choices on fighter procurement in fiscal 2023, the Air Force's top officer said. After three budgets where Air Force fighter buying soared to heights of more than 60 aircraft per year, the service requested 33 Lockheed Martin F-35As and 24 Boeing F-15EXs in FY23, for a total of 57 jets. Asked about the decision during a Tuesday roundtable with reporters, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown said the service had to prioritize keeping the B-21 Raider bomber and newly christened LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile on track.

**25. Air Force Academy expels 22 cadets for 2020 cheating scandal**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 14 (1852) | Rachel S. Cohen*

The U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado has expelled 22 students and put hundreds more on probation for cheating and plagiarism while learning from home in 2020, the school's top officer said Wednesday.

## **ARMY**

**26. New data transport paths are making the Army more resilient and flexible**

*FedScoop.com, Apr. 14 (1259) | Mark Pomerleau*

The Army is looking to make the flow of its data more resilient in the face of complex adversaries seeking to deny it, the service's top IT official said Thursday. CIO Raj Iyer noted that a key pillar of the Army's multi-cloud strategy is getting cloud capabilities to the tactical edge.

## **NAVY**

**27. U.S. Secretary of the Navy visits Fincantieri Marinette Marine**

*FOX News 11 (Green Bay, WI), Apr. 14 (1808) | Charlee Rubesky*

The U.S. Secretary of the Navy was in Marinette on Thursday. He was checking in on several classes of ships being built for the Navy. “Many of those ships are already beyond their extended service life as well too. There are some ships such as the LCS class, they’re below their extended service life. Unfortunately because of the challenges that we’ve had specifically related to the ASW module on them, it does need for them to be replaced earlier than expected,” U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro said.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **28. Arming for the Next Fight in Ukraine**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A14 | Editorial*

Ukraine won the battle of Kyiv in heroic fashion, but the war is set to enter a bloody new phase as Vladimir Putin prepares an offensive in the east. The question is whether President Biden will summon the mettle to make sure America’s friends win.

### **29. Ukraine Is Draining America’s Arsenal of Democracy**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 14 (0900) | Hal Brands*

America is following an “arsenal of democracy” strategy in Ukraine: It has avoided direct intervention against the Russian invaders, while working with allies and partners to provide the Kyiv government with money and guns. That strategy, reminiscent of U.S. support for Britain in 1940-41, has worked wonders. Yet as the war reaches a critical stage, with the Russians preparing to consolidate their grip on eastern Ukraine, the arsenal of democracy is being depleted.

### **30. Seize Russian yachts, jets and Picassos. Then use the money to help Ukraine**

*USA Today Online, Apr. 14 (1922) | Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-NJ)*

The split screen is stomach-turning: In Ukraine, Vladimir Putin’s rockets fall on fleeing refugees, missiles gash occupied apartment buildings and hospitals, and civilians huddle in metro stations as bombs fall above. Putin’s enablers – and even members of his family – live abroad in laundered luxury off the wealth they stole with his permission. Now imagine those mega-yachts commandeered, the private jets grounded and requisitioned, and the high-priced art whisked off to auction from the seized villas – with the proceeds used to aid the Ukrainian people. That would be a fitting use of the money that built the army besieging their nation.

### **31. With the West distracted, China expands**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A21 | Josh Rogin*

Over the past few weeks, the world has been understandably transfixed by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s horrific invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, though, his close ally Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quietly taking advantage of the West’s distraction by expanding China’s sphere of influence in the South Pacific. If

Washington doesn't wake up to this threat, China's efforts to dominate the region will gain dangerous and perhaps irreversible momentum.

**32. The battle against ISIS, yesterday's war, still smolders**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A19 | David Ignatius*

The Islamic State, which seemed to be extinguished three years ago when its caliphate was crushed, is still smoldering red hot at a refugee camp here and a prison nearby. And the Syrian Kurdish militia that's guarding the facilities says it badly needs help before there's a new eruption. The battle against ISIS, as the Islamic State is also known, is yesterday's war, and it gets little public attention. But the danger of a resurgence was evident Wednesday when Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, the new head of the U.S. Central Command, toured the two facilities in northeast Syria. He's the first senior military official to inspect either place.

**33. As Silicon Valley Tries to Enlist, the Pentagon Strangles Innovation**

*WarOnTheRocks.com, Apr. 15 (0345) | Steve Blank*

America's national security is inexorably intertwined with commercial technology, such as drones, AI, machine learning, autonomy, biotech, cyber, quantum, high-performance computing, and commercial access to space. Given that the Defense Innovation Unit is the Department of Defense's most successful organization in developing and acquiring advanced dual-use technology, one would expect the department to scale the Defense Innovation Unit. The threats are too imminent and stakes too high not to. So what happened?

**34. The Cyber-Escalation Fallacy**

*Foreign Affairs Online, Apr. 15 (0107) | Erica D. Lonergan*

In fact, the negligible role of cyberattacks in the Ukraine conflict should come as no surprise. Through war simulations, statistical analyses, and other kinds of studies, scholars have found little evidence that cyber-operations provide effective forms of coercion or that they cause escalation to actual military conflict. That is because for all its potential to disrupt companies, hospitals, and utility grids during peacetime, cyberpower is much harder to use against targets of strategic significance or to achieve outcomes with decisive impacts, either on the battlefield or during crises short of war. In failing to recognize this, U.S. officials and policymakers are approaching the use of cyberpower in a way that may be doing more harm than good—treating cyber-operations like any other weapon of war rather than as a nonlethal instrument of statecraft and, in the process, overlooking the considerable opportunities as well as risks they present.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. **Blast sinks Russian warship**

Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A1 | Joanna Slater, Dan Lamothe, Emily Rauhala and Karen DeYoung

Russia's premier warship in the Black Sea sustained severe damage and sank on its way back to port early Thursday, a major symbolic blow to Moscow as the invasion of Ukraine entered its eighth week and both sides prepare for a potentially devastating battle over the eastern Donbas region.

The cause of the explosion on the missile cruiser Moskva remains contested, with Russia saying a fire detonated ammunition onboard and forced the crew to evacuate. Ukraine said it struck the Russian vessel with a missile, and a senior U.S. official told The Washington Post on Thursday evening that the ship sank as a result of a Ukrainian attack, but did not confirm what weapon was used.

Earlier in the day, U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan called the damage to the ship a setback for Russia regardless of how it was disabled. Either it was "just incompetence" or "they came under attack," he said at a breakfast. "Neither is a particularly good outcome for them."

The war in Ukraine, which President Biden this week described as genocide, has killed thousands of civilians, forced more than 4.7 million Ukrainians to flee the country and reordered the geopolitical landscape in Europe.

Smaller European nations that also feel threatened by Russia have rushed weapons to Ukraine, while Finland and Sweden signaled Wednesday that they would consider joining NATO, ending their nonaligned status. On Thursday, Russia warned the two countries that if they join the alliance, Moscow will strengthen its military forces in the Baltic Sea, including though the deployment of nuclear weapons.

The Biden administration, meanwhile, has vastly expanded the types of weapons it will provide to the Ukrainian military, with the next phase of the conflict expected to include large clashes in the open fields of the Donbas region. An additional \$800 million in security assistance will for the first time include anti-personnel mines, long-range artillery, armored vehicles and radar defense equipment. And the top U.S. commander in Europe and his staff are developing training for Ukrainian forces that will take place on the continent and teach the soldiers about weapons new to the country's arsenal, a senior U.S. defense official said Thursday.

The training will focus on using 155mm howitzer cannons, counter-artillery radar and Sentinel air defense radars, and will last a few days each, the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon.

Russia this week sent a formal diplomatic note to the United States warning that U.S. and NATO shipments of the “most sensitive” weapons systems to Ukraine was “adding fuel” to the conflict there and could bring “unpredictable consequences.”

A copy of the diplomatic démarche - the first known high-level communication to the United States from Russia since the invasion began - was seen by The Washington Post. The State Department declined to comment on whether any response had been sent. Top Russian military officials have declined attempts by their U.S. counterparts to speak with them during the conflict.

The Russian Embassy did not respond to requests for comment on Thursday.

Among the “most sensitive” items mentioned in the note are “multiple launch rocket systems” - which Russian forces have deployed in territory they control, but which are not believed to have come from the United States or its NATO allies. Russia accused the allies of violating “rigorous principles” governing the use of arms transfers to conflict zones and of being oblivious to “the threat of high-precision weapons falling into the hands of radical nationalists, extremists and bandit forces in Ukraine.”

It accused NATO of trying to pressure Ukraine to “abandon” sputtering and so far unsuccessful negotiations with Russia, “in order to continue the bloodshed.” Washington, it said, was pressuring countries with military and technical cooperation with Russia to “immediately curtail it,” and those with Soviet-era weapons to transfer them to Ukraine.

“We call on the United States and its allies to stop the irresponsible militarization of Ukraine, which implies unpredictable consequences for regional and international security,” the note said.

Sullivan said the weaponry that is headed to Ukraine represented “everything we could muster in a reasonable time frame” so it could be “ready to use for the coming battle in the east.” He stressed that the United States was “not operating inside the territory of Ukraine” - a red line that could provoke a response from Moscow - and is making sure there are “resilient and diverse” ways to continue delivering military aid into the country.

Biden told reporters his administration is also considering whether to send a senior U.S. government official to Ukraine in a gesture of solidarity, following visits this week by top European leaders. “We’re making that decision now,” the president said.

The death toll from an April 8 Russian airstrike on a train station in Kramatorsk rose to 59 after two children injured in the attack died, Ukraine’s Defense Ministry said Thursday. Seven of the fatalities were children, the ministry said.

“A bloody children’s toy will be sent by [Ukraine’s national police] to the U.N. as proof of this barbaric crime,” the ministry said in a post on Twitter, including an image of a blood-soaked toy horse apparently left at the scene.

Another turning point in the war may be imminent in the embattled port city of Mariupol. The Russian Defense Ministry said 134 Ukrainian soldiers had surrendered there overnight. A day earlier, the ministry asserted that Mariupol was “completely liberated” from the Azov Battalion - a Ukrainian paramilitary unit with a history of far-right nationalism - and said the remaining Ukrainian forces in the city were trapped.

But a local Ukrainian official said Thursday on Telegram that Ukrainian and Russian forces continue to clash, particularly near the harbor. The city’s mayor, Vadym Boychenko, recently estimated that over 10,000 civilians have died in the Russian siege.

In its daily assessment for April 13, the Institute for the Study of War reported that Russian forces could “capture Mariupol in the coming week,” adding that the city’s defenders wouldn’t be able to hold out indefinitely.

Russian forces, it reported, continued to take ground in the city - including driving Ukrainian troops to abandon a metal plant in the north, “further constricting the two remaining pockets of Ukrainian defenders.”

Ukrainian officials have described Mariupol as a crucial battlefield. “Mariupol is the heart of this war today,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told the Associated Press on Sunday. “It beats, we fight, we are strong. If it stops beating, we will have weaker positions.”

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, who recently held separate meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Zelensky, told Germany’s DPA news agency that the two are entrenched in a “wartime state of mind.”

“Both sides are preparing for a very intense and, from a humane perspective, devastating battle” in the Donbas region, he said.

The sinking of the Moskva warship will be a major morale boost for Ukrainian forces, experts said. Late Thursday, the Russian defense ministry said that the Moskva sunk as it was being towed to port. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the impact of the loss of the ship on the broader war effort was not immediately clear. “The naval component of the war has been fairly limited to two things: One, cruise missile strikes into Ukraine and, two, replenishment and resupply of their efforts in the south,” Kirby said.

The Pentagon also disclosed Thursday for the first time that a small group of Ukrainian soldiers who had been in the United States for training when Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24 received coaching on armed, unmanned Switchblade aircraft, as well as on coastal defense surface drones that Biden just approved Wednesday. Those troops have returned to Ukraine, said a senior defense official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under rules set by the Pentagon.

It is clear that some of the earlier self-imposed limitations on U.S. military aid to Ukraine have changed, said Elias Yousif, a research analyst at the Stimson Center in Washington. But there are some steps that the Biden

administration still deems too risky in terms of provoking conflict with Russia, Yousif said, including facilitating the transfer of fighter jets to Ukraine.

The administration is “walking a tightrope, where it doesn’t know the amount of tension it has to work with,” Yousif said.

Meanwhile, Finland and Sweden are reconsidering their status as militarily nonaligned nations in the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, leading to escalated warnings from Russia.

Dmitry Medvedev, an ally of Putin who serves as deputy chairman of Russia’s Security Council, said Thursday that NATO expansion would lead Moscow to strengthen air, land and naval forces to “balance” military capability in the region.

“If Sweden and Finland join NATO, the length of the land borders of the alliance with the Russian Federation will more than double. Naturally, these boundaries will have to be strengthened,” he wrote on Telegram.

“There can be no more talk of any nuclear-free status for the Baltic,” Medvedev said.

Russia also accused Ukraine’s military of striking residential buildings in a Russian village near the border, leaving seven people injured.

Two Ukrainian combat helicopters entered Russian airspace and carried out “at least six strikes” in the village of Klimovo, Russia’s Investigative Committee said. The federal agency said six houses were damaged but provided few other details. Ukrainian authorities had no immediate response to the accusations.

Russia has accused Ukraine of several strikes on its territory since the war began. In early April, Moscow claimed Ukraine attacked a fuel depot in Belgorod, another border region. Ukrainian officials would not confirm or deny the attack at the time.

*--Rauhala reported from Brussels. Annabelle Timsit and Adela Suliman in London; Mary Ilyushina in Riga, Latvia; Annabelle Chapman in Warsaw; Amanda Coletta in Toronto; and John Hudson, Christine Armario, Tyler Pager, Kim Bellware and Paulina Firozi in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **2. Putin May Be Tempted to Use Small Nuclear Weapon, C.I.A. Chief Says**

*William J. Burns, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, cautioned that he had seen no 'practical evidence' that would suggest such a move was imminent*

New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A8 | David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON -- The director of the C.I.A. said on Thursday that “potential desperation” to extract the semblance of a victory in Ukraine could tempt President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to order the use of a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon, publicly discussing for the first time a concern that has coursed through the White House during seven weeks of conflict.

The director, William J. Burns, who served as American ambassador to Russia and is the member of the administration who has dealt most often with Mr. Putin, said the potential detonation of such a weapon -- even as a warning shot -- was a possibility that the United States remained “very concerned” about. But he quickly cautioned that so far, despite Mr. Putin’s frequent invocation of nuclear threats, he had seen no “practical evidence” of the kinds of military deployments or movement of weapons that would suggest such a move was imminent.

“Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setbacks that they’ve faced so far, militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons,” Mr. Burns said during a question-and-answer session following a speech he delivered at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

He spoke in response to a question from former Senator Sam Nunn, of Georgia, who helped create the program that brought nuclear weapons out of Ukraine and other former Soviet states 30 years ago.

Tactical weapons are sometimes called “battlefield nukes,” smaller weapons that can be shot out of a mortar or even exploded like a mine, as opposed to “strategic” weapons that are put on intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russia has a large arsenal of tactical weapons; the United States keeps comparatively few. Low-yield nuclear weapons have been designed to produce a fairly small explosion, which sometimes blurs the difference between conventional and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Burns also argued that the disclosure of Mr. Putin’s intentions by U.S. intelligence officials before the outbreak of the war had made it harder for Mr. Putin to hide the “raw brutality” his forces have used in Ukraine, reminiscent of the damage Russian forces inflicted in Chechnya in the 1990s.

“I have watched over the years as Putin has stewed in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition and insecurity,” Mr. Burns said. He said the Russian president has nursed grievances against the West for decades, convinced the United States took advantage of Russia’s weakness after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

President Biden and his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, both acknowledged Thursday that the White House was debating sending a high-level official to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, in a show of support for the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain recently took a secret trip to Kyiv by train.

Mr. Sullivan said that the White House had briefly considered having Mr. Biden go into Ukraine, but as soon as it became clear “what kind of footprint that would require, what kind of assets that would take from the Ukrainians as well as the U.S.” to keep him safe, the idea was rejected.

When pressed on reports that he, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken or Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III might go to Kyiv, Mr. Sullivan declined to discuss it, saying that “if and when that happens, we want to make sure it’s done in a very secure way.” Mr. Biden told reporters no decision had been made to send an envoy.

Mr. Sullivan also said that in coming days the United States would announce a crackdown on countries and companies violating the Western sanctions on Moscow, imposed since the invasion began in late February.

The Commerce Department on Thursday identified 10 aircraft that were flying into or operated by Belarus, with the apparent intention of registering them in Russia. The sanctions would prevent servicing or fueling the aircraft internationally, effectively grounding them.

Mr. Sullivan had made a similar vow to crack down on violators just ahead of Mr. Biden’s trip to Brussels and Warsaw last month. But on Thursday, speaking at the Economic Club of Washington, he said he believed that some of the sanctions -- particularly export controls on defense technology -- were beginning to hurt Russia’s military readiness.

“Russia’s ability to retool and replenish,” he said, was being set back because many of its systems “rely on Western microchips and components.”

“They are exhausting the stock of some of the high-end weapons,” Mr. Sullivan added, though he acknowledged that the continuing purchase of natural gas from Russia was helping to fund the war.

“I’m not sitting here suggesting we have so starved them of those resources they literally can’t field an army and continue to try to make progress on the battlefield,” Mr. Sullivan said. But he said Washington was stepping up the effort to help Europe wean itself off Russian gas by delivering supplies of liquefied natural gas from the United States.

But Mr. Sullivan also indicated that so far he had seen no evidence that China was stepping in to help Mr. Putin with either military or financial aid. His statement was notable because Mr. Biden, in a call with President Xi Jinping of China four weeks ago, had warned about American penalties should China aid the war effort. But the

evidence since then has suggested that despite Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi's declaration in February that their relationship has "no limits," China in fact appears to be of mixed views on how much to support the war.

Mr. Burns and Mr. Sullivan both acknowledged that the war was moving to a new phase now that Russia appears to have narrowed its objective to taking the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia separatists have been fighting since 2014.

Gen. Philip Breedlove, the former supreme allied commander in Europe, who is now retired, said Thursday that while Mr. Putin may be able to paint his narrower operation as a win, the war will be a loss for Russia in the long term.

"Ukraine is still going to try to fight what I call the American Revolutionary War again, skirmishing and counterattacking and ambushing," General Breedlove said. "It is just going to be a lot harder for them."

By moving his forces to the east, Mr. Putin is looking to move the war to more favorable territory, trying to make it more difficult for the Ukrainian forces to stick with those tactics. "They are now prepared to fight the war that they really want," General Breedlove said. "They want to meet force on force in open fields."

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### **3. South Korea's president-elect unveils foreign policy goals**

Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A7 | Michelle Ye Hee Lee

SEOUL -- South Korea in recent years has been a passive player on the global stage even as its economic and cultural influence ballooned, remaining wary of aggressive neighbors North Korea and China.

The country's conservative president-elect vows to change that. South Korea must step up its foreign policy commensurate with its economic and cultural status and become a stronger ally to the United States, he told The Washington Post in his first interview as president-elect.

"We should not only focus on relations with North Korea, but rather expand the breadth of diplomacy in the E.U. and throughout Asia with the South Korea-U.S. relationship as our foundation," Yoon Suk-yeol said Thursday. "We should take on a greater role in fulfilling our responsibility as one of the top 10 economies in the world."

Yoon joins a growing cadre of leaders in the Asia-Pacific region who are abandoning conciliatory stances in defense of their countries and tightening alliances to counter China. He aspires to make South Korea a critical player in addressing global challenges - including supply chain management, climate change and vaccine production - moving away from a singular focus on North Korea and calibrating policy around it.

The question is how effective he can be in this goal. On May 10, Yoon is set to become the president of the world's 10th-largest economy, although he has no policy or governing experience and was elected last month

with the narrowest margin in the nation's democratic history. He faces the test of rallying the opposition-controlled parliament and a divided nation weary of income inequality, soaring housing prices and empty promises of hope.

Central to Yoon's foreign policy is "rebuilding" South Korea's alliance with the United States, a nod to Washington's frustrations with the outgoing government of President Moon Jae-in, whose foreign policy ambition of brokering peace with North Korea made him wary of jeopardizing relations with China and Russia, North Korea's allies.

Yoon's promises have been welcomed by Washington, U.S. analysts say, noting that the United States wants a stronger South Korea that is a reliable ally to help bolster democratic unity in the region.

Yoon, 61, is a first-time politician and former prosecutor general. The son of academics, Yoon graduated from prestigious Seoul National University and became a prosecutor in 1994 after passing the bar exam on his ninth try. He took on some of South Korea's most powerful individuals - notably helping convict President Park Geun-hye in her impeachment trial.

Yoon lights up when talking about eating and cooking. On South Korean talk shows, he has showed off his culinary skills, deftly testing the heat of a stainless-steel pan with a drop of water and plating dishes with precision. Among his favorite dishes to cook are kimchi jjigae (kimchi stew), bulgogi (marinated beef), spaghetti and mushroom soup, he said.

"I believe it is very important and meaningful in life to spend quality time over meals with friends, family and other people close to us," he said.

Yoon married for the first time at 51 and has four dogs and three cats. He has no children.

When asked about his role models as president, he said he admires Abraham Lincoln's legacy as the defender of federalism and John F. Kennedy's charm and civil rights legacy. He said footage of Kennedy taking sole responsibility for the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion in a black-and-white documentary he watched in high school left a lasting impression.

### *Seoul as a 'global pivotal state'*

Yoon envisions South Korea as a "global pivotal state," his take on a long-held vision among South Korean conservatives to define the country's foreign policy on its own terms rather than as a response to North Korea.

That means South Korea needs to take on more responsibilities, including providing more developmental aid overseas, he said.

He cited as an example that South Korea has committed \$10 million in aid to Ukraine - which equals roughly 20 cents per Ukrainian, an amount he thinks is insufficient.

“We should take part in the international pressure campaign on Russia, which the current government is doing to a certain extent,” Yoon said. “When we are asked by the international community to participate more, we need to firmly demonstrate our attitude of respect for the international rules-based order.”

Yoon said that South Korea should lean on its military alliance with the United States to take a stronger political position on China, and that he does not view South Korea’s economic dependence on China as a one-way street. China remains South Korea’s biggest trading partner, but he said Seoul must recognize that Beijing also depends on it.

Before deciding whether to seek entry into the “Quad,” a grouping of the United States, Japan, Australia and India designed to counter China’s rise, Yoon said South Korea will support and cooperate with its working groups in tackling global issues such as vaccine distribution and climate change.

Yoon labeled North Korea as Seoul’s “main enemy,” a stance that marks a departure from that of his predecessor, who leaves a legacy of brokering nuclear negotiations between North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump. Yoon expressed concern about North Korea’s lifting of its self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear tests, but he said he would maintain a two-track response to pursue dialogue and offer humanitarian aid.

#### *Cooperation with U.S. and Japan*

Relations between Japan and South Korea are once again at one of their lowest points in decades, a concern for the Biden administration as it seeks to work with its two major Asian allies to counter China’s supply chain dominance and North Korea’s nuclear capabilities.

Yoon said dismal Seoul-Tokyo relations have backfired on South Korean companies and ordinary South Koreans who love traveling to Japan, and have hampered Seoul’s ability to coordinate with Tokyo and Washington.

Yoon said South Korea should work to rebuild confidence by having frequent conversations and visits with Japanese officials. Japanese officials have welcomed Yoon’s stance with caution.

“Our weakened relationship with Japan is the Achilles’ heel of South Korea-U.S.-Japan cooperation,” he said. “When I am president, South Korea-Japan relations will go well. I am sure of it.”

#### *Closing the gender gap*

One of the defining issues during the presidential campaign was gender, with Yoon's campaign and party appealing to disaffected young men who are frustrated with the Moon administration's policies of encouraging women to enter and stay in the workforce.

Yoon has proposed to abolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which has become a flash point in the gender war. For now, that decision appears to be on hold, as Yoon has named a new head of the agency.

Yoon acknowledged South Korea's poor rankings on gender, regularly placing last or second to last among developed countries in an array of metrics on women's economic and political empowerment, and he said South Korea needs to improve.

But he said there has been progress over the decades. When asked what role his administration will play in closing the gender gap, he said the government must guarantee legal rights for both sexes in unfair and criminal circumstances.

"I have a clear principle that we must conform to global standards for social and government activities," he said. "Guaranteeing women's opportunities must also go in line with global standards."

*--Min Joo Kim contributed to this report*

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## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. U.S. Support Shifts to Offensive Weapons**

*A new military assistance package is intended to help Kyiv repel Russia's forces*

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A7 | Courtney McBride

As Ukraine prepares to resist a new Russian military assault in the east, it likely will be doing so with weapons and equipment the U.S. once considered too risky to provide to Kyiv, highlighting how the line between offensive and defensive assistance has blurred in recent weeks.

The shift in weaponry comes as Kyiv has made increasing pleas for military assistance in recent days, warning of potential Russian escalation and the potential for mass civilian casualties amid Russia's expected offensive in the Donbas area. It also follows President Biden's allegation that Russia was conducting "genocide" in Ukraine.

Mr. Biden on Wednesday announced \$800 million in additional security assistance for Ukraine, including artillery, armored personnel carriers, and Humvees, bringing total military aid committed to Ukraine since he took office to more than \$3 billion. The new package includes heavier weaponry than the U.S. previously had provided and -- for the first time -- American-made artillery pieces.

While U.S. officials in the past have debated whether the U.S. government should limit itself to providing Kyiv with weapons designed to defend the country from attack, that distinction appears to have grown fuzzier as Russia moved its forces deeper into Ukraine. Any weapons designed to push Moscow's forces out of the country arguably could be considered defensive, so long as it doesn't involve hitting targets inside Russia, say U.S. officials and outside experts.

William Taylor, vice president for Russia and Europe at the United States Institute of Peace, said that given the current state of conflict in Ukraine, "there's no distinction to be made between offensive and defensive weapons."

After failing to take Kyiv, Russian forces in recent days have pulled back from the Ukrainian capital and other northern cities and begun redeploying to southern and eastern Ukraine, where Moscow made early gains in the first weeks of the invasion. The latest arms package, which comes in parallel with greater intelligence sharing, is meant to help Ukrainian forces in the expected battle there.

Mr. Taylor, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, welcomed the decision to send additional weapons to Ukraine. While the anti-armor and anti-aircraft missiles provided to date have proved effective at repelling Russian forces near Kyiv, Mr. Taylor said "the big battle that's coming in the east is on different terrain" and will require longer-range systems.

As with weapons, when it comes to intelligence, the distinction between "offensive" and "defensive" intelligence is an artificial one, says Jeffrey Edmonds, a Russia specialist who served at the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council. He argues it would make little sense to withhold detailed information -- such as the position of Russian artillery -- as the U.S. is shipping hundreds of millions of dollars in advanced weaponry to the Ukrainian government.

"That's no different in my mind from providing Javelins," he said, referring to anti-tank missiles the U.S. has sent to Ukraine.

Mr. Edmonds, who was in government during Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and is now at CNA, a Virginia-based nonprofit research group, said there is little risk that wider intelligence-sharing would escalate the conflict. "The Russians assume we're providing all the intelligence we can," he said.

The argument about the lack of distinction between offensive and defensive assistance amid an invasion is one Ukrainian officials have been making since the invasion started. Speaking last week in Brussels, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba blasted what he called the hypocrisy of those countries that would provide only what they labeled defensive weapons.

"When it comes to Ukraine, there should be no such difference as between defensive weapons and offensive weapons," he said. "Because every weapon used in the territory of Ukraine, by the Ukrainian army, against a foreign aggressor is defensive by definition."

That said, the administration still appears to be drawing the line at certain types of support, such as a no-fly zone, which could draw the North Atlantic Treaty Organization directly into an armed conflict with Russia. Fears of escalation into a full-scale war between Russia and NATO members were key to U.S. rejection of a plan to provide Polish MiG-29 jet fighters to Ukraine.

It isn't just conventional weapons that still face limits. While the Biden administration has been open about the kind of defensive cybersecurity assistance it has provided Kyiv -- deploying technical teams to Ukraine to help identify and patch vulnerabilities Russian hackers could exploit, for example -- it continues to draw lines on the kind of cyber operations against Moscow it is willing to engage in, officials and experts have said.

Some of those hesitations are rooted in a longstanding policy doctrine in Washington to not engage in destructive hacking that could prompt escalatory retaliation from an adversary, especially because the U.S. is highly digitized and therefore vulnerable to counterattack.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby on Wednesday challenged the notion that Washington's provision of new equipment and plans to train Ukrainian forces on their use amount to escalatory moves, though he declined to speculate how Moscow might interpret them.

"We committed from the very beginning, even before the invasion, to helping Ukraine be able to defend itself," he said. "This is a piece of that, and this is representative of the kinds of capabilities that the Ukrainians themselves have asked for and said they need as this fighting now gets focused on the eastern part of the country."

The United Kingdom also has taken the position that providing an increasingly sophisticated complement of weapons to Ukraine isn't escalatory, because those weapons are being deployed in defense of the country.

James Cleverly, U.K. minister of state for European and North America, said Monday that from his government's perspective, providing Ukraine with the means to defend itself against Russia isn't escalatory.

"I totally understand the concerns about escalation, and they are meaningful and we need to be conscious of those," he said, but the Ukrainians should have the equipment required "to fight effectively."

"We need to give them the tools to finish the job," he added.

*--Dustin Volz and Warren Strobel contributed to this article*

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## **5. Pentagon: Ukrainian troops will need training for some U.S. weapons being shipped**

*Ukrainians say home-made missile cripples Russian flagship cruiser in Black Sea*

Washington Times Online, Apr. 14 (1359) | Mike Glenn

U.S. officials in Europe are setting up training programs to show Ukrainian soldiers how to operate some of the military supplies being sent to them as part of the just approved \$800 million security assistance package as Kyiv gears up for an expected major new push by invading Russian forces.

On Thursday, a senior defense official said Ukrainian troops will likely require instruction to use the artillery and radar systems included on the list. Ukraine will receive 18 towed howitzers along with 40,000 artillery rounds, 10 AN/TPQ-36 counter-artillery radars and two AN/MPQ-64 Sentinel air surveillance radars. U.S. and allied supplies are credited with aiding the surprisingly tough resistance the Ukrainians have put up to date against a larger and better-armed Russian invading force.

“We do not assess that it’s going to take longer than a few days, max, to get them trained up on those systems,” the senior defense official told reporters.

Air Force Gen. Tod D. Wolters — who wears two hats as both head of U.S. European Command and NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander — is in charge of the training requirements. They will likely choose Ukrainian soldiers who already have some level of experience with artillery and radar to receive the training on the specifics of the American systems in the package, Pentagon officials said.

“It’s a ‘train the trainers’ approach. We’re not pulling out of Ukraine an exorbitant number of fighters. They don’t think this training is going to take very long to conduct,” the senior defense official said at a Pentagon background briefing.

The government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly pressed for more weapons to continue their fight against Russia, which launched a massive ground invasion on Feb. 24. President Biden and other NATO leaders have already ruled out contributing troops to the fight or establishing a no-fly zone over the former Soviet republic, for fear of sparking a direct shooting war with Moscow.

The training operation is being planned even as U.S. officials continue to locate the items on the latest list, which also includes aircraft such as 11 Mi-17 helicopters, 200 M113 armored personnel carriers, 500 Javeline missiles and thousands of other anti-armor systems.

“Every single item is not going to have to come from the United States. Some could come from prepositioned stocks that are elsewhere,” the senior defense official said.

The first weapons and tactical equipment on the list could be in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers in about a week, officials said.

The briefing came on a day when U.S. and European officials both said that Kyiv's claims to have hit a flagship Russian vessel with a missile strike appeared credible, although it was not clear how much damage the Russian Moskva had suffered. Ukraine's southern military command said a Ukrainian-made Neptune missile fired by its forces has scored a direct hit on the cruiser and it had begun sinking.

Russian defense officials acknowledged the ship had been hit in the Black Sea and caught fire, but said the crew had been rescued and the ship towed away from the war zone for repairs.

U.S. officials said they were still trying to get information, but said it appeared that Russian sailors were still struggling to control the fires aboard the vessel.

"We don't have the capacity at this point to independently verify that but certainly, the way this unfolded, it's a big blow to Russia," White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Thursday morning.

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## **6. Air Force and Space Force Will Now Allow Troops Up to 35 Days Off for Fertility Treatments**

Military.com, Apr. 14 (1448) | Thomas Novelty

Airmen and Guardians who undergo fertility treatments to start families can take up to 35 days off from their duty station under a new policy unveiled by the Department of the Air Force, which also oversees the Space Force.

The directive, announced Wednesday, would grant the time off -- which doesn't count against a service member's earned number of leave days -- if they undergo treatment at one of six military medical facilities. Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall praised the policy update and said it hits close to home for him.

"My wife and I have had our own struggles with starting a family, so I recognize what a strain this can be on our Airmen and Guardians, personally and financially," Kendall said in a press release. "I wholeheartedly support this program, and I hope our teammates take full advantage of it."

The 35 days are considered Permissive Temporary Duty, which means service members must cover the costs for travel, food and lodging while receiving treatment, but their time off won't go against their leave days.

Air Force Master Sgt. Kristy Negron, a member of the department's Women's Initiative Team that crafted the policy, said the change means service members will not have to choose between taking leave and getting treatment they need.

"This change is significant for everyone struggling with infertility, just as I have the last 10 years of serving," Negron said in a press release. "Infertility takes a huge toll, not only physically and emotionally, but financially.

Being able to go PTDY for treatments will help ease some of the stress associated with the process by allowing time off work to focus on our life goals.”

Airmen and Guardians can receive treatment at six facilities: Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland; Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii; Womack Army Medical Center in Fayetteville, North Carolina; Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington; San Antonio Military Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas; and Naval Medical Center San Diego in San Diego, California.

The policy update allowing leave for infertility treatment is the latest Department of the Air Force directive aimed at more progressive changes accommodating women and families in service.

Last month, the department released a policy that gave active-duty dual-military couples in the Air Force and Space Force extra time to decide whether they want to separate from the service after having a child.

In the past two years alone, airmen have seen once unlikely changes, many focused on the comfort of women -- such as longer hairstyles, the development of a maternity flight suit and a wrap-style dress for pregnant airmen. The Space Force is also making elements of its new dress uniforms unisex.

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## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **7. Republican lawmakers call for reopening U.S. Embassy in Ukraine’s capital**

Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 14 (1213) | Svetlana Shkolnikova

WASHINGTON – Republican lawmakers are calling for the U.S. to resume its diplomatic presence in Ukraine and reopen its embassy in the capital Kyiv now that Russia’s invading forces have withdrawn from the city’s surrounding areas.

Multiple countries recently announced plans to reopen embassies in Kyiv, including Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Austria and Turkey. The embassies of Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Lithuania have already opened their doors, as has the diplomatic office of the European Union. The U.S. needs to quickly follow suit, Republicans said.

“It’s time,” said Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, an Army veteran. “We have numerous American [non-governmental organizations] operating in Ukraine, thousands of Americans who never left, and American news operations in the country. It’s time to return – and show Ukraine, and the world, our enduring commitment to their freedom.”

The U.S. Embassy moved its consular operations to the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, near the Polish border, days before Russia's invasion and shuttered its Kyiv office entirely on Feb. 28. Diplomats and staff have been working from Poland ever since.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki on Monday declined to set a timetable for a return. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, said Sunday that U.S. officials are "working through" when to send diplomats back to Kyiv. The State Department said it is constantly evaluating safety in Kyiv and does not have specifics on when the U.S. Embassy there could reopen.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Thursday that resuming operations at the embassy would require consultation with the Defense Department. The Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, a brigade-sized organization of the Marine Corps, provides security for U.S. diplomatic missions worldwide. About 2,500 Marines are stationed at more than 150 embassies and consulates, according to the State Department.

At least some of the security detachment that worked in Kyiv is likely guarding personnel and sensitive U.S. government information in Poland, Kirby said. The State Department would not confirm how many Marines were assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

"In the meantime, we continue to stay in close touch with the government of Ukraine and its leadership at all levels and engage in conversations with our Ukrainian counterparts every day," a State Department spokesperson said Thursday.

Ernst criticized the administration of President Joe Biden for being "far too risk-averse" about restoring a diplomatic presence in Ukraine and said a U.S. diplomat she met in Poland last month "tearfully told me she wanted to return."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged governments to send back their embassy staff, saying the return of foreign missions would signal to Russia "that Kyiv is ours." Russian forces retreated from the northern part of the country earlier this month after failing to seize the capital.

"We need your support, even at the level of symbols and diplomatic gestures," Zelenskyy said last week in a video address. "Please come back, everybody who is brave, please come back to our capital and continue working."

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., and Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., praised foreign governments for heeding that call and said the U.S. must now back up its commitment to Ukraine and diplomacy with on-the-ground action.

"We must safely reopen the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv as quickly as possible," Wittman said. "To do so will send a clear message of our support for Ukraine, emphasize the country's unquestioned sovereignty, and support and facilitate critical diplomatic channels between the U.S. and Ukrainian governments at various levels."

Sen. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., cautioned that a diplomatic return to Kyiv would need to be carefully vetted for security. Embassy personnel in Poland have continued to perform their “important work” even outside the country, she said.

“While it is valuable to have a diplomatic presence on the ground in Ukraine, the State Department will have to determine when our diplomats are able to safely carry out their mission in Kyiv,” she said.

Top politicians, as well as envoys, have poured into the city in recent days.

The presidents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia traveled by train into Kyiv to meet with Zelenskyy on Wednesday. Last week, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen toured the nearby town of Bucha, where Russians are accused of committing mass atrocities. The United Kingdom’s prime minister, Boris Johnson, walked the streets of Kyiv with Zelenskyy in a surprise visit on Saturday.

Rep. Stephanie Bice, R-Okla., described Johnson’s visit as a “powerful demonstration of support for the people of Ukraine.” There are no plans for President Joe Biden to make a similar trip, White House officials have said, though there are reportedly discussions of sending another high-level official to the Ukraine capital.

On Thursday, Rep. Victoria Spartz, the first Ukrainian-born member of Congress, and Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., became the first U.S. officials to travel to Kyiv since the start of the war. Spartz asked Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday to consider redeploying diplomats to Lviv, a city largely untouched by Russian shelling that has served as a hub for people displaced by the war.

“As the single largest provider of military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, it is past time that the United States follow our European allies in kind,” Spartz, R-Ind., wrote in a letter to Blinken.

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## **8. Pressure on U.S. to Give Ukraine More Intelligence on Russia**

Associated Press, Apr. 14 (1435) | Nomaan Merchant and James LaPorta

WASHINGTON -- President Joe Biden has called Russia’s war on Ukraine a genocide and accused Vladimir Putin of committing war crimes. But his administration has struggled with how much intelligence it is willing to give the Ukrainian forces that are trying to stop the Russian leader.

Since the war began in late February, the Biden administration has made multiple changes to a classified directive that governs what U.S. agencies are supposed to share with Ukraine. Much of what the United States collects is shared; some is not. Where the line is drawn depends on protecting the sources and methods of the intelligence, but also trying to limit the risk of escalation with a nuclear-armed Russia.

The latest changes occurred last week when U.S. intelligence officials lifted some geographic limits on the transfer of actionable information — the kind of information used in minute-by-minute decisions on the battlefield. According to several people familiar with the issue who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss classified matters, officials removed language that had limited the specific locations of potential targets in parts of eastern Ukraine.

The shifts in the intelligence rules reflect the administration's changing calculations of what Putin might consider escalatory. The U.S. is also trying to step up support to Ukrainian forces that have surprised much of the world in how they have held back Russia but remain undermanned and outgunned. The Pentagon this week also announced \$800 million in new military assistance that could include more powerful weapons and defensive equipment.

Some people familiar with the directive say there is ambiguity about the new limits. One question is whether the U.S. would delay or limit information about a possible Russian target in areas internationally recognized as Ukrainian territory but that Moscow or its proxies controlled before the war, including the Crimean Peninsula and parts of the Donbas. U.S. personnel have at times limited intelligence that they believed Ukrainian forces could use to retake previously lost territory.

The directive still limits information given to Ukrainians about forces in Russia or neighboring Belarus, where Russian forces have staged and previously attacked from Ukraine's north.

"We are intensely sharing timely intelligence with the Ukrainians to help them defend themselves throughout their country, including in areas held by Russia before the 2022 invasion," said one U.S. intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the classified directive. The Wall Street Journal first reported the directive had been changed.

Another U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters said the administration was "providing detailed, timely intelligence to the Ukrainians on a range of fronts."

A letter sent Monday by Republicans on the Senate Intelligence Committee — after the new guidance — urges Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, to "proactively share intelligence with the Ukrainians to help them protect, defend, and retake every inch of Ukraine's sovereign territory, which includes Crimea and the Donbas."

The senators said they "remain deeply concerned that not enough is being done to share critical intelligence that would assist the Ukrainians as Russian forces move to secure territory in the southern and eastern parts of the country."

Unlike a Feb. 9 letter to Biden urging intelligence sharing "to the fullest extent possible," Democrats on the committee did not join this week's letter, reflecting apparent divisions in how members view the administration's current guidance.

The White House insists it is providing information in line with Ukraine's current goals. Analysts say the war is shifting from a conflict fought across the country to a stronger focus on the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine that Russia has seized or attacked recently. One expected point of focus is the strategic port city of Mariupol, whose mayor says more than 10,000 civilians have been killed in the Russian siege.

In addition to its own intelligence capabilities, Ukraine relies on U.S. and Western support to help it plan and repel attacks. Before and during the war, the U.S. has publicly and privately shared intelligence about what it believes are Putin's battle plans in the hopes of undercutting Russia and building support for a forceful Western response.

Lawmakers from both parties have spoken broadly about the limits since the Russian invasion.

Rep. Adam Smith, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said in a television interview in March that the White House was holding back some real-time intelligence "because that steps over the line to making us participating in the war." A spokesperson for Smith, D-Wash., declined an interview request Wednesday.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., on March 1 accused the White House of delaying intelligence due to "overly-lawyered processes," adding that "information about where an invading Russian tank was 12 hours ago does squat to prevent civilian bloodshed."

The directive has been changed to limit delays, officials said. The latest update, according to one intelligence official, is intended to give U.S. officers "added clarity" allowing for faster and more fulsome cooperation with Ukraine.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., asked Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last week if the U.S. was giving Ukraine intelligence to carry out operations in Crimea or parts of the Donbas previously controlled by Russian proxies.

"We want to make sure that's clear to our force, and so updated guidance that goes out today will make sure that's clear," Austin said, adding: "Certainly the current guidance was not clear in that regard, so we'll make sure it's clear."

Ohio Rep. Mike Turner, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, late last month asked Gen. Tod Wolters, the supreme NATO commander for Europe, whether he was satisfied with the speed of information getting to Ukraine.

"Congressman, I'm comfortable, but I want it to speed up," Wolters said. "And I always will say that even if it occurs in one second, I want it tomorrow to be in a half a second."

*--LaPorta reported from Wilmington, North Carolina*

## **9. Lawmakers Demand the Army Come Up with a Better Plan for Alaska-based Soldiers After String of Suicides**

Military.com, Apr. 14 (1346) | Steve Beynon

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is raising the alarm over an ongoing suicide crisis among troops in Alaska, saying the Army needs to rapidly pour more resources into those rural bases.

Alaska Republican Sens. Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski, along with Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., sent a letter to Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth outlining troubling findings of delayed mental health care and poor economic situations isolating junior enlisted troops as key points the service needs to fix.

“Service members stationed in Alaska are under an outsized level of stress from several angles, including behavioral health specialist shortages, financial challenges, infrastructure and transportation limitations, and the adjustment to living in a remote location with extreme cold weather,” the lawmakers wrote in their joint letter.

Leaders in Alaska have been scrambling for resources after at least 11 soldiers died by suicide last year, with another six deaths still under investigation. That’s an increase from 2020, when seven soldiers committed suicide, and eight in 2019.

One of the key issues, those lawmakers found, was extensive wait times for a first appointment with a mental health care provider -- often taking more than two weeks. Compounding that issue is a lack of providers. Right now, Fort Wainwright has 11 unfilled mental health care positions.

“This has put unbearable pressure on the uniformed and civilian providers who are filling those billets, increasing the likelihood that they quit and further exacerbate the problem,” the lawmakers said.

Another major concern is the inherent isolation in Alaska and the major time difference from where most of the U.S. population lives, making it difficult for troops to stay connected to their friends and family at home. Lawmakers also noted economic concerns, mostly among junior enlisted soldiers finding it difficult to afford flights to the lower 48 states, and requested Army leaders to provide solutions to ease soldiers’ financial burdens. One idea, the lawmakers suggested, was an extra \$300 pay per month to troops based in Alaska.

“Furthermore, soldiers told us that they cannot always get leave approved for trips outside of block leave periods which usually only occur around the major holidays,” they added.

In March, Military.com spent more than a week in Alaska, interviewing senior leaders and rank-and-file soldiers. Most troops were concerned about the lack of consistency with seeking care; some had anecdotes of appointments taking up to a month. In other cases, some said there’s still a stigma tied to seeking care, with soldiers afraid

they'll not be allowed to do their jobs, which often includes handling weapons. In other cases, service members were afraid that seeking care made it appear they were being disciplined, given troops are forced into similar care after drinking incidents or other disciplinary cases.

Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler, commander of U.S. Army Alaska, told Military.com he is mandating all troops have at least one mental health care appointment this year. While that mandate is likely contributing to the backlog, Eifler says those appointments are catching soldiers who were having problems but weren't seeking care.

Eifler said the biggest issue is recruiting mental health care workers to relocate to rural Alaska, as well as other personnel for the Army's civilian workforce -- including people to operate the gym and dining facilities. Some of those amenities not being fully staffed is likely contributing to quality-of-life issues among the 20,000 troops, half of whom are soldiers, across Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright.

Senior Army leaders are hoping to morph Alaska into a mostly volunteer assignment. Right now, new enlistees can be guaranteed to be stationed there if they elect to.

But Speier, Sullivan and Murkowski want the Army to develop a plan so that the ranks in Alaska aren't being filled ad hoc, like most other duty stations. In their letter to Wormuth, they said this could include screening new recruits ahead of time to see whether they're a good fit. They also suggested additional incentives.

Alaska represents a relatively small part of a growing suicide crisis within the ranks. Data from the Defense Department shows 176 active-duty soldiers died by suicide in 2021. In the same year, 74 Army reservists and 101 National Guardsmen died by suicide, respectively.

Data shows the bulk of those suicides were not immediately tied to combat trauma, with most deaths occurring among troops with no past combat deployments. Army leaders and lawmakers on Capitol Hill have struggled to come up with solutions to counter the crisis, which is also being seen among civilians. For now, the service's main tactic is training junior noncommissioned officers to identify red flags early among the soldiers they lead, which in many cases involves rocky romantic relationships and financial trouble.

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## EUROPE

### **10. EU closes loophole allowing multimillion-euro arms sales to Russia**

Reuters, Apr. 14 (0515) | Francesco Guarascio

BRUSSELS -- The European Union has closed a loophole that allowed EU governments to export weapons worth tens of millions of euros to Russia last year alone despite an embargo which took effect in 2014 after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region.

EU countries last year sold to Russia weapons and ammunition worth 39 million euros (\$42.3 million), according to the latest data made available by the EU Commission - up more than 50% from 2020, when sales were worth 25 million euros, a volume in line with previous years.

The EU had banned the export of arms to Moscow in July 2014 in reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea, but a clause in the sanctions permitted sales under contracts signed before August 2014.

Countries with large defence industries, such as France and Germany, were among the largest exporters.

The loophole has come under fire from some EU governments since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, which the Kremlin calls "a special military operation".

In a bid to weaken the Kremlin's war efforts in Ukraine, the EU has imposed five rounds of sweeping sanctions banning exports to Russia of a large variety of technology that could be used by the defence industry.

But EU governments failed to immediately agree to scrap the exemption on arms sales until last week, when the loophole was closed as part of the fifth package of EU sanctions, EU diplomats and officials told Reuters.

A legal text published on April 8 in the EU official journal deletes that exemption.

The EU Commission did not mention the closure of the loophole in its public communication about the fifth package of sanctions.

A spokesperson for the Lithuanian diplomatic mission to the EU said the exemption had been eliminated, but EU countries will be able to continue moving Russia-made weapons to Russia for repairs before they are returned to the EU.

The EU Commission, which is responsible for preparing sanctions, did not propose the amendment on closing the loophole as it was not clear whether it had the unanimous political backing of the 27 EU states, diplomats said.

But at a meeting last week, envoys agreed to amend the text after fresh criticism from some governments, including Poland and Lithuania, diplomats who attended the meeting said.

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## **11. Soviet-Era Missiles Now Guard Ukraine's Skies**

*Encouraged by the United States, Slovakia 'donated' a bulky but effective S-300, hoping to challenge Russian domination of the skies in the war next door*

New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A1 | Andrew Higgins

DOBRA, Slovakia -- Driving back to his village near the Ukrainian border last Thursday, the mayor had to stop to let a train pass, and assumed he wouldn't have to wait long. But the flatbed wagons, stacked high with military equipment, just kept coming. He waited for nearly half an hour.

"It was a very long train, much longer than usual," recalled Mikolas Csoma, the mayor of Dobra, a previously sleepy village in eastern Slovakia that, over the past month, has become a key artery funneling weapons and ammunition into Ukraine by rail from the West.

The train that delayed Mr. Csoma's drive home was not only unusually long but also signaled a singular escalation in Western efforts to help Ukraine defend itself. It carried an air defense system made up of 48 surface-to-air missiles, four launchers and radars to guide the rockets to their targets, which in Ukraine means Russian warplanes and missiles.

As President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia vows to fight the war to its "full completion" and his forces regroup for an expected push in Ukraine's east, NATO countries, including the United States, are scrambling to keep the weapons flowing and bulk up the country's defenses.

Bolstering Ukraine's long-range air defense capabilities is seen as especially critical. Ukraine already had its own S-300 and other air defense systems, but some of these have been destroyed, leaving Russia with a large degree of freedom to hit Ukrainian targets from the air with warplanes and cruise missiles.

Increasingly desperate to reverse this imbalance, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has repeatedly pleaded with NATO to "close the sky over Ukraine" by imposing a no-fly zone. But NATO has been unwilling to send its own warplanes into Ukraine.

Instead, the United States offered Slovakia, a fellow NATO member, a substitute battery of American-made Patriot missiles if it would "donate" its aging S-300 system to Ukraine.

Jaroslav Nad, Slovakia's defense minister and a gung-ho supporter of Ukraine, said it would have been unthinkable before Russia's invasion for his country to send large quantities of even basic weapons across its eastern border free of charge, never mind an old but still powerful Soviet-made antiaircraft system.

"But this is the world's new reality," he said in an interview in Bratislava, the Slovak capital. "We are a frontline state. We have war on our border and more than 330,000 Ukrainians coming to our country. The paradigm is completely different now."

Mr. Putin, he said, "is equal to Hitler" and must be stopped in Ukraine before he can move further West. "Ukraine is literally fighting for our future," he said.

Like Slovakia, other countries are also steadily expanding the scope of their military aid. The No. 2 Pentagon official met in Washington on Wednesday with America's largest military contractors to discuss how ready they are to restock supplies and what new capabilities to send to Ukraine.

The meeting and a new package of weapons, including artillery and ammunition, is intended in part by the Biden administration to blunt criticism that it is not doing enough for Ukraine and is too hesitant to send long-range weapon systems.

Other NATO members are already sending Ukraine bigger and better weaponry than before, including T-72 tanks and short-range air defense systems from the Czech Republic.

The S-300 system from Slovakia is the biggest item a NATO country has sent so far. It was previously deployed in Nitra, a city east of Bratislava at the other end of the country.

From there, it was hauled by truck and train to Dobra, where the state-controlled rail yard has Soviet gauge tracks, wider than the standard in Europe, which means it can run trains to and from Ukraine, which also has Soviet tracks.

Other big items now under discussion for transport to Ukraine via Slovakia include aging MIG-29 warplanes and sophisticated, self-propelled Howitzers called Zuzana 2. Also under review is a plan for Ukraine to send hundreds of damaged tanks, some of them captured from Russian forces, across the border for repair in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland, all of which have experience fixing Soviet-made equipment.

Slovakia "is not going to send tanks because we don't have any spare tanks," Mr. Nad said, underscoring an issue confronting even Ukraine's most eager backers. "We have to keep enough capabilities for our own armed forces."

But Slovakia is transporting not only weapons from its own stocks into Ukraine. It is also sending military aid from many other countries, including the Czech Republic, Australia and what Mr. Nad described as "countries that claim that they are not sending military material to Ukraine."

Hungary, Slovakia's southern neighbor, for example, has declared itself neutral in the conflict and barred weapons from passing through its own territory to Ukraine -- largely to avoid upsetting deliveries of cheap Russian gas -- but it is believed to have quietly provided weapons through other countries.

Asked about this, a Hungarian government spokesman in Budapest declined to confirm or deny that his country is providing military material, saying only that "Hungary's standpoint is well known, and it has remained unchanged."

Alarmed by the flood of weapons flowing across the borders of Slovakia, Poland and Romania, Russia has sought to stop or at least slow it by declaring all foreign arms destined for Ukraine a "legitimate target." Russia's foreign minister vowed last month that Moscow "will not allow" the transfer of Slovakia's S-300 air defense system.

It is too late for that now, and after failing to thwart the delivery, the defense ministry in Moscow claimed on Sunday that Russia had already destroyed the Slovak missile system when sea-launched cruise missiles hit a hangar near the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

Mr. Nad, the Slovak defense minister, dismissed this as a "fake news," apparently aimed at saving Russia's face and calming the nerves of Russian pilots sent on missions to bomb Ukraine. Mr. Nad said he had spoken with Ukraine's defense minister on Monday and been assured that "this system is working and is working well" and was not in Dnipro.

Previous military cargo sent into Ukraine by rail through Dobra and the nearby town of Cierna nad Tisou contained mostly ammunition and basic military hardware.

A separate weapons conduit through Poland, the main route for American arms, has involved weapons like Javelin, NLAW and Stinger missiles, which are light, portable, high-tech and relatively easy to hide in trucks passing through Polish border crossings into western Ukraine.

An air-defense battery, however, is too big to hide, particularly when it travels on trains with more than 120 wagons in full view of drivers blocked by their passage. The cargo was so bulky it took two days to deliver it just a few miles from Dobra into Ukraine in two separate trains.

"Everyone knows what is going on," said Jakub Zsolt, a steel factory maintenance worker who lives across the road from the rail yard. He said his grandchildren were scared by all the commotion, but added that he had himself grown accustomed to the clatter of military helicopters and the rumble of trucks carrying weapons to the loading yard.

All the same, he said, he worries that Slovakia, a small country of just 5.4 million people, is now wading too deeply into Ukraine's war with Russia.

“The Russians might attack us,” he said, adding that he did not understand why Ukrainians needed so much help when “they come here driving much nicer cars -- Porsches and Mercedes -- than we drive in Slovakia.”

Most refugees fleeing the war, nearly all women and children, don't drive anything, but cross on foot carrying just a change of clothes.

Mr. Zsolt's jaundiced view of Ukraine highlights the success of opponents of the pro-Western Slovak prime minister, Eduard Heger, who in an interview last week said, “We need to help Ukraine in every possible way to win this war.” His foes, playing to a substantial segment of the population traditionally favorable to Moscow, have sought to turn public opinion against support for Ukraine and seized on the war as a political opportunity.

Robert Fico, a scandal-tainted former Slovak prime minister, upended the government's efforts to keep the delivery of the S-300 battery secret until it had safely arrived in Ukraine when he posted a video on his Facebook page last Thursday that showed a train carrying the disassembled air-defense system on its way to Ukraine.

He denounced Mr. Heger as “a freak in American hands who will do whatever the Americans tell him to do” and demanded that the public immediately be told where the S-300 system was going.

Mr. Nad, the defense minister, said the delivery had been kept secret for security reasons. The opposition, he added, is playing “political games” against the interests of their own country and also Ukraine.

“Russia is killing thousands of people in Ukraine and I am not going to count the votes that I would lose -- or gain -- based on the decisions of the government to help. The only thing that I am counting is the lives we can save in Ukraine,” he said.

Pavel Macko, a retired Slovak general who served with NATO in Afghanistan and Germany, said the S-300 system delivered to Ukraine dated from the 1980s, when Slovakia was a member of the Warsaw Pact as part of Czechoslovakia, and was inferior to American-made Patriot missiles. But, he added, Ukrainians know how to use it and will be able to reduce Russia's mastery of the skies.

“This is not just symbolic but an important addition that could help make Russia change their plans,” he said.

The mayor in Dobra, Mr. Csoma, said he supported helping Ukraine, but was noncommittal when asked about the wisdom of sending a powerful weapon system like the S-300.

Miffed not to be informed in advance about the disruption to traffic caused by the S-300 trains, he said: “They don't tell me anything. They should at least let me know about this kind of thing.”

Nobody really worried much about the war spreading into Slovakia, he said, but the authorities have nonetheless dusted off old civil defense plans, with police taking an inventory of potential bomb shelters. In the event of conflict, the mayor said, he had been assured that district authorities would send buses to evacuate his village's 520 people.

"If something bad happens, we will all leave," he said. "So there is no panic yet."

*--Reporting was contributed by Julian Barnes in Washington and Benjamin Novak in Budapest*

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## **RUSSIA**

### **12. CIA head calls Bucha killings 'crimes,' takes aim at Putin**

Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A11 | Shane Harris

In his first public speech as director of the CIA, William J. Burns on Thursday called the killings of Ukrainian civilians in Bucha "crimes" and said Russia had "inflicted massive material and reputational damage on itself" following the invasion ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Burns, who engaged with Putin as U.S. ambassador to Russia, gave a blistering indictment of the leader and harked back to earlier Russian atrocities.

"I have no doubt about the cruel pain and damage that Putin can continue to inflict on Ukraine, or the raw brutality with which Russian force is being applied," Burns said during prepared remarks at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. "The crimes in Bucha are horrific. The scenes of devastation in Mariupol and Kharkiv are sadly reminiscent of the images I saw in Grozny, in Chechnya, as a young diplomat in the winter of 1994-95: Forty square blocks in the center of the city flattened by Russian shelling and bombing, leaving thousands of civilian deaths."

Burns's comments were in line with earlier assessments by senior Biden administration officials, including President Biden, that Putin is responsible for war crimes in Ukraine. On Wednesday, Victoria Nuland, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, said the United States is likely to determine that genocide has been committed.

Speaking in Iowa on Tuesday, Biden called Russia's attack on Ukraine a "genocide." He later told reporters he intentionally used the word and that he would "let the lawyers decide internationally whether it qualifies."

"It sure seems that way to me," Biden added.

Burns recounted his interactions in Moscow with Putin and his advisers in early November as the U.S. intelligence community was tracking the buildup of forces on Ukraine's border in apparent preparation for invasion. Burns said Biden sent him to Russia to convey "the depth of our concern of [Putin's] planning for war and the consequences for Russia of attempting to execute that plan. I was troubled by what I heard."

While it didn't seem then that Putin had irreversibly made up his mind to attack, Burns said, he "was defiantly leaning in that direction, apparently convinced that this window was closing for shaping Ukraine's orientation."

Putin seemed to think the winter offered a "favorable landscape" for invasion and that Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and his fellow citizens weren't likely to mount an "effective resistance." Putin also judged that the Russian military was "capable of a quick, decisive victory at minimal cost" and that he had made the Russian economy "sanctions-proofed by a war chest of foreign currency reserves," Burns said.

Those assumptions proved profoundly flawed. The Russian military quickly became bogged down following the Feb. 24 invasion and was beset by logistical challenges and a ferocious response from Ukraine's military, which has killed thousands of Russian soldiers. The United States and European countries promptly sanctioned the Russian central bank and froze hundreds of billions of dollars in reserves that Putin had left exposed overseas.

Putin also misjudged Ukraine and its people, Burns said. "Ukraine, he had argued for years, was not a real country. But real countries fight back. And that's what Ukrainians have done with such remarkable bravery, led with such courage and resolve by President Zelensky."

Burns aimed several remarks at Putin personally, describing him as a grievance-fueled "apostle of payback," who remains "firmly convinced that the West - especially the United States - took advantage of Russia's moment of historical weakness in the 1990s."

"His risk appetite has grown as his grip on Russia has tightened," Burns said. "His circle of advisers has narrowed, and in that small circle it has never been career-enhancing to question his judgment or his stubborn, almost mystical belief that his destiny is to restore Russia's sphere of influence. Every day, Putin demonstrates that declining powers can be at least as disruptive as rising ones."

A few days after invading Ukraine, Putin ordered Russia's nuclear forces to a higher level of alert, alarming world leaders and raising the prospect that the war could witness a heretofore unthinkable use of nuclear weapons.

But it's not clear that Putin's order led to any change in Russian position, Burns said during a question-and-answer session.

“While we’ve seen some rhetorical posturing on the part of the Kremlin about moving to higher nuclear alert levels, so far we haven’t see a lot of practical evidence of the kind of deployments or, you know, military dispositions that would reinforce that concern,” Burns said. “But we watch for that very intently. It’s one of our most important responsibilities at CIA.”

Burns, who was confirmed as CIA director in March 2021, had given congressional testimony, but his remarks in Atlanta were the most extensive in an unofficial forum. He also noted “the longer-term problem posed by China’s ambitious leadership ... the single most important geopolitical challenge as far out as I can see into the 21st century.”

“A silent partner in Putin’s aggression, Xi Jinping’s China is our greatest challenge, in many ways the most profound test that CIA has ever faced,” Burns added.

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### **13. Russia warns of nuclear, hypersonic deployment if Sweden and Finland join NATO**

Reuters, Apr. 14 (1622) | Guy Faulconbridge

LONDON -- One of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s closest allies warned NATO on Thursday that if Sweden and Finland joined the U.S.-led military alliance then Russia would deploy nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles in a European exclave.

Finland, which shares a 1,300-km (810-mile) border with Russia, and Sweden are considering joining the NATO alliance. Finland will decide in the next few weeks, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said on Wednesday.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia’s Security Council, said that should Sweden and Finland join NATO then Russia would have to strengthen its land, naval and air forces in the Baltic Sea.

Medvedev also explicitly raised the nuclear threat by saying that there could be no more talk of a “nuclear free” Baltic - where Russia has its Kaliningrad exclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania.

“There can be no more talk of any nuclear free status for the Baltic - the balance must be restored,” said Medvedev, who was Russian president from 2008 to 2012.

Medvedev said he hoped Finland and Sweden would see sense. If not, he said, they would have to live with nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles close to home.

When asked how Washington views the potential addition of Sweden and Finland to NATO in light of Russia’s warning, the U.S. State Department said there was no change in Washington’s position and repeated that “NATO’s open door is an open door.”

“Without speaking to any countries in particular, we would not be concerned that the expansion of a defensive alliance would do anything other than promote stability on the European continent,” Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a briefing.

Russia has the world’s biggest arsenal of nuclear warheads and along with China and the United States is one of the global leaders in hypersonic missile technology.

Lithuania said Russia’s threats were nothing new and that Moscow had deployed nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad long before the war in Ukraine. NATO did not immediately respond to Russia’s warning.

Still, the possible accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO - founded in 1949 to provide Western security against the Soviet Union - would be one of the biggest strategic consequences of the war in Ukraine.

Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917 and fought two wars against it during World War Two during which it lost some territory. On Thursday, Finland announced a military exercise in western Finland with the participation of Britain, the United States, Latvia and Estonia.

Sweden has not fought a war for 200 years. Foreign policy has focused on supporting democracy and nuclear disarmament.

## KALININGRAD

Kaliningrad, formerly the port of Koenigsberg, capital of East Prussia, lies less than 1,400 km from London and Paris and 500 km from Berlin.

Russia said in 2018 it had deployed Iskander missiles to Kaliningrad, which was captured by the Red Army in April 1945 and ceded to the Soviet Union at the Potsdam conference.

The Iskander, known as SS-26 Stone by NATO, is a short-range tactical ballistic missile system that can carry nuclear warheads. Its official range is 500 km but some Western military sources suspect it may be much greater.

“No sane person wants higher prices and higher taxes, increased tensions along borders, Iskanders, hypersonics and ships with nuclear weapons literally at arm’s length from their own home,” Medvedev said.

“Let’s hope that the common sense of our northern neighbours will win.”

While Putin is Russia’s paramount leader, Medvedev’s comments reflect Kremlin thinking and he is a senior member of the security council - one of Putin’s main chambers for decision making on strategic issues.

Lithuanian Defence Minister Arvydas Anusauskas said Russia had deployed nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad even before the war.

“Nuclear weapons have always been kept in Kaliningrad ... the international community, the countries in the region, are perfectly aware of this,” Anusauskas was quoted as saying by BNS. “They use it as a threat.”

Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands of people, displaced millions and raised fears of a wider confrontation between Russia and the United States - by far the world’s two biggest nuclear powers.

Putin says the “special military operation” in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia and Moscow had to defend against the persecution of Russian-speaking people.

Ukraine says it is fighting an imperial-style land grab and that Putin’s claims of genocide are nonsense. U.S. President Joe Biden says Putin is a war criminal and a dictator.

Putin says the conflict in Ukraine as part of a much broader confrontation with the United States which he says is trying to enforce its hegemony even as its dominance over the international order declines.

*--Additional reporting by Daphne Psaedakis and Humeyra Pamuk in Washington*

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#### **14. Russia accuses Ukraine of helicopter strike on border town**

Agence France-Presse, Apr. 14 (1155) | Not Attributed

Russian officials on Thursday accused Ukraine of sending helicopters to bomb a town in the southern Bryansk region about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the border, after reporting eight injured in shelling.

“Using two military helicopters carrying heavy weaponry, Ukrainian armed forces illegally entered Russian air space,” Russia’s Investigative Committee -- which probes major crimes -- said in a statement.

“Flying low, acting deliberately, they carried out at least six air strikes on residential buildings in the settlement of Klimovo,” investigators said.

As a result, they said, “at least six residential buildings were damaged... and seven people received injuries of varying severity including one small child born in 2020.”

A Russian health ministry official, Alexei Kuznetsov, later told the Interfax news agency that eight people were injured, six of them admitted to hospital.

Two patients -- the young child and a woman born in 1948 -- were in serious condition, he added.

This appeared to be the first time that Moscow has officially accused Ukrainian armed forces of flying helicopters into Russia to carry out an attack.

Previously the governor of Belgorod region in southern Russia, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said two Ukrainian military helicopters had carried out a strike on a fuel depot on April 1, while this was not directly confirmed by Ukraine or Moscow.

Thursday's shelling was announced earlier by governor Alexander Bogomaz, who said on Telegram that "two residential buildings were damaged and some of the residents were injured".

The governor of Russia's Belgorod region, Gladkov, later said on Telegram that the village of Spodaryushino close to the border "came under shelling from the Ukrainian side" and residents from this and a nearby village had been evacuated as a precaution.

Separately, Russian investigators said they were probing a Wednesday attack on a border checkpoint in Kursk region, also allegedly carried out by Ukraine.

There were no injured or damaged caused, investigators said.

Also on Thursday, Russia's security agency the FSB told TASS news agency that Ukraine fired at border checkpoint where over 30 Ukrainian refugees were crossing into Russia.

It added that there were no injuries.

AFP could not independently verify the claims.

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## **15. Russia's Sunken Warship Dents Both Its Pride and Capabilities**

Bloomberg News, Apr. 15 (0225) | Marc Champion

The loss of the flagship vessel of Russia's Black Sea Fleet goes beyond wounded pride, robbing the military of important protection and capabilities as the war in Ukraine enters a crucial phase for Moscow.

Ukraine said the ship was struck by two Neptune missiles, a new domestically developed anti-ship system of which just one battery exists. Russia's Defense Ministry said a blaze caused the warship's ammunition store to explode, without saying what started the fire.

The ship sank in rough water while being towed back to port, Russian news agencies reported late Thursday, citing the Defense Ministry.

The outcome is an embarrassment for Russia and a win for Ukraine. The ship gained notoriety at the start of the war for a confrontation with a small contingent of Ukrainian guards on Snake Island in the Black Sea who, in colorful terms, reportedly told the Moskva to get lost.

It will also cost Russia militarily. While old -- it was commissioned in 1982 -- the Slava (Glory) class Moskva was refitted in 2010. It provided a mobile bubble of long-range air defense for the rest of the fleet, as well as command and control systems. Those abilities cannot be easily substituted.

“It is the only class of ship the Russian navy currently has that fields a long-range air defense system,” said Sidharth Kaushal, research fellow for sea power at the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based think tank. “That matters because for the sort of operation the Black Sea Fleet is designed to do, the Moskva has the capability to sit back and create an air defense for the rest of the fleet, and at the same time provide command and control.”

A western official described the Ukrainian claim of a missile strike on the Moskva as credible, and its loss as a significant blow.

Although the Moskva had two sister ships, neither is in the Black Sea. They cannot enter it, because under the rules of the 1936 Montreux convention, Turkey is limiting access through the Bosphorus strait for Russian naval vessels.

“This incident means Russia has now suffered damage to two key naval assets since invading Ukraine, the first being Russia’s Alligator-class landing ship Saratov on 24 March,” the U.K. Ministry of Defence said in an intelligence update Friday.

“Both events will likely lead Russia to review its maritime posture in the Black Sea.”

Russia’s navy has played a relatively minor role in the war so far, used primarily as an additional source of cruise missile launchers to attack targets across Ukraine. The Moskva didn’t have those, but it did carry anti-ship missiles that made it a spearhead for use against U.S. carrier fleets during the Cold War.

“These ships would completely neutralize the American carrier fleet,” Russian historian and opposition politician Andrei Zubov wrote on Thursday, in a Facebook post headed “The Inglorious End of the Glory.” He was recalling the words of his late father, who oversaw construction of the Moskva among other major naval and civilian vessels.

Zubov said his father, who was an admiral, saw the heavy cruiser as a deterrent that should never be used in anger. “Thank God, he did not see how the current Russian strategists used his pride,” he said. “It is a big military mistake in itself to use an anti-aircraft deterrent as a ship to provide fire support for an amphibious landing.”

That's especially the case given the ship's defense systems and analog radar were outdated. The Moskva had a crew of about 500, and Moscow says they were evacuated from the ship.

Although the Black Sea Fleet has set out as if to attack Odesa multiple times since the war began on Feb. 24, it has not followed through. That's in large part, according to Kaushal, because with a capacity to land 3,000 troops, the amphibious force the fleet can deploy is too small to act without a larger land assault.

That land assault hasn't yet come, because Russian forces have consistently been blocked at Mykolayiv, the gateway to Odesa and Ukraine's largest Black Sea ports. Had they broken through, the Moskva could have thrown a protective bubble around an amphibious attack, much as it did during the Russia-Georgia war of 2008.

A person close to Russia's defense ministry said it would be very difficult with or without the Moskva to attack Odesa from the sea, and cast it as more of a symbolic loss. Still, Russia only had a small number of that class of vessel and lacked the shipbuilding capabilities of the Soviet era, the person said.

Mykolayiv helps explain why the Moskva is unlikely to be replaced for the medium term. Not only does the city have the only shipyard in the former Soviet Union with the capacity to build an aircraft carrier, it also hosts Zorya-Mashproekt, a producer of gas turbine engines for large ships such as the Moskva.

The loss of access to both the shipyard and engine maker after Russian President Vladimir Putin's annexation in 2014 of nearby Crimea has complicated his efforts to modernize the navy and would make it harder to produce another Moskva today. A project to build destroyers of a similar size to the Slava class cruisers has been postponed.

Designs for a next generation aircraft carrier called Storm also remain on paper, in part because without access to the Mykolayiv shipyard, Russia would have to retool one of its own.

Gas turbine engines matter because they have a better power-to-weight ratio, generating not only the extra power thrust that's needed to propel an 11,490 ton ship such as the Moskva forward, but the electricity that's increasingly important for complex systems on modern warships, according to Kaushal.

New generation directed-energy weapons and rail guns, in particular, would rely on large amounts of electrical power that only a gas turbine or nuclear powered engine can provide. Russia says it has programs to develop both.

The sanctions imposed on Russia for its actions in Ukraine are another complicating factor. Its naval vessels rely on significant quantities of imported parts and technologies from nations that have enacted bans on technology exports.

“Russian glory burns off the coast of Ukraine,” Zubov wrote in his post. “I do not know how many sailors were killed and maimed.”

--With assistance from Alex Morales and Daryna Krasnolutska

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**16. Russians planted thousands of land mines and booby-traps to ‘kill or maim’ civilians, Ukrainians say**  
*Departing Russian soldiers have laced large swaths of the country with buried mines and jury-rigged bombs, some hidden inside homes, to terrorize returning civilians*

New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A9 | Cora Engelbrecht

In the days after the Russian withdrawal from the outskirts of Kyiv, a driver named Oleg Naumenko opened the trunk of an abandoned car and it exploded, killing him instantly.

The car had been booby-trapped, and his family and local authorities blamed Russian soldiers. “I died with him in that moment,” Mr. Naumenko’s wife, Valeria, said between sobs.

As ordinary Ukrainians emerge from basements and bunkers into the ruins of their hometowns, many are being confronted with a new horror: thousands of mines and unexploded bombs left behind by retreating Russian troops.

Residents and authorities say that departing Russian soldiers have laced large swaths of the country with buried land mines and jury-rigged bombs -- some hidden as booby traps inside homes. The explosives now must be found and neutralized before residents can resume a semblance of normal life.

Some of the explosives have been attached to washing machines, doorways, car windows, and other places where they can kill or injure civilians returning to their homes, according to residents and Ukrainian officials. Some were even hidden under hospital stretchers and corpses.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine this week called his country “one of the most contaminated by mines in the world,” and said that authorities were working to clear thousands in the areas from which Russian armies had retreated in recent weeks. He accused Russian soldiers of leaving the explosives in their wake “to kill or maim as many of our people as possible.”

He said that the tactic was a war crime and that Russian soldiers must have been acting on instructions from top officials, adding: “Without the appropriate orders, they would not have done it.”

Human Rights Watch and The New York Times have reported that Russian forces in Ukraine appear to be using advanced land mines in the eastern city of Kharkiv. Several local officials have also said that bomb squads in their districts have found explosive devices left behind in homes.

Anti-personnel mines, which are designed to kill people, are banned by an international treaty signed by nearly every country in the world, including Ukraine; Russia and the United States have declined to join.

Ukraine's emergency services agency has deployed a small army of about 550 mine specialists to clear the areas recently occupied by Russian forces. The teams have been working to remove about 6,000 explosives per day, and since the start of Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, they have found more than 54,000 explosive devices, the agency reported on Tuesday.

"Wherever the occupiers stayed overnight, they would set up tripwires," Ukraine's interior minister, Denys Monastyrsky, said during a televised interview on Sunday. "Explosives have been found under helmets, attached to doors, in the washing machine, and in cars."

The placement of explosives in Ukrainian homes could not be independently verified.

Mr. Naumenko, who was killed on April 4, worked as a driver in the village of Hoholiv, about 40 miles outside of Kyiv. But his talent lay in repairing cars. After Russian forces retreated from a nearby village, neighbors found an abandoned vehicle and turned it over to him.

His wife learned of his death the next day in Poland, where she had fled with their 7-year-old son and her mother at the start of the war. She returned to their village as soon as she got the news. "What was left was the car, with the door still open and a pool of blood," Ms. Naumenko, 28, said, "and a big emptiness."

Her account was confirmed through photos and by the Kyiv regional police, who posted a report about the incident on their Facebook page, cautioning returning residents to "not touch objects and things that are not previously tested by experts."

Other local officials are urging residents to call emergency services before entering their homes.

Retreating armies often bury land mines in order to slow the advance of enemy armies. But experts say Russian forces have a well-earned reputation for booby-trapping areas they have vacated in order to kill and maim returning civilians.

Human Rights Watch has documented Russia's use of antipersonnel mines in more than 30 countries where Moscow's forces were involved, including conflicts in Syria and Libya. In Palmyra, during the Syrian war, booby traps surfaced after the Russians vacated the town.

"Leaving behind little presents for the civilians when they return -- like hand grenades, trip wires, unexploded shells, pressure plates -- it's in the Russian military tradition to do that," said Mark Hiznay, the senior arms researcher at Human Rights Watch.

“We’ve seen it before and we’ll see it again,” he said.

Mr. Hiznay said “putting a land mine in someone’s freezer” was a tactic that has no utility other than to terrorize civilians. Ukraine will be dealing with the consequences of land mines “one civilian leg at a time,” he added, explaining that it can often take years, and possibly decades, to clear all the ordnance.

“The presence of these devices denies civilians their terrain and forces them to make hard choices: take the sheep out to graze or risk stepping on a mine in the pasture,” he said.

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## **17. Developing World Quiet on Putin**

### *Nations fearful of repercussions decline to join sanctions or voice their criticism*

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A8 | Joe Parkinson, David Luhnnow and Juan Forero

Western leaders seeking to build a global coalition to isolate Russia over its war on Ukraine are facing pushback from the world’s largest developing nations, including the democracies of India, Brazil and South Africa.

The resistance, much of it from economic self-interest, limits the pressure on President Vladimir Putin and spotlights factions in the global community that recall the Cold War, when many countries tried to steer clear of the rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet Union.

The U.S. and its allies in Europe and elsewhere have imposed economic sanctions against Russia and provided billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine since the Feb. 24 invasion. The united front was praised for rejuvenating a flagging Western alliance.

Yet even after the massacre of civilians in Bucha, Ukraine, 24 countries of the 141 United Nations member states voted last week against removing Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council; 58 member states abstained, including India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa.

While U.S. and European leaders have accused Mr. Putin of war crimes in Ukraine, leaders in the developing world, from Mexico’s Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to India’s Narendra Modi, have refused to criticize the Russian leader.

The bulk of the economic sanctions on Russia are being shouldered by members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other close U.S. allies such as Australia, Japan and South Korea.

“One of the consequences of this is the Biden administration is going to come back to a recognition that our real buddies, our real fellow travelers, are in Europe and northern Asia,” said John Feeley, a former U.S. ambassador and diplomat. “It will be to the detriment of perhaps Africa and Latin America where this was an opportunity for

those regions and India, especially, to say, 'Look we may have our differences ... but we stand for some very clear democratic, sovereignty-based, international rules-based principles.' "

The split opens avenues for Russia to circumvent Western sanctions and allows Moscow to say it retains the support of nations around the world. Saudi Arabia, which has a historic security partnership with the U.S., has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion and rebuffed Washington's call to pump more oil to both tame surging prices.

A day before President Biden landed in Europe last month to shore up international support for Ukraine, ambassadors from what are known as the Brics economies -- Brazil, India, China and South Africa -- smiled for photos with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and then met for talks on enhancing mutual cooperation. In the hourlong meeting, covered by Russian state TV, Mr. Lavrov told the ambassadors that Moscow was a victim of an "unprecedented economic war." None criticized the Russian invasion or Mr. Putin.

"Our position is not that this is not our problem. Our position is that we are for peace," said India Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on the day his country abstained from the U.N. vote against Russia. "Indian foreign-policy decisions are made in Indian national interest, and we are guided by our thinking, our views, our interests."

India, a longtime Russia ally, doesn't want to alienate Moscow and drive it closer to Beijing, a regional rival.

New Delhi hosted top U.S. and U.K. officials for talks on Ukraine this month and meantime held separate meetings with Mr. Lavrov on a proposal to pay for Russian oil in rubles instead of dollars, a way for Moscow to evade sanctions. India in recent days bought millions of barrels of Russian crude at a hefty discount, Indian officials said, and could buy more.

"Now is the time to stand on the right side of history," said U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, "not funding and fueling and aiding President Putin's war."

Chinese leaders have positioned themselves as speaking for developing nations about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. After meeting with African and Asian foreign ministers, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, spoke of a disquiet among developing nations at being pressured to take moral positions on complex international questions.

China sees Russia as an ally in countering the U.S. and its Western allies. The two neighbors seek to dismantle the U.S.-led world order and allow Beijing and Moscow to hold sway over their regions.

The past two decades have seen a shift in how the developing world views the U.S., Russia and China. Moscow has spent billions on expanding trade, diplomatic ties and military ties, from selling weapons to Venezuela and India to delivering wheat exports to much of Africa. Beijing has been flexing its economic muscle with the building of dams, roads, bridges, pipelines and railways in dozens of countries world-wide through its Belt and Road Initiative.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the subsequent images of Iraqi prisoners tortured at Abu Ghraib prison, fed perceptions in some countries that the U.S. was guilty of the same violations of sovereignty it claimed to oppose. “This is part of the legacy of the 2000s and the war on terror,” said Odd Arne Westad, a professor of history at Yale University.

Officials in emerging economies trying to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic fear Western sanctions will make things worse. In Sudan, which imports around 80% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, the price of bread has nearly doubled over import disruptions. Reliance on Russian and Ukrainian crops stretches from Turkey to North Africa. Agricultural producers depend on Russian fertilizers.

Egypt, a military ally of the U.S., condemned Russia’s invasion at the U.N., and then criticized the Western sanctions. Analysts said the mixed response reflected worries that Washington could ease its decadeslong security ties in the Middle East and force greater reliance on Moscow as an arms supplier.

For some nations, refusal to criticize Russia reflects a desire to please China. Demand for such goods as Brazilian iron-ore and Argentine soybeans boosted China past the U.S. as the top trading partner in most South American countries. Beijing’s bilateral trade with Africa rose 35% last year to a record \$254 billion, far higher than the continent’s trade with the U.S.

New Delhi, meantime, seeks help from Moscow to defend its nearly 2,200-mile border with China, where Indian and Chinese troops have skirmished in the past. Russia provides half of India’s weapon imports, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, as well as a majority of the component parts to repair existing equipment.

Indian officials in December signed a deal to buy Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. The two countries also signed a contract for a joint venture to manufacture more than 600,000 Russian-designed AK-203 assault rifles in India.

Some developing countries view the war in Ukraine as Europe’s problem. Others don’t want to be used as proxies in a fight between great powers. During the Cold War, as many as 120 countries formed a nonaligned movement to navigate the U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

“There is a feeling of anxiety that this situation may become a permanent one, where you would have permanent divisions between, on the one side, the West, the U.S. and its allies, and on the other side Russia and China,” said Rubens Ricupero, a former Brazilian ambassador to the U.S. and Italy.

With a few exceptions, governments in Latin America voted in favor of the U.N. resolution condemning the invasion but refused to join in sanctions.

The nonaligned approach is rooted in the sentiment that it wouldn't be beneficial to pick sides if the war were to spill over into the battle over global influence being waged by the U.S. and China, said Brian Winter, editor of *Americas Quarterly*, a nonpartisan journal about Latin America.

"If we're entering a new era of great power conflict, most Latin American governments would prefer to sit this one out," Mr. Winter said. "These governments remember that the Cold War had terrible consequences for them, that the region was used as a chess board."

In Africa, nearly half the governments either abstained or didn't cast a vote last month to condemn Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. Many countries on the continent are ruled by parties that had been supported by Moscow during national struggles for independence from colonial or white-minority rule. Party leaders in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique remember how Soviet weapons, cash and advisers helped win freedom in the 1960s through 1980s

Russia dispatched senior diplomats to lobby for support from defense and foreign ministries in Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia. The delegations pledged investment and infrastructure aid in return for backing -- or at least not voting to condemn -- Russia at the U.N.

Uganda's longtime leader and a key U.S. security partner Yoweri Museveni said Russia should be viewed as the center of gravity in Eastern Europe. His son and heir apparent, Lt. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, went further.

"The majority of mankind (that are nonwhite) support Russia's stand in Ukraine," he wrote on Twitter.

--*Shan Li in New Delhi, Jose de Cordoba in Mexico City and David S. Cloud in Dubai contributed to this article*

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## CHINA

### **18. China holds drills around Taiwan as U.S. lawmakers visit**

Reuters, Apr. 15 (0259) | Ben Blanchard and Yew Lun Tian

TAIPEI/BEIJING -- China said it conducted military drills around Taiwan on Friday as a U.S. Congressional delegation visited the island in a show of support to a fellow democracy, with Beijing blaming the lawmakers for raising tensions with their "provocative" trip.

China's military sent frigates, bombers and fighter planes to the East China Sea and the area around Taiwan, the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command said, in a statement released as the lawmakers were holding a news conference in Taipei.

“This operation is in response to the recent frequent release of wrong signals by the United States on the Taiwan issue,” it said, without mentioning the visiting U.S. delegation.

“The U.S. bad actions and tricks are completely futile and very dangerous. Those who play with fire will burn themselves,” it said.

China’s Defence Ministry, in a separate statement, said the U.S. visit was “deliberately provocative” and had “led to further escalation of tension in the Taiwan Strait”.

Taiwan is a frequent source of tension between Beijing and Washington.

Republican U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham told Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen during the delegation’s meeting with her that the war in Ukraine and provocative behaviour by China have united U.S. opinion in a way not seen before.

“To abandon Taiwan would be to abandon democracy and freedom,” he said. “There’s a backlash growing in the world to thuggery - to the bad guys.”

Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the technology hub is a “country of global significance” and its security has implications for the world.

The bipartisan group of six lawmakers arrived for their two-day visit on Thursday, in a previously unannounced trip.

Such visits, and a reference to Taiwan as a “country”, always anger Beijing, which dismisses any suggestion that Taiwan is a country. China regards the island as one of its provinces.

The United States has no formal relations with Chinese-claimed Taiwan but is its most important international backer and arms supplier.

Menendez acknowledged the Chinese government was “very unhappy” with the delegation’s visit but said that would not dissuade the group from supporting Taiwan.

“With Taiwan producing 90% of the world’s high-end semiconductor products, it is a country of global significance, consequence and impact, and therefore it should be understood the security of Taiwan has a global impact,” Menendez told Tsai.

Taiwan has been heartened by the U.S. support offered by the Biden administration, which has repeatedly talked of its “rock-solid” commitment to the democratically governed island.

That has added to strains in Sino-U.S. relations.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also put Taipei on alert for any possible moves by Beijing to use the Ukraine crisis to make a move on the island. The government though has reported no sign that China is about to invade.

Taiwan has complained for the past two years or so of stepped-up Chinese military activity, including almost daily air force flights into Taiwan's air defence zone, but not close to the island itself.

*--Reporting By Ben Blanchard and Yimou Lee in Taipei, and Yew Lun Tian and Tony Munroe in Beijing*

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## **INDO-PACIFIC**

### **19. Document reveals \$14 billion backlog of U.S. defense transfers to Taiwan**

Defense News Online, Apr. 14 (1058) | Bryant Harris

WASHINGTON -- Pandemic-related acquisition issues have sparked a backlog in the U.S. delivering \$14.2 billion worth of military equipment to Taiwan that the island has purchased since 2019.

With much of Washington's attention focused on how to rapidly deploy a steady stream of military aid to Ukraine, some lawmakers are concerned the Taiwan delay is undermining its ability to deter a potential Chinese invasion.

Rep. Steve Chabot, the top Republican on the House's Asia and Pacific panel, told Defense News that the Foreign Affairs Committee held a meeting to discuss the backlog last week.

"We need to make sure that we provide Taiwan with the assistance that they need as well so that they're not vulnerable to the [People's Republic of China]," the lawmaker from Ohio said. "Obviously Ukraine is in the limelight right now and rightfully so but we best not forget about Taiwan because China's actions have been more and more provocative."

Defense News has obtained a spreadsheet detailing the backlogged equipment, which includes Taiwan's \$8 billion purchase of 66 F-16 fighter jets as well as \$620 million to replace expiring components of its Patriot missile system.

The delayed deliveries also consist of smaller, asymmetric weapons systems Washington believes would be useful in deterring and thwarting a potential Chinese invasion. China considers the self-governing island a rogue province and has promised to bring it back under Beijing's control, by force if necessary.

Those asymmetric weapons include Stinger missiles, heavyweight torpedoes, high-mobility artillery rocket systems, Paladin howitzers, MS-110 reconnaissance pods and a field information communications system. They

also include \$2.37 billion in Harpoon Block II surface-launched missiles and \$1 billion in air-launched SLAM-ER missiles.

The \$14.2 billion backlog of sales accounts for the vast majority of the approximately \$17 billion in military equipment Taiwan agreed to purchase from the United States since July 2019. The U.S. State Department notified Congress of another \$95 million sale to provide contracting support for Taiwan's Patriot missile system just last week. (Foreign Military Sales notification figures represent potential arms sales that the State Department internally clears. They must then clear a congressional review period, during which costs and quantities can change.)

Neither the Defense Department nor Taiwan's diplomatic office in Washington replied to Defense News' request for comment about the backlog.

But Taiwan's envoy to the United States, Hsiao Bi-khim, raised the alarm bells on Capitol Hill last week in a bid to urge Washington to address the backlog.

Hsiao addressed it during a breakfast with Rep. Mike McCaul, R-Texas, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and pushed for Taiwan's inclusion alongside the U.S. and more than two dozen other participants in the biennial Rim of the Pacific naval exercises off the coast of Hawaii.

"Her biggest complaint to us is that while we have notified and signed off on these systems, they have yet to be delivered to Taiwan," McCaul told the State Department's No. 2 diplomat, Wendy Sherman, during a hearing last week on the Indo-Pacific region.

He likened Taiwan's position vis-a-vis China to that of Ukraine in the lead-up to the Russian invasion.

"Is Taiwan able to defend herself?" McCaul asked. "I think the answer is 'no' right now, and I'm worried about that. I don't want to make the same mistake of waiting until after an invasion because that's going to be too late."

However, it remains unclear what if anything the United States can do to address the pandemic-related acquisition issues that prompted the backlog.

"Our primary issue and we see this playing out in Ukraine also is that the industry has been delayed in the development of these systems," a Republican staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee told Defense News.

The staffer also noted the U.S. defense industry has attributed supply chain issues, staff shortages and shipping delays to COVID-19 problems that have cascaded into broader production troubles.

"Honestly, the bottom line is there is very little that the government can do at this juncture to address supply chain issues," Rupert Hammond-Chambers, the president of the US-Taiwan Business Council, told Defense News.

Hammond-Chambers pointed to the federal government's inability to address semiconductor supply chain issues that contributed to higher car prices around the globe.

"There's a great deal of political and international pressure to sort it out, but it's having almost negligible impact on the ability of the companies to produce the chip that is necessary for the auto industry," he said.

Prior to the backlog, Congress had largely remained focused on incentivizing Taiwan to make cheaper purchases consisting of large quantities of asymmetric munitions versus the more expensive, state-of-the-art weapons that China may quickly incapacitate during an invasion.

And while much of Taiwan's U.S. defense purchases bolster its asymmetric capabilities — including many of the backlogged articles — some in Washington raised their eyebrows in 2019 when Taipei opted to move ahead with a \$2 billion purchase of Abrams tanks.

"The United States encourages Taiwan to purchase weapons that will enable [it] to adopt a strategy of denial that will prevent China from being able to seize and control Taiwan, so that it will not have the confidence to do so and therefore will not be tempted to do so," Bonnie Glaser, the Asia Program director at the German Marshall Fund, told Defense News.

For instance, Chabot introduced a bill last year with Rep. Ami Bera, D-Calif., calling on Taiwan to further invest in asymmetric defense capabilities.

Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has also introduced a bill to authorize \$2 billion a year in Taiwanese military aid, but only if Taipei produces long-term plans for joint capability development with the United States.

Another bill, introduced by Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., would authorize \$3 billion in Taiwanese military aid annually. The bill would place more explicit requirements stipulating the funding go toward developing Taipei's asymmetric defense capabilities against China.

The Biden administration has also encouraged Taiwan to invest more in its asymmetric capabilities, even as many of those munitions remain backlogged.

"We are also encouraging Taiwan to focus on capabilities that would deter the [People's Republic of China] from taking Taiwan by force," Sherman said during her testimony before Congress last week. "This means a focus on capabilities that are cost-efficient, mobile, lethal, resilient and capable of operating and surviving a contested environment."

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## **20. Australia, US grapple with Solomon Islands tilt to China**

*A re-alignment of alliances for the Solomon Islands would change the military calculus of the southern Pacific. Should Chinese defense forces regularly visit, that would give them a base of operations about 1,200 miles from the eastern coast of Australia and smack in the middle of thousands of Pacific islands*

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 (1045) | Colin Clark

SYDNEY -- It's symbolic. The American embassy in Honiara, capital of the Solomon Islands, has been shuttered since 1993. Now, the US is scrambling to reopen as quickly as it can in the face of China's increasingly successful campaign to tighten relations with the tiny but incredibly strategic island state.

The latest sign of closer security relations with China came on April Fool's Day when a draft security agreement between the two countries was leaked. The pattern since the US Embassy closed in 1993 seems pretty clear: The Solomons decided to break relations with Taiwan in favor of the Peoples Republic of China in 2019. And now the prime minister — whose actions have sparked riots that threatened his government's stability — appears ready to sign a broadly worded agreement with China that would appear to grant China the right for its military ships to call, repair and resupply there and to send troops and police in the event of instability.

Ironically, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji did just that when Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's hold on power appeared unsteady in November last year and he asked Australia for help under a treaty the two nations signed in 2017. Australia sent troops and members of its highly trained Australian Federal Police to patrol and tamp down the disturbances. New Zealand also sent troops and police; about a dozen Kiwis remain in the Solomons.

This wasn't Australia's first Solomon rodeo. The bilateral, Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) started in 2003 in response to "prevailing atmosphere of lawlessness, widespread extortion, and ineffective police" and lasted 14 years. At its end the two countries inked the security treaty that underpins the most recent deployment. Ironically, a small group of Chinese police are already on the islands, training Solomon Islands police.

As soon as the draft agreement with China was leaked online it sparked a furor as its terms became clear, especially here. Since World War II, Australia has been arguably the principal economic and security partner of the Solomon Islands.

To get some idea of just what a shock the proposed agreement was, the defense minister of New Zealand, Peeni Henare, admitted he and his Australian counterpart, Peter Dutton, were "caught off guard."

"We were both surprised, because the intelligence we were getting didn't exactly match that," Henare said in a March 29 interview with the Kiwi website "stuff." He was in Australia meeting with Dutton. "We knew that there were some challenges there, with respect to China, but the leaked draft agreement ... it did catch me as a surprise, and even Minister Dutton."

Aside from the diplomatic shifts that are happening under Sogavare, what does all this mean for defense of the region?

First, there's the simple geography. Should Chinese defense forces regularly visit the Solomons, it would give them a base of operations about 1,200 miles from the eastern coast of Australia. If you look at the map of Oceania above, the implications should become instantly clear. China would have access to a crucial location from which to broaden its ambit throughout the entire Pacific island archipelago. As a reminder, the capital, Honiara, is on an island called Guadalcanal.

"A lot of things change in warfare. Not geography. Where ... Solomon Islands are matters. It did then and it does now," US Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger said Wednesday in an appearance at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra.

A top Australian commander said the agreement would "change the calculus" of operations in the Pacific.

"We would change our patrolling patterns and our maritime awareness activities," the chief of Joint Operations, Lt. Gen. Greg Bilton, told reporters on March 31. "They're in much closer to the Australian mainland obviously, and that would change the way we would undertake day-to-day operations, particularly in the air and in the sea."

A host of senior Australian leaders, including the minister for the Pacific, have asked or urged Sogavare to drop the agreement with China. The president of Melanesia, David Panuelo, raised the specter in a letter to the prime minister of a terrible war in the Pacific like the one that swept the islands during World War II. Senior US officials have cautioned the Solomon's leader against the agreement.

Attempting to rectifying the long period of diplomatic neglect, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the reopening of a US embassy in Honiara during a Feb. 12 visit to Fiji. There is a consulate there already.

Chinese officials have reacted with indignity to calls for scrapping the deal, saying that the Solomons are a sovereign country, no one should treat them like a colony and they have the right to decide their own relations.

Perhaps the best argument they've offered is this, from Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin on April 1 when the agreement was exposed: "China-Solomon Islands cooperation does not target any third party and is not in conflict with Solomon Islands' cooperation with other countries. Instead, it complements the existing regional cooperation mechanisms in a positive way."

All this is not an abstract exercise for Australia. Long history and interests have tied the Solomons and Australia together. And the Aussies have one special, more personal reason for their interest in the island's future: an AFP officer was shot and killed there in 2004 during a patrol, trying to help bring order to the Solomon Islands.

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## MIDDLE EAST

### **21. UN Envoy Sees Light At ‘End of the Tunnel’ in Yemen’s War**

Associated Press, Apr. 14 (1259) | Edith M. Lederer

UNITED NATIONS -- The U.N. special envoy for Yemen told the Security Council on Thursday that he believes there is “a light at the end of the tunnel” in the more than seven-year war in the Arab world’s poorest country.

But Hans Grundberg also warned that the two-month cease-fire underway in Yemen is fragile and that reports of military operations around the oil-rich central province of Marib should be addressed urgently.

Grundberg also said that during his first visit this week to Yemen's capital of Sanaa — held by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels — he received “reaffirmed commitment to all aspects of implementing the truce” and held “constructive conversations” on next steps to strengthen and expand it.

The two-month truce is the first nationwide cease-fire in six years in Yemen’s civil war, which erupted in 2014. That year, the Houthis seized Sanaa and forced the internationally recognized government into exile. The Saudi-led coalition entered the war in early 2015 to try to restore the government to power.

The conflict has in recent years become a regional proxy war that has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians. It has also created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

In his speech, Grundberg also welcomed the Yemeni government's newly formed presidential council, established last week when the country’s exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi stepped aside, saying it “reflects a broader array of political actors.”

He echoed a Security Council statement expressing the expectation that the presidential council “will form an important step towards stability and an inclusive Yemeni-led and owned political settlement under U.N. auspices.”

The truce is “broadly holding,” despite the reported military operations around Marib, he said in a video briefing. “There has been a significant reduction in violence and civilian casualties. There have been no confirmed airstrikes inside Yemen or cross-border attacks emanating from Yemen.”

A number of ships have already entered Yemen's main port of Hodeida, some carrying badly needed fuel, he said, and the U.N. and its partners are working to quickly resume commercial flights in and out of Sanaa airport.

Another priority, Grundberg added, is reopening roads in southern Taiz and other areas, to allow civilians on both sides of the front lines to go to work and school.

The truce is a rare opportunity “to pivot toward a peaceful future” in Yemen, he said, and the coming weeks will test the commitments by the government and the Houthis to de-escalate and uphold their agreement.

“This is a time to build trust and confidence,” Grundberg said. “Yemen will need the international community’s support as much as ever to maintain the momentum, and move toward finding an inclusive, peaceful and sustainable end to the conflict.”

U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths, the former U.N. envoy for Yemen, described the cease-fire as “incredibly important” and said it was already having a positive impact on the humanitarian situation though “millions of people in Yemen still urgently need humanitarian assistance to stay alive.”

Despite reports of limited clashes in a few areas, mainly in Marib and Taiz, “hostilities have dropped sharply across the country,” he said. “Civilian casualties have fallen to their lowest level in months, a major improvement after weeks of escalating conflict earlier this year.”

Griffiths said a \$3 billion economic support package from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, announced at a recent meeting of the regional Gulf Cooperation Council, “is extraordinarily welcomed.” He said it includes fuel support, development assistance, “and crucially a new \$2 billion deposit in Yemen’s central bank,” which will help stabilize the country.

Since the announcement of the truce, Griffiths said the value of Yemen’s currency, the rial, has recovered 25% of its value which means that food and other essential goods, nearly all of which must be imported, “should soon become more affordable for the people of Yemen.”

Griffiths said he’s often been accused of being too hopeful about Yemen, “but it’s true in this case.” This is “an extraordinary moment” to try to restore peace and “we must now seize” it, he said.

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## **AFRICA**

### **22. ‘Down With France’: Africa Wants Influence Of an Old Power Gone**

*Decades after independence, many African countries are increasingly troubled by the ongoing influence of their former colonial power*

New York Times, Apr. 15 (0300), Pg. A5 | Ruth Maclean

BAMAKO, Mali -- Many French guests came through the guesthouse where El Bachir Thiam worked as a security guard, a small oasis of greenery in busy Bamako, the capital of the West African country of Mali. They were friendly, usually, and he liked them.

But after he had welcomed them in, shown them to their rooms and reassured them that Bamako was safe, not the hotbed of terrorist activity it might seem from outside, he went back to his phone, where his activist WhatsApp groups were focused on one thing. Getting the French -- their businesses, diplomats and thousands of troops -- out of Mali.

Over the past few years there has been a sharp rise in criticism of France across its former colonies in Africa, rooted in a feeling that colonialist practices and paternalistic attitudes never really ended, and propelled by a tide of social media posts, radio shows, demonstrations and conversations on the street.

In Senegal, young people attending protests last year accused the president of being a puppet of the French president, Emmanuel Macron, who is currently vying for a second term. They smashed the windows of French gas stations and set fire to French supermarkets.

In Burkina Faso, as a coup d'état unfolded in January, tailors tore up French flags and pieced the tricolors back together horizontally to make Russian ones.

In Niger last November, after protesters shouting "Down with France!" tried to block a French military convoy, the soldiers opened fire. They killed two people, the Nigerien government said.

Nearly half of the countries in Africa were at one time French colonies or protectorates. Six decades after most of them gained independence, young people like Mr. Thiam -- born long after the colonial French departed -- are driving this uprising, tapping into a wealth of online information that older generations, often less educated and literate, never had access to, and trying to use it to promote change. And their elders are paying attention.

"There's a new awakening in sub-Saharan Africa that the world should know about," said El Hadj Djitteye, a Malian analyst who recently founded a think tank, the Timbuktu Center for Strategic Studies on the Sahel. "If a foreign minister makes a speech today, there's a group of young analysts that can look at it and say this paragraph is paternalist, that one is aggressive, this isn't diplomacy."

Though the tide of information they consume and share sometimes veers into misinformation, including unfounded rumors about France working with jihadists or stealing gold, much of the criticism in countries with ties to France is aimed at the perceived arrogance of the former colonial master. There have always been critiques of France, particularly in more educated, urban circles in West Africa, but now that almost everyone either owns a cellphone or knows somebody who does, these ideas have spread.

In Mali, where for almost a decade French soldiers who initially came at the invitation of the Malian government have tried and failed to stop the spread of armed Islamist groups, France stands accused of disrespecting Malians not just by activists like Mr. Thiam, but by the country's highest officials, including the prime minister.

“They want to humiliate us,” said Prime Minister Choguel Maiga in a recent speech which drifted into unfounded conspiracy theory. This kind of rhetoric has helped the military junta that seized power in 2020 retain huge popular support. “We’re not a people that submits.”

This is a stark turnaround from a decade ago. When jihadists took over its northern cities in 2012, Mali appealed to France for military help. And when French soldiers arrived, Malians greeted them as liberating heroes.

Now they are effectively being chased from the country. They are blamed for sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, aimed at trying to get the junta to commit to handing over power -- France is assumed to be the group’s puppet master.

The French are blamed for their failure to stop an insurgency that metastasized and spilled over Mali’s borders, destabilizing a vast stretch of arid territory known as the Sahel -- even though troops from Mali have also been fighting the insurgents and now stand accused of massacring hundreds of people together with their new partners, Russian mercenaries. The French are blamed, too, for their support of former rebel groups from the north considered by many in Mali’s powerful south to be no different than the jihadists.

The deteriorating security situation was one of the main things Mr. Thiam posted about on social media during his night shifts at the guesthouse. He built up a following of more than 35,000 friends and followers on Facebook at one point.

But he wasn’t just an online warrior: He co-founded an activist group, On A Tout Compris -- French for “We’ve Got it All Figured Out” -- which organized demonstrations outside the French embassy and targeted French-owned businesses like the petroleum company Total. Soon, he found he was having to duck out of his activist meetings early to get to work on time. Then he left the guesthouse job for full time activism.

His favorite trick was to post videos of himself burning the French flag on Facebook -- something that eventually got him banned from the social network, he said. (Facebook said that the burning of flags does not violate their policies, but he could have been banned for another reason). He said he posted pictures of dead French soldiers, labeling them “other terrorists,” just for shock value.

“We knew that was mean, but it was part of our battle plan,” he said.

French soldiers are now packing up in their bases, preparing to leave, while their leaders focus on their relationships with other, friendlier countries like Niger and Ivory Coast, where this month they will hold a training session with local troops, as they have done for years.

For years after African nations got independence, France maintained a web of political and business ties with its former colonies, often in effect propping up corrupt governments or dictators for its own benefit, a system widely known as Françafrique.

When Mr. Macron became president, it initially seemed that things would change. He promised to declassify secret files related to the assassination of Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso's revolutionary leader, killed in a putsch in which many suspect France played a role. He asked Rwanda for forgiveness over France's role in the genocide.

"I am from a generation that doesn't come to tell Africans what to do," he told students in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital, in 2017.

But this rang hollow in January 2020 when he summoned five African leaders to a summit, partly to disavow rising anti-French sentiment in their countries. To many of their citizens back home, Mr. Macron came across as insufferably arrogant.

And in Mali -- often, of late, the harbinger for the region, whether in terms of coups or destabilizing Islamist groups -- people felt that the arrogance just kept coming -- notably, in French ministers' condemnations of the military junta that overthrew the president, France's erstwhile ally, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

The relationship between the two countries broke down fast.

After France's foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, called the junta "illegitimate" and "out of control" in January, its ambassador in Bamako was instructed to leave.

On a recent afternoon at the embassy, the ambassador's spacious office was hushed, the only sign of him a photograph atop his office chair, where he jokingly propped it on his way out.

Many Malians still bristle at that "illegitimate" label: of course, they say, the junta was not elected. But many feel they have been failed by democracy as France conceives it, and that the junta speaks for them.

"Stop thinking we are inferior," said Pierre Togo, a former soldier, addressing France as he nursed a mango juice at a Bamako bar on a recent evening. "France is plotting, playing games, and Africans understand that now."

Across town, at a busy roundabout where vendors sold Malian flags, Lassina Keita, a mechanic, wiped oil-stained hands on his shirt, to which was clipped the source of all his information, a small yellow radio. "It's better to say thank you, and let them go," he said of the French.

But while these sentiments are common in the capital, some Malians from the north and center, where the insurgency is raging, see things differently.

In a quiet suburb of Bamako, Ami Walet Idrissa and Bintou Walet Abdou, both 22, chatted in Ami's house, its rough cinder block walls heating in the sun. They reminisced about their lives back home in Timbuktu, which

was taken by Islamist militants, after arms and men flooded into the country in the wake of Libya's descent into chaos.

"France helped Mali a lot," said Bintou.

"They're the ones who chased the jihadists out," Ami said.

When jihadists took over Timbuktu in 2012, Ami was 13. Her parents had fled, but she stayed behind with her siblings. One day, walking home after bathing in the river, armed men stopped Ami and her brother. Males and females were forbidden from walking together, they said -- siblings or not. They whipped them both, she said.

Both women worried about what would happen if the French left, but they never said so in public, even when people equated the French with jihadists, as they often did. Their opinions could invite trouble in Bamako.

Were France's harshest critics living in areas threatened by extremists or abusive military forces, rather than safely in Bamako, things could be different.

At the leafy guesthouse, one of Mr. Thiam's former co-workers was amused to hear what his old colleague was up to.

"Send him to Dogon country, let him hear a bit of gunfire," he said with a smile, referring to an area often attacked by the armed groups that France fought. "He'll run back yelling 'Vive la France!'"

*--Mamadou Tapily, Mohamed Ag Hamaleck and Mady Camara contributed reporting*

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### **23. U.S. State Dept. approves \$1 billion sale to Nigeria, delayed over human rights concerns**

Defense News Online, Apr. 14 (1637) | Joe Gould and Bryant Harris

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. State Department has cleared the sale of 12 AH-1Z Cobra attack helicopters to Nigeria worth nearly \$1 billion, apparently after U.S. lawmakers lifted objections over human rights concerns.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency on Thursday announced the sale of the helicopters and related defense systems to the Nigerian military. The package includes \$25 million for human rights-related training.

The sale includes the Bell-made Cobras; 28 General Electric-made T700-401C engines; 2,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems used to convert unguided missiles into precision-guided missiles; and night vision, targeting and navigation systems.

The case highlights the Biden administration's attempts to balance human rights concerns in the arms sale process.

Foreign Policy reported in July that the top Democrat and Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee delayed the sale amid concerns Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari was drifting toward authoritarianism. The country is facing multiple security challenges, including terrorism.

“Nigeria requires a fundamental rethink of the framework of our overall engagement,” committee Chairman Bob Menendez, D-N.J., told Secretary of State Antony Blinken during the diplomat’s testimony before the panel last year.

Menendez also tweeted that “the Nigerian government must get serious about security” after the militant group Boko Haram kidnapped more than 300 schoolboys in December 2020. The Nigerian government also ran afoul of the New Jersey Democrat in 2019 after arresting one of his constituents, Nigerian-American journalist Omoyele Sowore.

According to the announcement, \$25 million in the package will be dedicated to “institutional and technical assistance” to Nigeria’s military to continue its Air-to-Ground Integration program, which concerns targeting processes that are consistent with international humanitarian law and the laws of armed conflict.

“The proposed sale will better equip Nigeria to contribute to shared security objectives, promote regional stability and build interoperability with the U.S. and other Western partners,” the announcement read. “This sale will be a major contribution to U.S. and Nigerian security goals.”

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## **AIR FORCE**

### **24. Air Force’s nuclear modernization bill is cramping fighter jet procurement**

*‘Ideally, I’d like to get to higher [fighter procurement rates],’ Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown said. ‘If I had a big blank check, I’d actually take care of it all’*

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 (1443) | Valerie Insinna

WASHINGTON -- With two major nuclear programs ramping up, the Air Force had to make hard choices on fighter procurement in fiscal 2023, the Air Force’s top officer said.

After three budgets where Air Force fighter buying soared to heights of more than 60 aircraft per year, the service requested 33 Lockheed Martin F-35As and 24 Boeing F-15EXs in FY23, for a total of 57 jets.

Asked about the decision during a Tuesday roundtable with reporters, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown said the service had to prioritize keeping the B-21 Raider bomber and newly christened LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile on track.

“We’re doing something we’re doing once in a generation, and that’s recapitalizing our nuclear portfolio. The United States Air Force has two thirds of the nuclear triad, and 75% of the nuclear command and control and communications,” he said.

Brown acknowledged that the administration’s budget request was “pretty generous,” with a \$234 billion topline for the Department of the Air Force — more than the Army and Navy’s share of the pie. However, he said, the Air Force needs to balance its spending for new aircraft procurement with the demands of future modernization programs — both conventional and nuclear — as well as ensuring that current forces remain ready to meet combatant commander demands.

“Ideally, I’d like to get to higher [fighter procurement rates],” Brown said. “If I had a big blank check, I’d actually take care of it all.”

The Air Force wants to pare down to four combat aircraft types: the F-35, which will act as the “cornerstone” of the fighter fleet; the F-15EX, which can take on a role as a weapons truck and launch large hypersonic missiles; the F-22, which will eventually be replaced by the sixth-generation Next Generation Air Dominance; and the F-16, which will be continued to be modernized, Brown said.

However, questions remain about the ultimate makeup of the fighter fleet, when old combat aircraft will be retired and how quickly new airplanes will be purchased to make up for losses.

If Congress permits the Air Force to move forward with its divestment plans, the service will retire more legacy fighters in FY23 than the number of new fighters its getting. It plans to send 26 F-16C/Ds and 67 F-16C/Ds to the boneyard in FY23, a total of 93 aircraft.

Meanwhile, if the FY23 budget request is enacted at current levels, the Air Force’s fighter procurement number will be at its lowest point since FY19, the year before the service began buying the F-15EX.

When the service announced plans to begin buying the F-15EX in FY20, then-Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said that the Air Force needed to ramp fighter procurement up to 72 aircraft per year. The Air Force reached that mark in the FY21 budget before dropping to 60 fighters in FY22.

In its unfunded requirements list, the Air Force includes \$921 million to restore 7 F-35A models, which would bring the F-35 buy up to 40 jets in FY23. These aircraft would be Block 4 aircraft, purchased during Lot 17, the list notes.

That would be enough to push Air Force fighter procurement to 64 planes in the upcoming fiscal year. However, Brown noted that funding for readiness is a currently bigger priority for the service, topping the unfunded requirements list with a \$579 million sum for weapon system sustainment.

The worst case scenario, however, is if lawmakers decide to take funding from modernization and readiness accounts to pour into retaining old platforms like the old F-15s and F-16s the service is trying to mothball, he said.

“What I don’t want to necessarily do is take that money and put it back into buying and keeping platforms that we’re trying to retire, he said. “It doesn’t make move us forward, and it actually eats into our weapons systems sustainment and flying hour aircraft availability.”

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## **25. Air Force Academy expels 22 cadets for 2020 cheating scandal**

Military Times Online, Apr. 14 (1852) | Rachel S. Cohen

The U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado has expelled 22 students and put hundreds more on probation for cheating and plagiarism while learning from home in 2020, the school’s top officer said Wednesday.

In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, the Colorado Springs college decided to send all freshmen, sophomores and juniors home for the final months of the spring 2020 semester while seniors finished out their last year on campus.

The sudden switch to distance learning invited one of the most widespread spates of academic misconduct in the academy’s history. Away from campus, students sought help on unauthorized websites, plagiarized papers and collaborated on tests.

The vast majority of cadets who were suspected of cheating — 231 of the 245 students — admitted to their actions, according to a presentation given by USAFA Superintendent Lt. Gen. Richard Clark at an academy board meeting. That’s about 10% of the more than 4,000 cadets who attend the academy each year.

In total, 210 cadets were put on probation, which typically lasts six months, and 22 were kicked out. Probation typically involves suspending a student’s ability to leave campus, wear civilian clothes, participate in sports or other clubs and hold jobs, and requires journal entries and meetings for honor code-related discussions.

Seven were also found not to have violated academy rules. Three had their cases dropped, and two are awaiting a final decision.

This is the academy’s most complete accounting of the cheating’s fallout so far. The student-run process of meting out punishments was still underway when the school went public with the incident in January 2021. At the time,

one cadet had been expelled and one had resigned because of their misconduct, USAFA spokesperson Mike Slater said.

It became a wake-up call that the academy's honor code needed a fresh look for the first time in several years.

"We needed to ... step back and look at how we're developing our cadets and how we're helping to instill that 'living honorably' [piece]," Clark said.

Members of the USAFA community, including cadets, alumni and other constituencies, spent a few days fleshing out the main problems at hand and how to address them.

They settled on three priorities: emphasizing why living honorably is important at the academy and beyond; rebuilding trust in USAFA and each other; and rethinking how much and when to instill the school's core values throughout a student's four years there.

The group worried cadets weren't seeing the honor code consistently enforced, or that they didn't have enough positive role models on campus. Faculty and staff can play a bigger role in that regard, Clark said.

And, he added, the school has to give students time and space for personal growth. Lessons on honesty, integrity and hard work can start even earlier than when a cadet steps foot on campus, and are particularly important for setting freshmen up for success.

"We realize that everybody doesn't come from the same background. They don't have the same focus or view of living honorably, and we have to meet them where they are," Clark said. "Now, that doesn't mean that we have to accept where they are. But we have to ... help them to get where we need them to be."

USAFA has expanded its curriculum and staffing related to the honor code and updated its definition of tolerated behavior at the school, among other changes.

Clark hopes the updates are working: Honor code violations have dropped from 311 in the 2020-2021 school year to 44 in 2021-2022 — respectively the highest and lowest points since at least 2009.

But it's too soon to tell whether good behavior is a result of more obedient cadets or if people are being extra cautious following the latest crackdown.

"One positive thing is that our freshman class ... which normally has a pretty significant number of the honor cases, were much lower," Clark said. "In fact, they were lower than the upper class and usually it's the opposite. So that's one indicator that maybe we're making a difference."

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## ARMY

### **26. New data transport paths are making the Army more resilient and flexible**

FedScoop.com, Apr. 14 (1259) | Mark Pomerleau

The Army is looking to make the flow of its data more resilient in the face of complex adversaries seeking to deny it, the service's top IT official said Thursday.

CIO Raj Iyer noted that a key pillar of the Army's multi-cloud strategy is getting cloud capabilities to the tactical edge.

"We can't really solve this cloud problem, this multi-cloud problem, unless we also address the [data] transport issues," he said during a presentation at the Public Sector Innovation Summit, hosted by VMware and FedScoop. "One of the things that we have to acknowledge right up front is we're going to be in a highly contested environment. We're not going to have the bandwidth that we need. It's going to be interrupted [and] intermittent. It's going to be contested, and when that happens, your transport now becomes a problem."

Iyer indicated the importance of partnering with commercial satellite providers and cloud service providers to take advantage of Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) and Medium-Earth Orbit (MEO) satcom capabilities for a more resilient data transport architecture.

"We always thought, hey, what we build and what we own and what we deploy, is far more superior when it comes to supporting the warfighter than what's commercially available, when honestly, that's not true anymore," he said. "That integration of that transport and that backhaul back to more reliable transport using satellite communications is a game changer."

Leveraging these capabilities make U.S. military forces much more mobile and expeditionary than having to take a lot of tactical server infrastructure or cables with them when they deploy.

"One of the struggles that we've had when we deploy to the tactical edge is taking a bunch of hardware with us when we go. That is not making us expeditionary," Iyer said.

He pointed out that when the 82nd Airborne Division deployed to Poland at the onset of the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine, it had to do so at a moment's notice.

"If you're going to be carrying around a whole bunch of infrastructure with you and server stacks and miles and miles of cabling, you can just imagine how cumbersome that is. It hurts our maneuverability when we are stuck to tactical server infrastructure that we need to take with us," he said. "This is where, again, getting to that low form factor devices that's connected back to the cloud, being able to establish connectivity through LEO and

MEO in minutes rather than hours and days, is a huge game changer. We've been able to validate that, like I said, most recently here in Europe."

Iyer noted that the Army has been able to demonstrate the ability to transition battlefield applications and tools to the cloud, such as the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System, which is a fires command and control tool, and the Command Post Commuting Environment, a web-enabled system that consolidates current mission systems and programs into a single-user interface.

Just a couple of years ago, some observers of the Army might have thought "you'll never move any tactical application to the cloud, it's got to be like your traditional business systems and financial systems [and] HR systems," Iyer said. "Well guess what, we've already shown that we can now move these tactical applications to the cloud in forward deployed locations in the hands of the warfighter now, today. That's real, and so that's a huge game changer."

Getting the right data to the right entity at the right time is going to be crucial in future conflicts. Enabling cloud technologies, especially at the edge, is an important aspect to this.

Iyer referenced cloud as a warfighting platform and described the data flowing through it as ammunition.

"What we'll come to recognize is that our strategic advantage is truly by connecting data across all of these weapons system platforms, getting that as fast as we can to the tactical edge and in the hands of the commander and the soldier for decision making," Iyer said. "If we can do that, that's how we're going to achieve that strategic digital overmatch."

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## NAVY

### **27. U.S. Secretary of the Navy visits Fincantieri Marinette Marine**

FOX News 11 (Green Bay, WI), Apr. 14 (1808) | Charlee Rubesky

MARINETTE -- The U.S. Secretary of the Navy was in Marinette on Thursday.

He was checking in on several classes of ships being built for the Navy.

This comes after the Navy announced it wants to decommission 24 ships.

Nine of those are Freedom Class Littoral Combat Ships, all built by Fincantieri Marinette Marine.

“Many of those ships are already beyond their extended service life as well too. There are some ships such as the LCS class, they’re below their extended service life. Unfortunately because of the challenges that we’ve had specifically related to the ASW module on them, it does need for them to be replaced earlier than expected,” U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro said.

ASW stands for Anti-Submarine Warfare.

That capability was canceled in the new budget.

The Freedom-class ships also suffer from a defect that would be costly to repair.

“We make major investments in modernization. Those investments are important. But just like every new piece of technology, sometimes things work out, sometimes they don’t work out,” Del Toro said.

Fincantieri Marinette Marine CEO Mark Vandroff says the Navy is his customer, and it has the right to employ the ships as it sees fit.

“It’s our job as a shipbuilder when the Navy gives us a contract to build the ship that’s in the contract. And we have to stay focused on that,” Vandroff said.

The Navy is still planning to use the remaining LCS’ being built at Marinette Marine.

“So my plan is to continue to very aggressively use those ships throughout the entire globe, wherever they’re needed,” Del Toro said.

Fincantieri Marinette Marine says the company is executing three programs, the remaining Littoral Combat Ships, four ships for the Royal Saudi Navy, and the Constellation Class Frigates.

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## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **28. Arming for the Next Fight in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15 (0200), Pg. A14 | Editorial

Ukraine won the battle of Kyiv in heroic fashion, but the war is set to enter a bloody new phase as Vladimir Putin prepares an offensive in the east. The question is whether President Biden will summon the mettle to make sure America’s friends win.

The Biden Administration on Wednesday announced \$800 million more in weapons, ammunition and other security assistance for Ukraine, calling it “tailored to the wider assault we expect Russia to launch in eastern Ukraine.” The awful images coming out of Mariupol are a sign of what is to come, and the miracle is that the city’s defenders have managed to hold out as long as they have. Mr. Putin said this week that peace talks have reached a dead end.

The terrain in the eastern part of the country is a “bit like Kansas,” as the Pentagon put it, more open and less amenable to, say, the supply ambushes the Ukrainians have been running in the north. The Russians are reinforcing their combat power, and they can concentrate it in a smaller area. The Russian supply and morale problems won’t disappear overnight, but Mr. Putin has appointed a single commander with experience in Syria. Expect him to organize a ruthless campaign.

This means tougher fighting, long on artillery and missiles, and the Ukrainians will need heavier weapons and equipment. Wednesday’s package includes 18 155mm Howitzers and 40,000 rounds, and this artillery will be put to productive use. Ditto for 10 counter-artillery radars, two air surveillance radars and 200 armored personnel carriers.

One bad sign is that the Biden Team wobbled before deciding to send 11 Mi-17 helicopters, though the U.S. has provided this type of aircraft before. Ukraine also wants and needs multiple-launch rocket systems, which don’t appear on the U.S. list. This suggests U.S. decisions are still governed to a puzzling extent by fear of crossing Mr. Putin.

Ukrainian antiship capabilities need upgrading, but the latest Biden package includes only unmanned coastal defense vessels. The Ukrainians claim to have hit the Russian cruiser Moskva, though the Russians blame a fire aboard the ship. The smoking ship is a humiliation to the Russian navy, and Ukraine is doing the U.S. and NATO a great favor by offering to sink these Black Sea assets.

The Ukrainians still need long-range air defenses, and these deals need to move faster than the weeks it took to deliver Slovakia’s S-300. There is a question of urgency and will about U.S. deliveries. The White House announced the U.S. would send 100 Switchblade loitering munitions on March 16. The Pentagon said on Wednesday -- April 13 -- that the last of these would enter Ukraine “over the course of the next day.”

The Biden package this week promises more Switchblades, which may be helpful in the east because they can strike targets from a distance. But they’ll be less useful if they arrive in a month. And it’ll take much more effort to get heavier stuff like artillery to the front fast.

More broadly, the U.S. and NATO need to shift from sending Ukraine whatever is on the shelf to a more coordinated effort to train and equip a Ukrainian military that may be fighting for years. This means training the Ukrainians on more complex NATO weapons, such as Patriot missile defenses and fighter aircraft.

The Ukrainians need to prevent Russian domination of the skies. The American military trains plenty of foreign military pilots, and starting now means the Ukrainian pilots could fly NATO aircraft as the war drags on.

Western training since Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 has been crucial in helping the Ukrainians mount the impressive defense they have so far, and this is no time to slow down. That ought to include setting up maintenance and repair shops in NATO countries, as facilities in Ukraine are Russian targets.

The paradox of President Biden's response in Ukraine is that he has been too casual with words like "genocide," as he was again this week, while he's also too hesitant to offer the lethal weapons Ukrainians need to win.

Mr. Putin could still succeed in swallowing parts of Ukraine, and he'll use his gains to keep threatening the country's existence. The fastest end to the human suffering is to confront the Russian dictator with the gradual destruction of his military if he continues this war of conquest. Mr. Putin cares more about that than he does moral denunciations.

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## **29. Ukraine Is Draining America's Arsenal of Democracy**

Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 14 (0900) | Hal Brands

America is following an "arsenal of democracy" strategy in Ukraine: It has avoided direct intervention against the Russian invaders, while working with allies and partners to provide the Kyiv government with money and guns.

That strategy, reminiscent of U.S. support for Britain in 1940-41, has worked wonders. Yet as the war reaches a critical stage, with the Russians preparing to consolidate their grip on eastern Ukraine, the arsenal of democracy is being depleted.

That could cause a fatal shortfall for Ukrainian forces in this conflict, and it is revealing American weaknesses that could be laid bare in the next great-power fight.

Of all the support the U.S. and its friends have provided Ukraine, arms have mattered the most. Deliveries of drones, antitank and anti-aircraft weapons, ammunition and other capabilities have helped Ukraine wreak havoc on Russian forces even as Moscow has pummeled the country's industrial base.

General Mark Milley, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress that the West has delivered 60,000 antitank weapons and 25,000 anti-aircraft weapons to Kyiv. The Pentagon is now laying plans to rush additional artillery, coastal defense drones and other materiel to Ukraine. The White House on Wednesday announced a new \$800 million package including helicopters and armored personnel carriers.

But President Joe Biden never planned for a war like this. The assumption was that Russia would quickly conquer much of the country, so the U.S. would be supporting a simmering, low-intensity Ukrainian insurgency. Instead, Ukraine's successful resistance has led to an ongoing, high-intensity conventional fight, with prodigious consumption of munitions and intense attrition of key military assets.

Pentagon officials say that Kyiv is blowing through a week's worth of deliveries of antitank munitions every day. It is also running short of usable aircraft as Russian airstrikes and combat losses take their toll. Ammunition has become scarce in Mariupol and other areas.

This is presenting Western countries with a stark choice between pouring more supplies into Ukraine or husbanding finite capabilities they may need for their own defense.

Germany has declined to transfer tanks to Ukraine on grounds that it simply cannot spare them. Canada quickly ran short on rocket launchers and other equipment that the Ukrainians desperately need. The U.S. has provided one-third of its overall stockpile of Javelin anti-tank missiles. It cannot easily deliver more without leaving its own armories badly depleted — and it may take months or years to significantly ramp up production.

Before the U.S. entered World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt and his military advisers engaged in intense debates about whether the U.S. should rush weapons to a beleaguered Britain or hang onto them in case America had to defend itself. Biden's arsenal-of-democracy strategy is reaching a similar inflection point in Ukraine.

Kyiv will require far more Western support to beat back Russian forces gathering in the east, where relatively open terrain is less favorable to the defense. It will also need more sophisticated weapons, such as tanks and aircraft, to deny Russia a decisive advantage — and perhaps take the offensive if Moscow's eastern offensive falters. Stout Ukrainian resistance has given Kyiv a reasonable chance of winning this war, but the cost of any victory, in equipment no less than lives, will be astounding.

For the same reason, the war in Ukraine is a sobering preview of the problems the U.S. itself would face in a conflict against Russia or China. If forced to go to war in Eastern Europe or the Western Pacific, Washington would spend down its stockpiles of missiles, precision-guided munitions and other critical capabilities in days or weeks. It would probably suffer severe losses of tanks, planes, ships and other assets that are sophisticated, costly and hard to replace.

During World War I, the offensives of 1914 led to "shell famine" as the European combatants exhausted their arsenals. Get ready for "missile famine" if there is a great-power war.

In the world wars of the last century, America's unmatched manufacturing base ultimately powered it to victory. But today, replenishing the free world's arsenal might not be so easy.

American economic leadership is no longer based primarily on manufacturing. Shortages of machine tools, skilled labor and spare production capacity could slow a wartime rearmament effort. The U.S. can't quickly scale up production of Stinger missiles for Ukraine, for example, because the workforce needed to do so no longer exists.

American stockpiles of key weapons are smaller than one might imagine, partly because of production constraints and partly because most of the Pentagon's roughly \$750 billion budget goes to manpower, health care and things other than bullets and bombs.

Don't bet against the world's leading economy — and all of its democratic allies — in a long war. But don't think that America would effortlessly produce what it needs to win.

The problem isn't insoluble. Greater investments in the defense industrial base and more aggressive purchasing and stockpiling of key munitions can help. The creation of a reserve industrial corps (civilians who have basic peacetime training so they can contribute to wartime production) is worth exploring. Key allies, such as Japan, may be able to help the U.S. surge production in shipbuilding and other areas.

Small wars typically preview what is to come in bigger wars. The Ukraine conflict is showing what it will take to keep the arsenal of democracy equal to the task.

*--Hal Brands is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist, the Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, and a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Most recently, he is the author of "The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us About Great-Power Rivalry Today"*

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### **30. Seize Russian yachts, jets and Picassos. Then use the money to help Ukraine**

***We've introduced legislation that would give President Joe Biden the authority to seize Russian assets and give increased support to Ukraine***

USA Today Online, Apr. 14 (1922) | Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-NJ)

The split screen is stomach-turning: In Ukraine, Vladimir Putin's rockets fall on fleeing refugees, missiles gash occupied apartment buildings and hospitals, and civilians huddle in metro stations as bombs fall above.

Outside Ukraine, mega-yachts ferry Russian oligarchs between tropical islands, private jets shuttle them to ski vacations and priceless art adorns the walls of their villas.

Putin's enablers — and even members of his family — live abroad in laundered luxury off the wealth they stole with his permission.

Now imagine those mega-yachts commandeered, the private jets grounded and requisitioned, and the high-priced art whisked off to auction from the seized villas – with the proceeds used to aid the Ukrainian people. That would be a fitting use of the money that built the army besieging their nation.

### *Freeze and seize*

Some nations have already started this work:

Under current law, the United States and our allies can generally “block” or freeze such assets – temporarily denying sanctioned oligarchs and companies their use – but not seize them outright.

We believe an exception should be made for Russia following Putin’s murderous invasion of Ukraine, given the clear evidence that sanctioned oligarchs made their billions thanks to corrupt relationships with the Russian government and the likely massive cost of reconstructing Ukraine when Russia’s armies are beaten back.

It is hard to imagine giving Putin’s cronies their stolen assets back after the harm they helped him cause. And a half-billion-dollar yacht could rebuild a lot of schools, hospitals and apartment buildings in Ukraine.

So with bipartisan support, we have introduced legislation in the House and Senate to give the Biden administration the authority, limited to two years, to seize sanctioned Russians’ assets and to use them to support humanitarian, military and reconstruction aid to Ukraine.

This would give the United States a powerful new tool to punish – or leverage cooperation from – the wealthy and powerful Russians who have supported Putin’s regime while giving Ukrainians a small measure of justice. There are even signs that the European Union and European allies are exploring options to confiscate assets of sanctioned Russian kleptocrats.

Putin and his cronies are nothing special – they just happen to run a big, oil-rich country with a military at their command. We’ve long known, as Sen. John McCain often used to say, that “Putin is a gangster, with an army, running a gas station.”

Yet for far too long, the United States and our European allies have been complicit in the kleptocracy that Putin built. We’ve allowed his cronies the best of both worlds: They steal money at home, where there is no rule of law, and then shelter it in jurisdictions like New York, Paris and London behind rule-of-law protections.

In those wealthy enclaves, kleptocrat money has enriched lawyers, trust fund managers, real estate brokers and art dealers, while driving up costs for everyone else.

### *Congress must act*

That strengthens the moral case for taking the extraordinary measures we propose. Those efforts will be complicated and must be well funded: We should fully fund, for example, the Treasury Department’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, which tracks the movement of dirty money around the world. We passed a limited boost in the Ukraine funding package, but FinCEN needs more.

We will also need to coordinate closely with allies to close off sanctuaries for oligarchs and collect the evidence needed to justify asset seizures. The Biden administration has announced a transatlantic, interagency task force to help find and crack down on ill-gotten assets stowed in the West by Russian oligarchs, their families and their stooges. That is a good start and something Congress will need to oversee and expand.

Putin’s Ukraine invasion must result in a decisive, strategic defeat for his regime, its enablers and what they stand for. As Ukraine battles the onslaught, ordinary Ukrainians – and Russians – should see oligarchs’ yachts, jets and Picassos auctioned off. They should see police tape around oligarch villas and penthouse apartments.

These goods and properties should not automatically be returned to their corrupt owners when the crisis is over. The wealth that supported Putin’s regime should be used to rebuild the country he is destroying.

*--Sheldon Whitehouse is a U.S. senator from Rhode Island. U.S. Rep. Tom Malinowski represents New Jersey’s 7th District in the House of Representatives*

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### **31. With the West distracted, China expands**

Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A21 | Josh Rogin

Over the past few weeks, the world has been understandably transfixed by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s horrific invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, though, his close ally Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quietly taking advantage of the West’s distraction by expanding China’s sphere of influence in the South Pacific. If Washington doesn’t wake up to this threat, China’s efforts to dominate the region will gain dangerous and perhaps irreversible momentum.

Officials and experts throughout Asia expressed shock last month when a leaked document emerged showing a draft of a “security cooperation” agreement between China and the Solomon Islands, a small former British colony in the South Pacific that has been independent since 1978. The draft agreement would enable Beijing to send armed police or military personnel, at the request of the Solomon Islands, for a variety of purposes, including to “assist in maintaining social order.” Marked confidential, the agreement would also expand the Chinese military’s ability to send ships and troops to protect Chinese people and projects on the islands.

If you haven’t been paying attention to the Solomon Islands government, led by Beijing-friendly Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, you’re like most policymakers in Washington. But if you doubt the islands’ strategic

significance, just look at the map. A Chinese military presence there would put People's Liberation Army troops less than a five-hour flight from the eastern coast of Australia and far closer to U.S. territories than ever before.

China surely hasn't forgotten the role played by the Solomon Islands in World War II, especially during the 1942-43 Battle of Guadalcanal.

"Ensuring that these islands, within striking distance of Australia and occupying critical strategic geography, remain free from Chinese coercion and military presence is a massive strategic imperative for the U.S. and Australia," Alex Gray, director for Oceania and Indo-Pacific Security at the National Security Council during the Trump administration, told me.

Predictably, Beijing says that the agreement is no big deal and is "beyond reproach." But the U.S. and Australian governments have been scrambling to try to stop its completion. Australian officials are engaged in frantic shuttle diplomacy with the Sogavare government. President Biden's top NSC official for Asia, Kurt Campbell, will become the administration's first senior official to visit the Solomon Islands next week, in a regional tour that will include several other stops.

It was Campbell who predicted in January that China would unveil a "strategic surprise" in the Pacific this year. Clearly, the U.S. and Australian governments had some indication that this was coming. Yet neither seems to have done much to try to prevent the Chinese move. Now, experts say, both governments are struggling to catch up to Beijing.

"Reversing momentum, rather than stopping it in the first place, is risky and expensive," said former Australian national security official John Lee, now with the Hudson Institute. "The failure to do more to prevent the deal from even being contemplated means the U.S. and allies will need to spend more resources and regional political capital than they would like."

Biden administration officials maintain that they are, in fact, heavily engaged in the Pacific Islands. Biden spoke to Pacific Island leaders in August, via Zoom. Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Fiji in February. Last month, Biden appointed Ambassador Joseph Yun as a special envoy to work on completing negotiations to renew U.S. compacts with three other Pacific Island nations. State Department climate envoy John F. Kerry attended a conference in Palau this week.

A senior Biden administration official told me that covid restrictions hampered face-to-face diplomacy until recently, but the official assured me that the Biden team is determined to step up the United States' game in this region. Nevertheless, details of exactly how the Biden administration plans to try to persuade Sogavare to turn away from China are scarce.

"This did not come as a surprise, and this is not the only place in the Pacific or globally where China is extraordinarily active," the official said. "This is but a recent manifestation, and it's probably one of the boldest."

To be sure, the Solomon Islands is only one of many places in the Pacific Islands where China is expanding its influence. Beijing has persuaded two Pacific island countries to drop diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in recent years, including the Solomon Islands. China offers tempting packages of economic, diplomatic and military aid while bribing any and all corrupt leaders in these countries. Rather than reacting case by case, the United States and allied governments need to come to the table with substantive, long-term offers of aid and investment to reassure these Pacific Island nations that they have another option besides betting their future on partnership with Beijing.

Russia is an urgent threat, but China is the more serious long-term competitor, only too happy to exploit our distraction. Xi has global ambitions, which means we must confront his aggression in many places at once. If the Pacific Islands become China's outposts, the region and the world will be a much more dangerous place.

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### **32. The battle against ISIS, yesterday's war, still smolders**

Washington Post, Apr. 15 (0115), Pg. A19 | David Ignatius

AL-HOL, Syria -- The Islamic State, which seemed to be extinguished three years ago when its caliphate was crushed, is still smoldering red hot at a refugee camp here and a prison nearby. And the Syrian Kurdish militia that's guarding the facilities says it badly needs help before there's a new eruption.

The battle against ISIS, as the Islamic State is also known, is yesterday's war, and it gets little public attention. But the danger of a resurgence was evident Wednesday when Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, the new head of the U.S. Central Command, toured the two facilities in northeast Syria. He's the first senior military official to inspect either place.

Kurilla traveled to Syria as the final stop on his first trip to the Middle East since becoming commander of U.S. military forces in the region on April 1, and he invited me to come along. He wanted to assess the risks here to U.S. interests, and he came away with a vivid firsthand picture of the continuing problem of containing what's left of ISIS.

Kani Ahmed, the local commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces militia that's securing the al-Hol refugee camp, described to Kurilla a March 28 uprising by Islamic State supporters inside the fences. Fighters attacked with rocket-propelled grenades, AK-47s and pistols that had been smuggled into the facility. As the fighting raged, four people were killed and 10 wounded, according to local news reports.

"This camp is like a time bomb," Ahmed told the visiting Americans. "We don't know when it's going to explode."

The al-Hol camp is a miserable sight: acres of dirty, ragged tents and primitive water and sewage facilities. It currently houses about 56,000 people, roughly 70 percent of them under age 18. Many are families of Islamic State fighters who were killed or captured in the war, and judging by their angry faces inside the wire, they live on rage and dreams of revenge. One threw a rock at Kurilla's armored vehicle as it drove past.

If you wanted to design a breeding ground for future Islamist militants, it would be al-Hol. Nearly 8,000 of the residents came from countries other than Syria or Iraq, but those nations have mostly ignored repatriation requests. "The countries don't want them back, and they're not doing anything to help," said the SDF official who oversees the foreigners, who identified herself only as Amara.

"The world needs to know what's going on here," Kurilla told me after we left the camp. He said the U.S. military is already working to improve security at the camp. He also wants to help the State Department organize an international response that would return families of Islamic State foreign fighters to their home countries - and take some of the burden from the SDF militia.

Kurilla next flew by helicopter to the Hasakah prison, about 40 miles away, where he heard a chilling account of a violent escape there four months ago by several thousand captives, assisted by fighters outside, that left hundreds dead. The eyewitness description was provided by local SDF commanders and U.S. Special Operations advisers who fought in the bloody battle.

The Centcom commander heard the narrative as he gazed from a rooftop at the prison blocks below. The U.S. and Syrian officers explained that on Jan. 20, about 10 ISIS fighters entered the compound in a carefully planned attack, blowing through the walls with two truck bombs and raiding the SDF's armory. They then distributed weapons to some of the roughly 5,000 captives, and about 3,700 escaped.

American troops rushed to help the SDF stop the fleeing detainees. The battle raged for 10 days, as the United States called in Bradley armored vehicles, fighter jets and Apache helicopters to contain the escape. About 3,000 prisoners finally surrendered on Jan. 30, but 421 Islamic State supporters were killed, along with 125 SDF troops, 25 of whom were beheaded, according to one of the American military advisers. About 100 Islamic State fighters got away, whereabouts unknown.

"That's an ISIS army in detention," Kurilla said as he gazed at the prison complex 100 yards away. The spasm of violence by the escapees, including the beheadings and what a U.S. Special Operations adviser here said were other horrific mutilations, is a reminder of what Islamic State fighters might do outside captivity.

The SDF is carrying the burden of running a total of 28 prisons, of which Hasakah is the largest, that house about 12,000 captured Islamic State fighters and supporters. "What's needed is repatriation en masse," the Special Operations adviser told me. But as with the Islamic State families at al-Hol, other nations have mostly shrugged their shoulders at repatriation requests.

“The SDF needs very big help,” Mazlum Adli, the Syrian Kurdish group’s top leader, told me in a brief interview later, after he had met with Kurilla. The commander said he needed more training and equipment, and that the support he was getting now was only about 20 percent of what he needed.

Kurilla saw another threat to U.S. forces in Syria during a separate visit Monday to a joint American-SDF base called Green Village, near Deir El-Zoor. The base was hit the night of April 7 by two explosions, and four U.S. soldiers were wounded. The U.S. military initially described the strike as a rocket attack, and analysts suspected it came from an Iranian-backed militia, posing a question for Biden administration officials back in Washington of whether and how to retaliate.

But U.S. commanders at Green Village told Kurilla on Monday that after examining video recordings, they now believed that the blasts were caused by explosive devices planted by someone - affiliation, so far, unknown - who entered the base.

Iran and its proxies remain a threat. So does the Islamic State. As much as we would like to imagine otherwise, wars in the Middle East aren’t over even when they’re over.

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### **33. As Silicon Valley Tries to Enlist, the Pentagon Strangles Innovation**

WarOnTheRocks.com, Apr. 15 (0345) | Steve Blank

Looking at a satellite image of Ukraine online, I realized it was from Capella Space — one of our Hacking for Defense student teams who now have seven satellites in orbit. Hacking for Defense is a university course I and others created to connect students interested in learning lean innovation methods to solve the toughest national-security challenges.

They’re not the only startup in this fight. An entire wave of new startups and scaleups are providing satellite imagery and analysis, satellite communications, and unmanned aerial vehicles supporting Ukraine’s struggle.

For decades, satellites that took detailed pictures of Earth were only available to governments and the high-resolution images were classified. Today, commercial companies have their own satellites providing unclassified imagery. The government buys and distributes commercial images from startups to supplement their own and shares them with Ukraine as part of a broader intelligence-sharing arrangement that the head of Defense Intelligence Agency described as “revolutionary.”

At the onset of the war in Ukraine, Russia launched a cyber attack on Viasat’s KA-SAT satellite, which supplies internet across Europe, including to Ukraine. In response to a (tweeted) request from Ukraine’s vice prime minister, Elon Musk’s Starlink satellite company shipped thousands of its satellite dishes and got Ukraine back on the internet. Other startups are providing portable cell towers — both “backpackable” and fixed. When these connect via satellite link, they can provide phone service and Wi-Fi.

Drone technology was initially only available to national governments and militaries. In Ukraine, drones from startups are being used as automated delivery vehicles for resupply, and for tactical reconnaissance to discover where threats are.

Equipment from large military contractors and other countries are also part of the effort. However, the equipment listed above is available commercially at dramatically cheaper prices than what's offered by the large existing defense contractors, and developed and delivered in a fraction of the time.

While we should celebrate the organizations that have created and fielded these systems, they illustrate much larger issues in the Department of Defense.

America's national security is inexorably intertwined with commercial technology, such as drones, AI, machine learning, autonomy, biotech, cyber, quantum, high-performance computing, and commercial access to space.

Most of these companies were founded or funded by the Defense Department's orphan-child — the Defense Innovation Unit. Established in Silicon Valley in 2015 by then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, the organization has offices in Austin, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. This is the one defense organization with the staffing and mandate to go head-to-head with any startup or scaleup. The Defense Innovation Unit is America's most promising effort to bridge the divide between pressing national security requirements and the commercial technology needed to address them with speed and urgency. This capability is exactly what the Department of Defense needs. It accelerates the connection of commercial technology to the military. Just as importantly, the Defense Innovation Unit helps the department learn to innovate at the same speed as tech-driven companies.

China views combining its military-civilian sectors as a national effort to develop a "world-class" military and become a world leader in science and technology. A key part of Beijing's strategy includes developing and acquiring advanced dual-use technology.

Given that the Defense Innovation Unit is the Department of Defense's most successful organization in developing and acquiring advanced dual-use technology, one would expect the department to scale the Defense Innovation Unit. The threats are too imminent and stakes too high not to. So what happened?

Congress cut the budget by 20 percent.

Why? The defense ecosystem is at a turning point. Defense innovation threatens entrenched interests. Given that the Pentagon budget is essentially fixed, creating new vendors and new national champions of the next generation of defense technologies becomes a zero-sum game.

The traditional suppliers of defense tools, technologies, and weapons — the prime contractors and federal labs — are no longer the leaders in next-generation technologies such as drones, AI, machine learning, autonomy, biotech,

cyber, quantum, high-performance computing, and commercial access to space. They know this and know that weapons that can be built at a fraction of the cost and upgraded via software will destroy their existing business models.

Venture capital and startups have spent 50 years institutionalizing the rapid delivery of disruptive innovation. In the United States, private investors spend \$300 billion a year to fund new ventures that can move with the speed and urgency that the Department of Defense now requires. The Pentagon's relationship with startups and commercial companies, already an arms-length one, is hindered by a profound lack of understanding about how the commercial innovation ecosystem works and its failure of imagination about what it could do.

The department has world-class people and organization for a world that no longer exists.

A radical reinvention of America's civil-military innovation relationship is necessary if it wants to keep abreast of its adversaries. This would use Department of Defense funding, private capital, dual-use startups, existing prime contractors and federal labs in a new configuration along the following lines.

Create a new defense ecosystem encompassing startups and mid-sized companies at the bleeding edge, prime contractors as integrators of advanced technology, federally funded research-and-development centers refocused on areas not covered by commercial tech (nuclear and hypersonics come to mind). Make it permanent by creating innovation doctrine and policy.

Create new national champions in dual-use commercial tech areas such as AI, machine learning, quantum, space, drones, autonomy, biotech, underwater vehicles, shipyards, etc., that are not the traditional vendors. Do this by picking winners. Don't give out door prizes. Contracts should be larger than \$100 million so high-quality venture-funded companies will play.

Integrate and create incentives for the venture-capital and private-equity ecosystem to invest at scale. Ask them what it would take to invest at scale — one example might be to create massive tax holidays and incentives — to get investment dollars in technology areas of national interest.

Recruit and develop leaders across the Defense Department prepared to meet contemporary threats and reorganize around this new innovation ecosystem. The threats, speed of change, and technologies the United States faces in this century will require radically different mindsets and approaches than those it faced in the 20th century. Today's Department of Defense leaders of consequential organizations must think and act differently than their predecessors, even their predecessors from only a decade ago. Leaders at every level now need to understand the commercial ecosystem and how to move with the speed and urgency that China is setting.

Buy where you can; build where you must. Congress mandated that the Department of Defense should use commercial off-the-shelf technology wherever possible, but the department fails to do this. (See this industry letter to the Department of Defense for more details.)

Acquire at speed. Today, the average Department of Defense major acquisition program takes anywhere from nine to 26 years to get a weapon in the hands of a warfighter. The department needs a requirements, budgeting, and acquisition process that operates at commercial speed (18 months or less), which is 10 times faster than its current procurement cycles. Instead of writing requirements, the department should rapidly assess solutions and engage warfighters in assessing and prototyping commercial solutions.

Coordinate with allies. Expand the National Security Innovation Base to an Allied Security Innovation Base. Source commercial technology from allies.

Change is hard — especially on the people and organizations inside the Department of Defense who've spent years operating with one mindset only to be asked to pivot to a new one. But America's adversaries have exploited the boundaries and borders between its defense and commercial and economic interests. Current approaches both in the past and under the current administration to innovation across the government are piecemeal, incremental, increasingly less relevant, and insufficient. It's a politically impossible problem for the Defense Department to solve alone. Changes at this scale will require congressional action: hard to imagine in the polarized political environment. But not impossible.

These are not problems of technology. It takes imagination, vision, and the willingness to confront the status quo. So far, all are currently lacking. But if more can be found, we may see more successes like those seen in Ukraine.

*--Steve Blank is an adjunct professor at Stanford and a founding member at Stanford's Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation. Steve consults for the national security establishment on innovation methods, processes, policies, and doctrine*

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### **34. The Cyber-Escalation Fallacy**

#### ***What the War in Ukraine Reveals About State-Backed Hacking***

Foreign Affairs Online, Apr. 15 (0107) | Erica D. Lonergan

During a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in March, Senator Angus King, an independent from Maine, pressed General Paul Nakasone, the head of U.S. Cyber Command and director of the National Security Agency, about the lack of significant cyber-operations in Russia's war in Ukraine. After all, Russia has long been known for targeting Western countries, as well as Ukraine itself, with cyberattacks. Echoing the surprise of many Western observers, King said, "I expected to see the grid go down, communications too, and that hasn't happened." Indeed, although President Joe Biden and members of his administration have also warned of potential Russian cyberattacks against the United States, there were remarkably few signs of such activity during the first six weeks of the war.

That is not to say that cyber-activity has been entirely absent. Proxy cyber-groups and hackers have mobilized on both sides, ranging from Ukraine's 400,000-strong "IT Army" to Russia's Conti ransomware group. Sandworm, an outfit linked to Russian military intelligence, also has a long record of cyberattacks against Ukraine.

Yet since the war began, such operations have mostly been limited to low-cost, disruptive incidents rather than large-scale attacks against critical civilian and military infrastructure. Two potential exceptions only underscore the relatively limited role of cyber-operations. There is some evidence that at the start of the war Russian-linked actors conducted a cyberattack against Viasat, a U.S.-based Internet company that provides satellite Internet to the Ukrainian military and to customers in Europe. But the impact was temporary and, more important, did not meaningfully affect the Ukrainian military's ability to communicate. Additionally, Ukrainian officials recently announced that, in early April, the Sandworm group attempted, but failed, to carry out a cyberattack against Ukraine's power grid. While the hackers appeared to have gained access to a company that delivers power to two million Ukrainians, they were thwarted by effective defenses before being able to cause any damage or disruption.

In fact, the negligible role of cyberattacks in the Ukraine conflict should come as no surprise. Through war simulations, statistical analyses, and other kinds of studies, scholars have found little evidence that cyber-operations provide effective forms of coercion or that they cause escalation to actual military conflict. That is because for all its potential to disrupt companies, hospitals, and utility grids during peacetime, cyberpower is much harder to use against targets of strategic significance or to achieve outcomes with decisive impacts, either on the battlefield or during crises short of war. In failing to recognize this, U.S. officials and policymakers are approaching the use of cyberpower in a way that may be doing more harm than good—treating cyber-operations like any other weapon of war rather than as a nonlethal instrument of statecraft and, in the process, overlooking the considerable opportunities as well as risks they present.

## THE MYTH OF CYBER-ESCALATION

Much of the current understanding in Washington about the role of cyber-operations in conflict is built on long-standing but false assumptions about cyberspace. Many scholars have asserted that cyber-operations could easily lead to military escalation, up to and including the use of nuclear weapons. Jason Healey and Robert Jervis, for example, expressing a widely held view, have argued that an incident that takes place in cyberspace, "might cross the threshold into armed conflict either through a sense of impunity or through miscalculation or mistake." Policymakers have also long believed that cyberspace poses grave perils. In 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta warned of an impending "cyber-Pearl Harbor," in which adversaries could take down critical U.S. infrastructure through cyberattacks. Nearly a decade later, FBI Director Christopher Wray compared the threat from ransomware—when actors hold a target hostage by encrypting data and demanding a ransom payment in return for decrypting it—to the 9/11 attacks. And as recently as December 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin noted that in cyberspace, "norms of behavior aren't well-established and the risks of escalation and miscalculation are high."

Seemingly buttressing these claims has been a long record of cyber-operations by hostile governments. In recent years, states ranging from Russia and China to Iran and North Korea have used cyberspace to conduct large-scale espionage, inflict significant economic damage, and undermine democratic institutions. In January 2021, for example, attackers linked to the Chinese government were able to breach Microsoft's Exchange email servers, giving them access to communications and other private information from companies and governments, and may have allowed other malicious actors to conduct ransomware attacks. That breach followed on the heels of a Russian intrusion against the software vendor SolarWinds, in which hackers were able to access a huge quantity of sensitive government and corporate data—an espionage treasure trove. Cyberattacks have also inflicted significant economic costs. The NotPetya attack affected critical infrastructure around the world—ranging from logistics and energy to finance and government—causing upward of \$10 billion in damage.

But the assumption that cyber-operations play a central role in either provoking or extending war is wrong. Hundreds of cyber-incidents have occurred between rivals with long histories of tension or even conflict, but none has ever triggered an escalation to war. North Korea, for example, has conducted major cyberattacks against South Korea on at least four different occasions, including the “Ten Days of Rain” denial of service attack in which a network is flooded with an overwhelming number of requests, becoming temporarily inaccessible to users against South Korean government websites, financial institutions, and critical infrastructure in 2011 and the “Dark Seoul” attack in 2013, which disrupted service across the country's financial and media sectors.

It would be reasonable to expect that these operations might escalate the situation on the Korean Peninsula, especially because North Korea's war plans against South Korea reportedly involve cyber-operations. Yet that is not what happened. Instead, in each case, the South Korean response was minimal and limited to either direct, official attribution to North Korea by government officials or more indirect public suggestions that Pyongyang was likely behind the attacks.

Similarly, although the United States reserves the right to respond to cyberattacks in any way it sees fit, including with military force, it has until now relied on economic sanctions, indictments, diplomatic actions, and some reported instances of tit-for-tat cyber-responses. For example, following Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the Obama administration expelled 35 Russian diplomats and shuttered two facilities said to be hubs for Russian espionage. The Treasury Department also levied economic sanctions against Russian officials. Yet according to media reports, the administration ultimately rejected plans to conduct retaliatory cyber-operations against Russia. And although the United States did use its own cyber-operations to respond to Russian attacks during the 2018 midterm elections, it limited itself to temporarily disrupting the Internet Research Agency, a Russian troll farm.

These measured responses are not unusual. Despite decades of malicious behavior in cyberspace and no matter the level of destruction cyberattacks have always been contained below the level of armed conflict. Indeed, researchers have found that major adversarial powers across the world have routinely observed a “firebreak” between cyberattacks and conventional military operations: a mutually understood line that distinguishes strategic interactions above and below it, similar to the threshold that exists for the employment of nuclear weapons.

But it is not just that cyber-operations do not lead to conflict. Cyberattacks can also be useful ways to project power in situations in which armed conflict is expressly being avoided. This is why Iran, for example, might find cyberattacks against the United States, including the 2012–13 denial of service attacks it conducted against U.S. financial institutions, appealing. Since Iran likely prefers to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States, cyberattacks provide a way to retaliate for perceived grievances, such as U.S. economic sanctions in response to Iran’s nuclear program, without triggering the kind of escalation that would put the two countries on a path to war.

## THE ADVANTAGE OF AMBIGUITY

In addition to the ways they are used, cyber-operations also have two general qualities that tend to distinguish them from conventional military operations. First, they typically have limited, transient impact—especially when compared with conventional military action. As the Hoover Institute fellow Jacquelyn Schneider recently told *The New Yorker*, “If you’re already at a stage in a conflict where you’re willing to drop bombs, you’re going to drop bombs.” Unlike traditional military hardware, cyberweapons are virtual: even at their most destructive, they rarely have effects in the physical world. In the extraordinary instances when they do—such as the Stuxnet cyberattack, which caused the centrifuges used to enrich uranium in Natanz, Iran, to speed up or slow down—cyber-operations do not inflict the kind of damage that can occur in even a minor precision missile strike. And when states have launched cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure, such as Russia’s 2015 hit on Ukraine’s power grid, the impact has been short-lived. To date, cyberattacks have never caused direct physical harm; the only known indirect death associated with a cyberattack occurred in 2020, when a German patient with a life-threatening condition died as a result of a treatment interruption caused by a ransomware attack on a hospital’s servers.

In practice, governments themselves have also recognized the contrasting impacts of cyberattacks and conventional military attacks. Consider the incident between Iran and the United States that occurred in the summer of 2019: according to reports in the U.S. media, when Iran attacked oil tankers in the region and downed a U.S. drone, the Trump administration chose to respond in cyberspace, allegedly by hacking Iranian computer systems to degrade their ability to conduct further attacks against oil tankers. What stands out about this case is that there was a credible military option on the table that was subsequently revoked: President Donald Trump called off plans to conduct military strikes against Iranian targets. At the time, Trump tweeted that he changed his mind after learning of the potential for civilian casualties. By implication, a cyber-operation may have been seen as less risky precisely because it was unlikely to cause loss of life or even major destruction.

Second, in contrast to most military strikes, cyber-operations tend to be shrouded in secrecy and come with plausible deniability. Analysts have argued that uncertainty about responsibility makes interactions in cyberspace perilous and undermines deterrence. Cloaked in anonymity, so the logic goes, malicious actors can provoke conflict while remaining in the shadows. It is true that false-flag cyberattacks are common. For example, when a group linked to the Chinese government conducted cyber-operations against Israel in 2019 and 2020, it

masqueraded as Iranian, presumably to confuse Israeli attribution efforts. Yet secrecy need not have negative implications: it can provide opportunities for states to maneuver in crises without the drawbacks that more conventional uses of hard power might have, such as exacerbating domestic political tensions. It can also offer a way to explore the extent to which the other side is willing to negotiate or resolve the crisis: ambiguity creates breathing space.

For example, when the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, experts worried that Iran might retaliate, perhaps by attacking U.S. personnel or U.S. interests in the Middle East. Instead, Iran appeared to respond with increased cyber-activity that was ambiguous and not escalatory. Although the Iranian cyber-operations were noted within a day of the U.S. announcement, they were not the kind of massive attack that many commentators had anticipated; they mostly appeared to be attempts to conduct reconnaissance and probe for vulnerabilities. If Iran intended for this activity to be uncovered, it would largely serve symbolic purposes—communicating Iran’s presence to the United States.

Put simply, cyber-operations by their very nature are designed to avoid war. They can act as a less costly alternative to conflict because they are ambiguous, rarely break things, and don’t kill people. By continuing to depict cyberspace as an escalatory form of warfare itself, policymakers risk overstating the role of cyber-operations in armed conflict and missing their true importance.

## TOOLS NOT WEAPONS

The recognition that cyber-operations are unlikely to lead to military escalation—and that they play at most a supporting rather than decisive role in actual armed conflicts—has direct consequences for U.S. policy and strategy. For one thing, it means that the United States may have greater room to use cyberspace to achieve objectives without precipitating new crises or exacerbating existing ones. Since 2018, for example, the U.S. Defense Department has treated cyberspace as an arena in which the military can operate more routinely and proactively rather than wait to respond to an adversary’s activity. According to the Pentagon, Washington needs to “defend forward to disrupt or halt malicious cyber activity at its source.” This approach encompasses maneuvering on networks controlled by U.S. adversaries or third parties and even conducting offensive cyber-operations.

At the time that the 2018 cyber strategy was released, many experts expressed alarm that it could provoke military escalation. Adding to the concerns, in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress authorized the secretary of defense to conduct cyber-operations as a traditional military activity, which meant that cyber-operations would no longer be treated as a form of covert action requiring a presidential finding to be approved. Yet in the four years since the defend forward concept was implemented, the escalation that many feared has not materialized. This should give some assurances to policymakers that the United States can continue to conduct offensive cyber-operations without risking a wider conflict.

In 2021, for example, U.S. Cyber Command, working with a partner government, conducted a cyber-operation to limit the ability of the Russian-linked criminal group REvil to conduct ransomware attacks. Several months later, U.S. officials acknowledged that the military had “imposed costs” against ransomware groups. There is also some evidence that efforts to counter Russian cyber-activity during the current Ukraine crisis may have blunted a more effective Russian cyberoffensive, with Nakasone alluding to work done by the Ukrainians and others to hinder Moscow’s plans.

But just because the Pentagon’s plan has not led to escalation does not mean it is tool the U.S. can use to solve all of the cyber challenges it faces. For the very same reasons that offensive cyber-operations have not led to escalation, their constraints should cast doubt on the notion that the United States can use them to coerce adversaries into changing their behavior or punish them by inflicting high costs.

Second, the reality that cyber-operations are used by states in many different ways means that policymakers need to develop a more nuanced approach for responding to cyberthreats. Because cyber-operations are consistently seen as representing an existential threat to the United States, Washington has tended to deal with cyber-incidents of contrasting scope and scale with the same policy tools. For instance, senior U.S. officials described both Russia’s 2016 election interference and 2021 SolarWinds operation as acts of war. But the first was a cyber-enabled information operation and the second was in fact a large-scale cyber-espionage campaign and neither resembled open war in any conventional sense. Moreover, the policy responses in both of these cases (as in many other cyber-incidents) were similar: a combination of public attribution, indictments, and sanctions. Instead of responding with inflammatory language and standard forms of retaliation, policymakers should consider how to employ cybertools and non-cybertools in ways that are tailored to specific incidents, taking into account the extent and gravity of a given operation. Responses can also be proportionate without being symmetrical. Rather than responding in kind, the United States should apply varying and more creative approaches that reflect differences in adversaries’ centers of gravity. What is important to Beijing and therefore what may motivate its behavior is different from what is important to Moscow, Tehran, and so on.

A one-size-fits-all approach to adversary cyber-operations may raise particular problems in the Ukraine conflict. Anticipating potential Russian cyberattacks against member states, NATO leaders have reaffirmed that Article 5, the treaty’s collective defense clause, applies to cyberspace, but they have also expressed ambiguity about what specific operations might trigger it. A lack of clarity about how thresholds and responses are defined risks undermining the credibility of this pledge and the effectiveness of NATO’s overall cyberstrategy.

A third lesson of cyber-operations over the past decade is that U.S. officials should adopt a more flexible mindset in their response to them. Rather than focusing on retaliatory action, the United States should devote more resources to enhancing resilience the ability to absorb and rapidly recover from disruptive occurrences. Embracing this type of approach means accepting that cyberattacks are likely to take place and, more important, that the overwhelming majority of them will not have cataclysmic effects. Over the past several years, the United States has improved its resilience to such attacks, expanding the agencies responsible for working with and maintaining critical infrastructure, such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. The U.S.

government has also created the Office of the National Cyber Director to harmonize its cybersecurity efforts and collaborate with the private sector. But these entities are still relatively new, and efforts to implement meaningful regulation of the private sector to promote resilience still have a long way to go.

#### A CYBER ESCAPE VALVE?

Just because cyber-operations have not yet caused escalation does not mean that they will never do so. If conflicts such as the war in Ukraine lead to greater instability in the international system and increased great-power competition, the risks of cyber-escalation may grow. The opposite is also possible, however: in a more unstable world, cyber-operations may provide an important outlet for recurring tensions, given their lack of physical violence and relatively limited effects. As international politics become more dangerous, cyberspace can offer a way for states to respond to perceived aggressions without causing physical destruction or loss of life, thus providing a kind of stability in itself.

Ultimately, escalation is in the eye of the beholder—it depends as much on the target’s perception of an event as on the perpetrator’s intent or the reality of the strategic context. Therefore, a further priority of U.S. policymakers should be to improve their understanding of how adversaries interpret Washington’s activities in cyberspace and leverage that knowledge to conduct cyber-operations that minimize the risk of escalation. During a crisis, for instance, the United States may want to avoid conducting cyber-operations in a manner that an adversary might perceive as a precursor to conflict or to a military strike, especially if that is not the intent. If there is a pressing strategic or military imperative to conduct these types of operations, they should occur in tandem with efforts to communicate their purpose to avoid misunderstandings.

For too long, policymakers have drawn the wrong lessons from cyber-operations. The absence of escalation across decades of strategic interaction in cyberspace—a record that has only been reinforced in the conflict in Ukraine—should cause policymakers to reevaluate long-standing assumptions about the cyber-domain. In doing so, they may be able to see how cyber-actions are but one of a number of strategic tools that, properly understood, can limit the risk of conflict as much as increase it. Of course, the potential for cyberattacks to temporarily paralyze large information networks or even whole sectors of an economy should not be discounted. But in a world in which armed conflict continues to destroy entire cities and wreak terrible human costs, both civilian and military, cyber-operations should be regarded less as another form of hard power than as a way for states to pursue strategic goals by other means.

*--Erica D. Lonergan is Assistant Professor in the Army Cyber Institute at West Point and a Research Scholar at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. Previously, she served as Senior Director on the U.S. Cyberspace Solarium Commission. The views expressed here are her own*

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# U.S. Strategic Command News Briefs

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AS OF 0600 HOURS, APRIL 15

## SUMMARY

CIA Director William Burns said that Russian President Vladimir Putin's "desperation" to achieve a semblance of victory in Ukraine might tempt him to order the use of "tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons," while cautioning that he had seen no "practical evidence" that would suggest such a move was imminent, according to the *New York Times*. Separately, the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command on Friday said that it sent frigates, bombers and fighter jets to the East China Sea and the area around Taiwan for military drills as a U.S. Congressional delegation visited Taipei, *Reuters* reported. Also of note, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force announced on Friday that U.S. and Japanese destroyers equipped with the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System conducted a joint exercise earlier this week in the Sea of Japan aimed at enhancing cooperation in shooting down ballistic missiles, according to *Kyodo News*.

## TWEETS

"North Korean soldiers continued parade training at a military base in Pyongyang on Friday, satellite imagery shows, suggesting the DPRK did not hold an overnight military parade. It is unclear when the expected parade will take place," according to a tweet from *NK News*. Separately, *BBC News* tweeted: "Russian warship *Moskva* has sunk, state media says, a day after it was reported damaged by fire or a Ukrainian missile strike." And Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones wrote: "There is no integrated deterrence without strategic deterrence, and the #Strikers at @TeamBarksdale are getting it done. With modernization efforts like the B-21 & Sentinel coming online, it's an exciting time to be at @AFGlobalStrike."

## Table of Contents

### TOP STORIES

#### **1. Putin May Be Tempted to Use Small Nuclear Weapon, C.I.A. Chief Says**

*New York Times*, Apr. 15, Pg. A8 | David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes

The director of the C.I.A. said on Thursday that "potential desperation" to extract the semblance of a victory in Ukraine could tempt President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to order the use of a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon, publicly discussing for the first time a concern that has coursed through the White House during seven weeks of conflict.

#### **2. China holds drills around Taiwan as U.S. lawmakers visit**

*Reuters*, Apr. 15 | Ben Blanchard, Yimou Lee, Yew Lun Tian and Tony Munroe

China said it conducted military drills around Taiwan on Friday as a U.S. Congressional delegation visited the island in a show of support to a fellow democracy, with Beijing blaming the lawmakers for raising tensions with their "provocative" trip.

**3. Japan, U.S. conduct joint Aegis destroyer drill amid North Korea threat**

*Kyodo News (Japan), Apr. 15 | Not Attributed*

Japanese and U.S. destroyers equipped with the Aegis missile interceptor system conducted a joint exercise earlier this week in the Sea of Japan, the Maritime Self-Defense Force said Friday, in a fresh show of force as North Korea's nuclear and missile threat grows.

**RUSSIA**

**4. Russian Flagship Sinks in Black Sea; E.U. Could Ban Oil**

*New York Times, Apr. 15, Pg. A1 | Matina Stevis-Gridneff and Richard Pérez-Peña*

Russia's faltering war against Ukraine suffered a pair of setbacks Thursday when the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet sank after a catastrophic explosion and fire, as the European Union moved closer to an embargo on Russian oil imports.

**5. Moskva's loss is a major, if symbolic, setback for Russia**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15, Pg. A12 | Dan Lamothe, Claire Parker, Andrew Jeong, Reis Thebault and Maite Fernández Simon*

The flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet sank after an attack from Ukrainian forces triggered a "significant explosion" as the vessel floated off the coast of Ukraine, U.S. officials said Thursday, with Moscow offering a competing claim about the cause of the destruction.

**6. Russia warns U.S. to stop arming Ukraine**

*Washington Post Online, Apr. 14 | Karen DeYoung*

Russia this week sent a formal diplomatic note to the United States warning that U.S. and NATO shipments of the "most sensitive" weapons systems to Ukraine were "adding fuel" to the conflict there and could bring "unpredictable consequences."

**7. Soviet-Era Missiles Now Guard Ukraine's Skies**

*New York Times, Apr. 15, Pg. A1 | Andrew Higgins*

Driving back to his village near the Ukrainian border last Thursday, the mayor had to stop to let a train pass, and assumed he wouldn't have to wait long. But the flatbed wagons, stacked high with military equipment, just kept coming. He waited for nearly half an hour. "It was a very long train, much longer than usual," recalled Mikolas Csoma, the mayor of Dobra, a previously sleepy village in eastern Slovakia that, over the past month, has become a key artery funneling weapons and ammunition into Ukraine by rail from the West. The train that delayed Mr. Csoma's drive home was not only unusually long but also signaled a singular escalation in Western efforts to help Ukraine defend itself. It carried an air defense system made up of 48 surface-to-air missiles, four launchers and radars to guide the rockets to their targets, which in Ukraine means Russian warplanes and missiles.

**8. Russia Warns It Could Station Nuclear Forces in Europe if Finland, Sweden Join NATO**

*Wall Street Journal Online, Apr. 14 | Bojan Pancevski and Georgi Kantchev*

Russia warned on Thursday that it could station nuclear forces in and around a Russian exclave in Northern Europe and bolster its military presence there if Finland and Sweden join the NATO alliance. Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, said Thursday that Russia would have to bolster its defenses in Kaliningrad—a Russian exclave wedged between Lithuania and Poland—as well as in the Baltic Sea, if the two countries joined the alliance. Mr. Medvedev's comments were echoed by the Kremlin on Thursday.

**9. Russia's latest nuclear threat rings hollow in Baltic states**

*Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 14 | Joel Gehrke*

Russia threatened to deploy nuclear weapons near the Baltic Sea if Finland and Sweden apply to join NATO, but eastern flank allies regard the threat as a laughable effort to intimidate the Nordic states. "It's just rhetoric, because they have nukes in Kaliningrad already," a senior European official said. "It's just meant for the public, actually, to frighten the public and parliamentarians in Sweden and Finland as well. But they shouldn't be stupid."

**10. The World's Most Powerful Nuclear Missile Is a Russian ICBM Nicknamed 'Satan'**

*Military.com, Apr. 14 | Blake Stilwell*

In the late 1960s, the Soviet Union jumped ahead of the United States' first strike capability in a big way. The latest version of the R-36 intercontinental ballistic missile (called SS-18 by NATO) could hit anywhere in the U.S. with at least 10 18-25 megaton nuclear warheads.

## EUROPE

**11. Gibraltar port call offers British a glimpse of U.S. submarine**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 14 | Alison Bath*

The USS Georgia, an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine, docked at port in Gibraltar this week as part of an ongoing effort to enhance relations with the United Kingdom, Navy officials said.

## CHINA

**12. Panel: China Planning a 'Go Big, Go Early' Strategy Against Taiwan**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 14 | John Grady*

While it's unclear what lessons Chinese military planners are learning from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they learned to "go big and go early" from America's quick victory in the first Gulf War, a panel of defense analysts agreed Thursday. It's a strategy the Chinese could use against Taiwan.

**13. China must 'pay price' for Russia backing, says US senator in Taiwan**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 15 | Not Attributed*

China must pay a greater price for backing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a senior United States senator said Friday, during a trip to Taiwan in which American lawmakers vowed that Washington would not abandon the island.

**14. Pentagon warns China-Solomons security pact could be destabilizing**

*Kyodo News (Japan), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed*

The U.S. Defense Department on Thursday expressed concern over a possible security pact between China and the Solomon Islands, saying it leaves the door open for deployment of Chinese military forces to the Pacific nation.

## KOREAN PENINSULA

**15. North Korea to Celebrate Its Biggest Holiday, Though It Might Not Bring Out the Big Guns**

*Wall Street Journal Online, Apr. 15 | Dasl Yoon*

North Korea is preparing for major celebrations tied to its biggest national holiday on Friday, with Kim Jong Un looking to boost morale during a time of economic hardship and project outward strength following a spree of missile tests.

**16. South Korea's president-elect unveils foreign policy goals**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15, Pg. A7 | Michelle Ye Hee Lee*

South Korea in recent years has been a passive player on the global stage even as its economic and cultural influence ballooned, remaining wary of aggressive neighbors North Korea and China. The country's conservative president-elect vows to change that. South Korea must step up its foreign policy commensurate with its economic and cultural status and become a stronger ally to the United States, he told The Washington Post in his first interview as president-elect.

**17. North Korean provocations likely to continue for months – Jake Sullivan**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Apr. 14 | Byun Duk-kun*

North Korea is currently in a provocation cycle that may last for weeks or even months, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Thursday.

**18. U.S. special representative for North Korea to visit Seoul to discuss missile launches**

*Reuters, Apr. 15 | Josh Smith*

The U.S. envoy for North Korea will visit Seoul next week for meetings with South Korean counterparts to discuss the international response to the North's recent intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) launches, the State Department said.

## IRAN

**19. Iran starts production at centrifuge component workshop**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 14 | Not Attributed*

Iran has started making components for machines used to enrich uranium at a new workshop in Natanz, the country's main nuclear site, the UN atomic watchdog said Thursday.

## MIDEAST

**20. Israel Successfully Tests New Laser Missile Defense System**

*Associated Press, Apr. 14 | Laurie Kellman*

Israel's new laser missile-defense system has successfully intercepted mortars, rockets and anti-tank missiles in recent tests, Israeli leaders said Thursday. The Israeli-made laser system, known as the "Iron Beam," is designed to complement a series of aerial defense systems, including the more costly rocket-intercepting Iron Dome.

## AIR FORCE

**21. Air Force's nuclear modernization bill is cramping fighter jet procurement**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 | Valerie Insinna*

With two major nuclear programs ramping up, the Air Force had to make hard choices on fighter procurement in fiscal 2023, the Air Force's top officer said.

**22. Simulator will ease training of 'Doomsday' planes' crews**

*Omaha World-Herald, Apr. 15, Pg. A1 | Steve Liewer*

An Air Force pilot accelerates the E-4B Nightwatch jumbo jet down Offutt Air Force Base's single runway, following the bend in the Missouri River as it soars into a blue Midwest sky. Once at altitude, the pilot lines up with the boom of a KC-135 aerial tanker, slurping up thousands of gallons of fuel to power a long training mission.

**23. 914th Maintenance group wins AFRC 2021 Maintenance Effectiveness Award**

*914th Air Refueling Wing, Apr. 14 | Peter Borys*

The Air Force Reserve Command Maintenance Effectiveness Award Category 1 – Small Aircraft Maintenance (25 to 300 authorized personnel) was awarded to the 914th Maintenance Group recently for the most successfully managed maintenance resources to provide safe and serviceable equipment for sustained use in peacetime and wartime.

**NAVY**

**24. In electric-powered laser test, Navy shoots down cruise missile analog**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 14 | Justin Katz*

The Navy's primary research and development agency successfully tested an all-electric, high-energy laser, shooting down "a target representing a subsonic cruise missile in flight," the Pentagon announced Wednesday.

**COMMENTARY**

**25. Obsession on nuclear weapons and casually thinking the unthinkable?**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 14 | Victor Davis Hanson*

Americans, like the planet's other 7.5 billion people, are not prone to talk or think much about nuclear weapons. Of course, some of us are old enough to remember how "mutually assured destruction," or MAD, was supposed to ensure the general peace.

**26. Arming for the Next Fight in Ukraine**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15, Pg. A14 | Editorial*

Ukraine won the battle of Kyiv in heroic fashion, but the war is set to enter a bloody new phase as Vladimir Putin prepares an offensive in the east. The question is whether President Biden will summon the mettle to make sure America's friends win.

**27. Will the Russo-Ukrainian War Provoke Nuclear Proliferation in Asia?**

*National Interest Online, Apr. 14 | Andy Cichon*

Following Beijing's announcement that Chinese-Russian relations had "no limits," China's backing of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has subsequently created an existential threat to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The invasion violated an agreement that exchanged Ukraine's nuclear weapons for security assurances and undermined U.S. policy and credibility with other nations with similar formal or informal U.S. assurances. As a result, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan now question the wisdom of relying on U.S. security assurances instead of their own nuclear deterrent.

**28. With the West distracted, China expands**

*Washington Post, Apr. 15, Pg. A21 | Josh Rogin*

Over the past few weeks, the world has been understandably transfixed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's horrific invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, though, his close ally Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quietly taking advantage of the West's distraction by expanding China's sphere of influence in the South Pacific. If Washington doesn't wake up to this threat, China's efforts to dominate the region will gain dangerous and perhaps irreversible momentum.

**29. The Dangers of China's Decline**

*Foreign Policy, Spring 2022 | Hal Brands*

Decline is a tricky concept. The term makes us think of a country that is falling like a rock—one whose power and capabilities are dropping across the board. But a country can be in relative decline vis-à-vis a fast-growing adversary even if its own power is still increasing. It can be surging forward in some areas, such as military might, even as its underlying economic strength starts to wither. And decline doesn't always lead a country to scale back its objectives—the sense of urgency it creates can cause ambitious powers to grab what they can before the clock runs out.

**30. Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site: Work Continues Around South Portal**

*38North.org, Apr. 14 | Olli Heinonen, Peter Makowsky, Jack Liu and Jenny Town*

Recent commercial satellite imagery of North Korea's Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Sites indicates work to restore Tunnel No. 3 (South Portal) to operational status continues. Two new support buildings have been constructed between April 6 and 14 in the southern support area. A total of four new structures have been added since January, and roof repairs are ongoing at some of the older support buildings, including an old greenhouse, although at a seemingly slower pace than work in the area around the tunnel complex. This investment in support infrastructure suggests long-term plans for site operations, not simply ad hoc actions to support a single test.

**31. America's new multibillion-dollar nuclear warhead is a great deal for the British**

*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Apr. 14 | Shane Ward*

According to the US Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan released last month, the development of the United States' first new nuclear warhead since the Cold War appears to be proceeding. Collective sighs of relief are emanating from Washington and London. But they may be louder in the United Kingdom.

**STATE-RUN MEDIA**

**32. Nuclear weapons deployment in Baltic on hold before Defense Ministry's plan – Kremlin**

*TASS (Russia), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed*

Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov advised to wait until the Russian Defense Ministry comes up with a plan regarding the enhancement of the country's western borders before speaking about a possible deployment of nuclear weapons in the Baltic area.

**33. Russia to take defense measures if Sweden, Finland join NATO, senior diplomat warns**

*TASS (Russia), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed*

Moscow will take required security and defense measures if Sweden and Finland join NATO, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told TASS on Thursday. "It is clear that our border with Finland is 1,300 km long. This will mean a radical change in the military and political situation and it is understandable that we will be forced to take security and defense measures that we will deem necessary. This is the essence of military development," the senior Russian diplomat said, responding to a question about the possibility of Russia deploying nuclear weapons in the Baltic region.

**34. Visit of US delegation to Taiwan undermines China-US relations, Chinese top brass says**

*TASS (Russia), Apr. 15 | Not Attributed*

A recent visit of US congressmen to Taiwan undermines the political foundation of Chinese-US relations, the Friday statement by Chinese Defense Ministry Spokesman Wu Qian said.

**35. PLA conducts destroyer-bomber joint patrol around Taiwan where US congressmen visit**

*Global Times Online (China), Apr. 15 | Not Attributed*

The PLA Eastern Theater Command on Friday conducted a patrol of multi-services and arms with jet fighters, destroyers and bombers around the island of Taiwan, where a US congressional delegation is visiting.

**36. US provocations before North Korea's vital event 'would worsen situation'**

*Global Times (China), Apr. 15, Pg. 3 | Leng Shumei, Zhang Changyue and Wan Hengyi*

Despite North Korea's vital festivals in the coming days, the US and NATO, instead of making encouraging gestures to ease the situation on the Korean Peninsula, have intensified threats, including sending an aircraft carrier group near South Korea and urging the UN to slap new sanctions to provoke the country citing so-called nuclear and missile threats. However, Chinese experts warned that the moves would only worsen tensions on the Peninsula.

**37. Russian ambassador in Pyongyang denies reports about Shoigu's visit to North Korea**

*Interfax (Russia), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed*

Information that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited North Korea and asked Pyongyang to help Russia with missiles is not true, Russian Ambassador to North Korea Alexander Matsegora said.

**38. Ukraine crisis a risk to nuclear security**

*China Daily (China), Apr. 15, Pg. 9 | Li Zhe*

The risks to nuclear security have increased with the continuation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The geopolitical game involving Russia and Ukraine but also the United States and some European countries poses a big threat to nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear deterrence. Perhaps a bigger threat is that the nuclear risks will carry with them the hidden dangers to nuclear security in the post-conflict era.

**TWEETS OF NOTE**

*Twitter, Apr. 14-15*

**TOP STORIES**

**1. Putin May Be Tempted to Use Small Nuclear Weapon, C.I.A. Chief Says**

New York Times, Apr. 15, Pg. A8 | David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON -- The director of the C.I.A. said on Thursday that "potential desperation" to extract the semblance of a victory in Ukraine could tempt President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to order the use of a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon, publicly discussing for the first time a concern that has coursed through the White House during seven weeks of conflict.

The director, William J. Burns, who served as American ambassador to Russia and is the member of the administration who has dealt most often with Mr. Putin, said the potential detonation of such a weapon -- even as a warning shot -- was a possibility that the United States remained "very concerned" about. But he quickly cautioned that so far, despite Mr. Putin's frequent invocation of nuclear threats, he had seen no "practical evidence" of the kinds of military deployments or movement of weapons that would suggest such a move was imminent.

"Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setbacks that they've faced so far, militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-

yield nuclear weapons," Mr. Burns said during a question-and-answer session following a speech he delivered at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

He spoke in response to a question from former Senator Sam Nunn, of Georgia, who helped create the program that brought nuclear weapons out of Ukraine and other former Soviet states 30 years ago.

Tactical weapons are sometimes called "battlefield nukes," smaller weapons that can be shot out of a mortar or even exploded like a mine, as opposed to "strategic" weapons that are put on intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russia has a large arsenal of tactical weapons; the United States keeps comparatively few. Low-yield nuclear weapons have been designed to produce a fairly small explosion, which sometimes blurs the difference between conventional and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Burns also argued that the disclosure of Mr. Putin's intentions by U.S. intelligence officials before the outbreak of the war had made it harder for Mr. Putin to hide the "raw brutality" his forces have used in Ukraine, reminiscent of the damage Russian forces inflicted in Chechnya in the 1990s.

"I have watched over the years as Putin has stewed in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition and insecurity," Mr. Burns said. He said the Russian president has nursed grievances against the West for decades, convinced the United States took advantage of Russia's weakness after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

President Biden and his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, both acknowledged Thursday that the White House was debating sending a high-level official to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, in a show of support for the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain recently took a secret trip to Kyiv by train.

Mr. Sullivan said that the White House had briefly considered having Mr. Biden go into Ukraine, but as soon as it became clear "what kind of footprint that would require, what kind of assets that would take from the Ukrainians as well as the U.S." to keep him safe, the idea was rejected.

When pressed on reports that he, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken or Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III might go to Kyiv, Mr. Sullivan declined to discuss it, saying that "if and when that happens, we want to make sure it's done in a very secure way." Mr. Biden told reporters no decision had been made to send an envoy.

Mr. Sullivan also said that in coming days the United States would announce a crackdown on countries and companies violating the Western sanctions on Moscow, imposed since the invasion began in late February.

The Commerce Department on Thursday identified 10 aircraft that were flying into or operated by Belarus, with the apparent intention of registering them in Russia. The sanctions would prevent servicing or fueling the aircraft internationally, effectively grounding them.

Mr. Sullivan had made a similar vow to crack down on violators just ahead of Mr. Biden's trip to Brussels and Warsaw last month. But on Thursday, speaking at the Economic Club of Washington, he said he believed that some of the sanctions -- particularly export controls on defense technology -- were beginning to hurt Russia's military readiness.

"Russia's ability to retool and replenish," he said, was being set back because many of its systems "rely on Western microchips and components."

"They are exhausting the stock of some of the high-end weapons," Mr. Sullivan added, though he acknowledged that the continuing purchase of natural gas from Russia was helping to fund the war.

"I'm not sitting here suggesting we have so starved them of those resources they literally can't field an army and continue to try to make progress on the battlefield," Mr. Sullivan said. But he said Washington was stepping up the effort to help Europe wean itself off Russian gas by delivering supplies of liquefied natural gas from the United States.

But Mr. Sullivan also indicated that so far he had seen no evidence that China was stepping in to help Mr. Putin with either military or financial aid. His statement was notable because Mr. Biden, in a call with President Xi Jinping of China four weeks ago, had warned about American penalties should China aid the war effort. But the evidence since then has suggested that despite Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi's declaration in February that their relationship has "no limits," China in fact appears to be of mixed views on how much to support the war.

Mr. Burns and Mr. Sullivan both acknowledged that the war was moving to a new phase now that Russia appears to have narrowed its objective to taking the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia separatists have been fighting since 2014.

Gen. Philip Breedlove, the former supreme allied commander in Europe, who is now retired, said Thursday that while Mr. Putin may be able to paint his narrower operation as a win, the war will be a loss for Russia in the long term.

"Ukraine is still going to try to fight what I call the American Revolutionary War again, skirmishing and counterattacking and ambushing," General Breedlove said. "It is just going to be a lot harder for them."

By moving his forces to the east, Mr. Putin is looking to move the war to more favorable territory, trying to make it more difficult for the Ukrainian forces to stick with those tactics. "They are now prepared to fight the war that they really want," General Breedlove said. "They want to meet force on force in open fields."

#### RELATED STORIES:

Agence France-Presse: [CIA Warns Desperate Putin Poses Nuclear Threat](#)

The Hill: [CIA director: US can't 'take lightly' possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons](#)

Reuters: [U.S. cannot 'take lightly' threat Russia could use nuclear weapons – CIA chief](#)

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## **2. China holds drills around Taiwan as U.S. lawmakers visit**

Reuters, Apr. 15 | Ben Blanchard, Yimou Lee, Yew Lun Tian and Tony Munroe

TAIPEI/BEIJING -- China said it conducted military drills around Taiwan on Friday as a U.S. Congressional delegation visited the island in a show of support to a fellow democracy, with Beijing blaming the lawmakers for raising tensions with their "provocative" trip.

China's military sent frigates, bombers and fighter planes to the East China Sea and the area around Taiwan, the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command said, in a statement released as the lawmakers were holding a news conference in Taipei.

"This operation is in response to the recent frequent release of wrong signals by the United States on the Taiwan issue," it said, without mentioning the visiting U.S. delegation.

"The U.S. bad actions and tricks are completely futile and very dangerous. Those who play with fire will burn themselves," it said.

China's Defence Ministry, in a separate statement, said the U.S. visit was "deliberately provocative" and had "led to further escalation of tension in the Taiwan Strait".

Taiwan is a frequent source of tension between Beijing and Washington.

Republican U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham told Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen during the delegation's meeting with her that the war in Ukraine and provocative behaviour by China have united U.S. opinion in a way not seen before.

"To abandon Taiwan would be to abandon democracy and freedom," he said. "There's a backlash growing in the world to thuggery - to the bad guys."

Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the technology hub is a "country of global significance" and its security has implications for the world.

The bipartisan group of six lawmakers arrived for their two-day visit on Thursday, in a previously unannounced trip.

Such visits, and a reference to Taiwan as a "country", always anger Beijing, which dismisses any suggestion that Taiwan is a country. China regards the island as one of its provinces.

The United States has no formal relations with Chinese-claimed Taiwan but is its most important international backer and arms supplier.

Menendez acknowledged the Chinese government was "very unhappy" with the delegation's visit but said that would not dissuade the group from supporting Taiwan.

"With Taiwan producing 90% of the world's high-end semiconductor products, it is a country of global significance, consequence and impact, and therefore it should be understood the security of Taiwan has a global impact," Menendez told Tsai.

Taiwan has been heartened by the U.S. support offered by the Biden administration, which has repeatedly talked of its "rock-solid" commitment to the democratically governed island.

That has added to strains in Sino-U.S. relations.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also put Taipei on alert for any possible moves by Beijing to use the Ukraine crisis to make a move on the island. The government though has reported no sign that China is about to invade.

Taiwan has complained for the past two years or so of stepped-up Chinese military activity, including almost daily air force flights into Taiwan's air defence zone, but not close to the island itself.

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### **3. Japan, U.S. conduct joint Aegis destroyer drill amid North Korea threat**

Kyodo News (Japan), Apr. 15 | Not Attributed

TOKYO -- Japanese and U.S. destroyers equipped with the Aegis missile interceptor system conducted a joint exercise earlier this week in the Sea of Japan, the Maritime Self-Defense Force said Friday, in a fresh show of force as North Korea's nuclear and missile threat grows.

The two-day information sharing drill through Thursday aimed at enhancing cooperation in shooting down ballistic missiles involved the U.S. destroyers Mobile Bay and Spruance, which both belong to the strike group headed by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, and Japan's Kongou, according to the MSDF.

The U.S. strike group started the exercise in the Sea of Japan on April 8 with MSDF vessels, according to the U.S. 7th Fleet, ahead of the 110th anniversary on Friday of the birth of Kim Il Sung, North Korea's founder and the grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un.

In connection with the North Korean anniversary, speculation has been growing that Pyongyang will conduct a nuclear test or fire an intercontinental ballistic missile over Japan into the Pacific Ocean.

During the exercise, the Japanese and U.S. vessels coordinated their response to an incoming missile, sharing radar information and simulating interception procedures, according to the MSDF.

MSDF Aegis destroyers are equipped with Standard Missile-3 interceptors and tasked with hitting incoming missiles in the outer atmosphere. If they fail, the Air Self-Defense Force's ground-based Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptors will counter the attack in the lower tier.

North Korea on March 24 made the first launch of an ICBM since November 2017, marking an end to its self-imposed moratorium on ICBM tests since April 2018.

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## **RUSSIA**

### **4. Russian Flagship Sinks in Black Sea; E.U. Could Ban Oil**

New York Times, Apr. 15, Pg. A1 | Matina Stevis-Gridneff and Richard Pérez-Peña

BRUSSELS -- Russia's faltering war against Ukraine suffered a pair of setbacks Thursday when the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet sank after a catastrophic explosion and fire, as the European Union moved closer to an embargo on Russian oil imports.

Ukraine claimed to have struck the vessel, the guided missile cruiser Moskva, with two of its own Neptune missiles, while Russia said the blast was caused by ammunition aboard the ship. If confirmed, the missile attack would be a serious blow to Russia, both militarily and symbolically -- proof that its ships can no longer operate with impunity, and another damaging blow to morale.

It would also give a lift to Ukrainian hopes, while demonstrating the defenders' homegrown technological capacity and exposing an embarrassing weakness in the Russian navy's antimissile defenses.

Moscow also faces the possible loss of European markets in fossil fuels, which are providing billions of dollars a month to support its war effort. The European Union has long resisted calls to reduce its energy dependency on Russia, but officials revealed on Thursday that an oil embargo is in the works and is likely to be adopted in the coming weeks.

That comes on top of a previously announced ban on imports of Russian coal. Taken together, the steps are bound to raise fuel and electricity prices in Europe, potentially disrupting the economy and provoking a political backlash.

Ukraine continues to brace for a Russian offensive in the eastern Donbas region -- where Moscow has said it will focus its war efforts after its failure to capture the capital, Kyiv -- while Russian forces squeeze the shrinking pocket of resistance in the ruined southern port of Mariupol. The devastation rained there has offered a dire warning of what may befall other cities in the event of a prolonged Russian siege, prompting a mass exodus of civilians from the Donbas.

Its international isolation deepening, the Kremlin reacted ominously to the growing indications that Finland and Sweden would join the NATO alliance in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On Thursday, the government warned that any such expansion of NATO would prompt an increased Russian military presence, including nuclear weapons, in the region.

The C.I.A. director, William J. Burns, warned on Thursday of the possibility that Mr. Putin, facing a debacle in Ukraine, might use a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon, though he stressed that he had seen no "practical evidence" that

such a step was pending. It was the first time he discussed publicly a concern that has been much debated in the White House.

"Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setbacks that they've faced so far, militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons," Mr. Burns said, in answering questions after a speech in Atlanta.

Prominent voices in Russian state media have made increasingly incendiary statements recently, calling for more brutality in battles that have already sparked calls for war-crimes investigations of the Russian forces.

Much remained unclear about Russia's setback in the western Black Sea, where a blast on Thursday morning -- Wednesday night in the United States -- and subsequent fire forced many of the Moskva's roughly 500 crew members to abandon ship. There was no word on casualties. Ukraine said it had struck the vessel with two Neptune missiles and sunk it.

Russia's Defense Ministry initially said its sailors had managed to put out the fire and the Moskva, commissioned in 1983, remained afloat. But hours later, it said, the ship sank while being towed to port in a storm.

Western defense officials said they could not be sure what caused the explosion aboard the 12,000-ton ship. Three American officials briefed on the incident said all indications were that it had been hit by missiles. The officials cautioned that early battlefield reports can sometimes change, but expressed deep skepticism over the Russian account of an accidental fire.

Ukraine has been stressing the need for coastal defense weapons, and the U.S. announced this week that it would send more of them. Pentagon officials said that other Russian ships had moved farther from the Ukrainian shoreline, lending credence to the claim of missile strikes.

"It's going to have an impact on their naval capabilities, certainly in the near term," but the long-term picture is unclear, said the Pentagon spokesman, John F. Kirby, a former Navy rear admiral.

Until now, Russian ships have been able to fire missiles at will against coastal cities. They have blockaded Ukraine's south coast and threatened an amphibious landing in the southwestern region. The presence of an effective Ukrainian anti-ship weapon -- Ukraine says the Neptune has a range of about 190 miles -- could change those calculations, though Ukraine's commercial shipping is unlikely to resume anytime soon.

Current and former American naval commanders said a successful missile attack would represent a shocking lack of Russian combat readiness.

"This is not supposed to happen to a modern warship," said Adm. James G. Foggo III, a former commander of the United States Sixth Fleet, whose area of operations includes Europe. "If this was a Neptune missile strike, it's indicative of complacency and lack of an effective integrated air and missile defense capability."

Ukraine has endured most of the suffering in the war that began on Feb. 24, with untold thousands of casualties, widespread destruction and millions of people displaced, but the blowback on Russia has also been severe. Moscow's vaunted military has often seemed hapless, absorbing unexpectedly heavy losses of men and equipment, while unprecedented sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies have shaken the Russian economy.

President Vladimir V. Putin acknowledged some of that cost on Thursday in a videoconference with top government officials and oil and gas executives, referring to "the disruption of export logistics" in that industry and "setbacks in payments for Russian energy exports."

Fossil fuels are Russia's biggest export product, a huge part of the Russian economy that employs millions of people and supplies the government with much of the revenue needed to support its war-making machinery.

Now E.U. officials and European diplomats say the bloc is moving toward barring oil imports from Russia, a ban that would be phased in over months to allow countries to arrange alternative supplies. They said European leaders will not make a final decision until after April 24, when France will hold its presidential runoff; a rise in fuel prices could hurt the prospects of President Emmanuel Macron and boost his right-wing opponent, Marine Le Pen, who has praised Mr. Putin.

The government of Germany, the most influential country in the European Union, has been particularly reluctant to cut off Russian fuel, which would come at a steep cost and could lead to shortages. But pressure from allies and mounting evidence of Russian atrocities in Ukraine have, step by step, overcome that resistance. Germany refused to allow the virtually completed, \$10 billion Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to go into service, supported the coal ban and now appears to be on board with an oil embargo.

The shifting stance of the neutral Scandinavian states is another unintended consequence for Mr. Putin. In waging a war that he said was intended to keep Ukraine out of NATO -- a distant prospect at best -- he may have succeeded in driving two countries that had been steadfastly nonaligned for generations into the arms of the alliance.

Dmitri A. Medvedev, a senior Russian security official, said on Thursday that if Sweden and Finland joined NATO, there would be "no more talk of a nuclear-free Baltics" region. Moscow would be compelled to "seriously strengthen" its air and ground forces in the area, said Mr. Medvedev, a former president and prime minister, and could deploy nuclear-armed warships "at arm's length" from Finnish and Swedish shores.

Vladimir Solovyov, a television host who is considered a leading voice of Kremlin propaganda, said on Wednesday that Russia should destroy all Ukrainian infrastructure, including basic utilities.

Russia "must bring these terrorists to their senses in the cruelest way," he said on his show on the state-owned Russia-1 channel. "We need to talk differently with terrorists," he added. "There shouldn't be any illusions that they can win."

Russia has forced independent news outlets to shut down or leave the country, and has criminalized disputing the Kremlin's account of the war. Yet Margarita Simonyan, the head of the state-owned RT news organization, said earlier this week that the government should restrict information even more.

No major power can exist "without having information under its control," she said, adding, "we are all waiting for this."

*--Matina Stevis-Gridneff reported from Brussels, and Richard Pérez-Peña from New York. Reporting was contributed by Ivan Nechepurenko and Anton Troianovski from Istanbul, Michael Schwartz from London, and Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt David E. Sanger and Julian E. Barnes from Washington*

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## **5. Moskva's loss is a major, if symbolic, setback for Russia**

Washington Post, Apr. 15, Pg. A12 | Dan Lamothe, Claire Parker, Andrew Jeong, Reis Thebault and Maite Fernández Simon

The flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet sank after an attack from Ukrainian forces triggered a "significant explosion" as the vessel floated off the coast of Ukraine, U.S. officials said Thursday, with Moscow offering a competing claim about the cause of the destruction.

Russia's Defense Ministry acknowledged the sinking but said its missile cruiser - the Moskva - had been damaged after a fire. Earlier that day, the hobbled warship was moving under its own power, heading to the Crimean port city

of Sevastopol for repairs, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said. The episode buoys the morale of Ukrainian forces, who have repelled the Russian invasion for 50 days and are girding for a new phase of fierce fighting in the country's east.

The explosion occurred Wednesday, when the ship was roughly 75 miles from Odessa, a seaside hub in Ukraine's south, a senior U.S. defense official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon. Odessa's governor said the Moskva was hit by a Ukrainian anti-ship missile, an assertion backed by another American official familiar with the matter, who confirmed the strike but could not verify the specific weapons system used.

Russia, meanwhile, said the fire on board caused ammunition stocks to detonate, forcing the evacuation of at least some of the 500-person crew. As the Moskva was being towed to port, it sank due to a "heavy storm," the Russian Defense Ministry said. It was not clear whether any crew members died in the incident. After the explosion, several other Russian warships in the northern part of the Black Sea repositioned farther from shore, the U.S. defense official said.

Experts and analysts said Ukraine's claim of a successful strike was more credible than the explanations emerging from Moscow. But regardless of the cause, the ship's loss is a major, if symbolic, setback for Russia, said Artyom Lukin, an international relations professor at the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, Russia.

The Moskva is named after Russia's capital and was at the center of a widely reported attack against Ukrainian border guards on Snake Island in the Black Sea. The guards drew global attention for insulting Russian troops during the early days of the invasion.

"The loss of not just a principal surface combatant in the Russian navy, but also the fleet flagship, would amount to more of a psychological blow to the Russians," said Collin Koh, an expert on maritime security at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

Ukraine's military said its forces had fired a Neptune anti-ship missile at the Moskva, and the U.S. defense official said the claim was plausible, adding that artillery rounds and missiles aboard the ship could also have been involved in an explosion, or that the ship could have struck a mine.

One Moscow-based think tank, the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, said on its Telegram channel earlier Thursday that it believed the ship had been sunk in a missile attack. The source of the think tank's claims was unclear. Mark Cancian, senior adviser for the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said it was "more likely" that the explosion was caused by Ukraine's anti-ship cruise missiles than by some sort of accident.

"Given that there's a war going on and the Ukrainians have this anti-ship capability, it's more likely that it was caused by these cruise missiles," Cancian said.

Ukraine began developing the Neptune missile in 2013 as a deterrent against Russian sea power off its southeastern coast. It is based on an older Russian model, the KH-35, which Ukraine was also involved in producing. Fired from a truck-mounted launcher, the missile has a maximum range of 173 to 186 miles.

At roughly 600 feet long, the Moskva presented a large target. It was armed with 16 anti-ship missiles and originally built to destroy U.S. aircraft carriers. Its destruction could reduce Russia's capabilities against NATO, Cancian said.

"The flagship is literally the ship on which the admiral's flag flies," he said. "It's typically the largest and most important ship in a fleet or squadron, and that's the case here - this is a large and very powerful ship."

The damage to the Moskva is more significant because of previous Russian naval losses, said James Black, an expert on the Russian military at the Rand Corp. Last month, Ukraine's navy said it hit a Russian amphibious landing ship in Berdyansk, a Ukrainian port that Russian forces have occupied.

No matter what caused the damage to the Moskva, Black said, "it will likely be seen as poetic justice by Ukrainians and their supporters."

*--John Hudson in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **6. Russia warns U.S. to stop arming Ukraine**

Washington Post Online, Apr. 14 | Karen DeYoung

Russia this week sent a formal diplomatic note to the United States warning that U.S. and NATO shipments of the "most sensitive" weapons systems to Ukraine were "adding fuel" to the conflict there and could bring "unpredictable consequences."

The diplomatic *démarche*, a copy of which was reviewed by The Washington Post, came as President Biden approved a dramatic expansion in the scope of weapons being provided to Ukraine, an \$800 million package including 155 mm Howitzers — a serious upgrade in long-range artillery to match Russian systems — coastal defense drones and armored vehicles, as well as additional portable anti-air and antitank weapons and millions of rounds of ammunition.

The United States has also facilitated the shipment to Ukraine of long-range air defense systems, including Slovakia's shipment of Russian-manufactured Soviet-era S-300 launchers on which Ukrainian forces have already been trained. In exchange, the administration announced last week, the United States is deploying a Patriot missile system to Slovakia and consulting with Slovakia on a long-term replacement.

Shipment of the weapons, the first wave of which U.S. officials said would arrive in Ukraine within days, follows an urgent appeal to Biden from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as Russian forces were said to be mobilizing for a major assault on eastern Ukraine's Donbas region and along the coastal strip connecting it with Russian-occupied Crimea in the south. Russian troops have largely withdrawn from much of the northern part of the country, including around the capital, Kyiv, following humiliating defeats by the Ukrainian military and local resistance forces.

"What the Russians are telling us privately is precisely what we've been telling the world publicly — that the massive amount of assistance that we've been providing our Ukrainian partners is proving extraordinarily effective," said a senior administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity about the sensitive diplomatic document.

The State Department declined to comment on the contents of the two-page diplomatic note or any U.S. response.

Russia experts suggested Moscow, which has labeled weapons convoys coming into the country as legitimate military targets but has not thus far attacked them, may be preparing to do so.

"They have targeted supply depots in Ukraine itself, where some of these supplies have been stored," said George Beebe, former director of Russia analysis at the CIA and Russia adviser to former vice president Dick Cheney. "The real question is do they go beyond attempting to target [the weapons] on Ukrainian territory, try to hit the supply convoys themselves and perhaps the NATO countries on the Ukrainian periphery" that serve as transfer points for the U.S. supplies.

If Russian forces stumble in the next phase of the war as they did in the first, "then I think the chances that Russia targets NATO supplies on NATO territory go up considerably," Beebe said. "There has been an assumption on the

part of a lot of us in the West that we could supply the Ukrainians really without limits and not bear significant risk of retaliation from Russia," he said. "I think the Russians want to send a message here that that's not true."

The diplomatic note was dated Tuesday, as word first leaked of the new arms package that brought the total amount of U.S. military aid provided to Ukraine since the Feb. 24 invasion to \$3.2 billion, according to Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. In a public announcement Wednesday, Biden said it would include "new capabilities tailored to the wider assault we expect Russia to launch in eastern Ukraine."

The document, titled "On Russia's concerns in the context of massive supplies of weapons and military equipment to the Kiev regime," written in Russian with a translation provided, was forwarded to the State Department by the Russian Embassy in Washington.

The Russian embassy did not respond to requests for comment.

Among the items Russia identified as "most sensitive" were "multiple launch rocket systems," although the United States and its NATO allies are not believed to have supplied those weapons to Ukraine. Russia accused the allies of violating "rigorous principles" governing the transfer of weapons to conflict zones, and of being oblivious to "the threat of high-precision weapons falling into the hands of radical nationalists, extremists and bandit forces in Ukraine."

It accused NATO of trying to pressure Ukraine to "abandon" sputtering, and so far unsuccessful, negotiations with Russia "in order to continue the bloodshed." Washington, it said, was pressuring other countries to stop any military and technical cooperation with Russia, and those with Soviet-era weapons to transfer them to Ukraine.

"We call on the United States and its allies to stop the irresponsible militarization of Ukraine, which implies unpredictable consequences for regional and international security," the note said.

Andrew Weiss, a former National Security Council director for Russian, Ukrainian and Eurasian affairs, and now vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, recalled that Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a speech on the February morning the invasion began, warned that Western nations would face "consequences greater than any you have faced in history" if they became involved in the conflict.

Attention at the time focused on Putin's reminder that Russia possesses a powerful nuclear arsenal, Weiss said, but it was also "a very explicit warning about not sending weapons into a conflict zone." Having drawn a red line, he asked, are the Russians "now inclined to back that up?"

Such an attack would be "a very important escalatory move, first and foremost because it represents a threat to the West if they aren't able to keep supplies flowing into Ukraine, which by extension might diminish Ukraine's capacity for self-defense." That risk "shouldn't be downplayed," he said, noting the added risk that an attempt to strike a convoy inside Ukraine could go awry over the border into NATO territory.

Senior U.S. defense officials remain concerned about the possibility of such attacks. "We don't take any movement of weapons and systems going into Ukraine for granted," Kirby said Thursday. "Not on any given day."

Kirby said Ukrainian troops bring the weapons into Ukraine after the United States brings them into the region, and "the less we say about that, the better."

*-Dan Lamothe contributed to this report*

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## **7. Soviet-Era Missiles Now Guard Ukraine's Skies**

New York Times, Apr. 15, Pg. A1 | Andrew Higgins

DOBRA, Slovakia -- Driving back to his village near the Ukrainian border last Thursday, the mayor had to stop to let a train pass, and assumed he wouldn't have to wait long. But the flatbed wagons, stacked high with military equipment, just kept coming. He waited for nearly half an hour.

"It was a very long train, much longer than usual," recalled Mikolas Csoma, the mayor of Dobra, a previously sleepy village in eastern Slovakia that, over the past month, has become a key artery funneling weapons and ammunition into Ukraine by rail from the West.

The train that delayed Mr. Csoma's drive home was not only unusually long but also signaled a singular escalation in Western efforts to help Ukraine defend itself. It carried an air defense system made up of 48 surface-to-air missiles, four launchers and radars to guide the rockets to their targets, which in Ukraine means Russian warplanes and missiles.

As President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia vows to fight the war to its "full completion" and his forces regroup for an expected push in Ukraine's east, NATO countries, including the United States, are scrambling to keep the weapons flowing and bulk up the country's defenses.

Bolstering Ukraine's long-range air defense capabilities is seen as especially critical. Ukraine already had its own S-300 and other air defense systems, but some of these have been destroyed, leaving Russia with a large degree of freedom to hit Ukrainian targets from the air with warplanes and cruise missiles.

Increasingly desperate to reverse this imbalance, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has repeatedly pleaded with NATO to "close the sky over Ukraine" by imposing a no-fly zone. But NATO has been unwilling to send its own warplanes into Ukraine.

Instead, the United States offered Slovakia, a fellow NATO member, a substitute battery of American-made Patriot missiles if it would "donate" its aging S-300 system to Ukraine.

Jaroslav Nad, Slovakia's defense minister and a gung-ho supporter of Ukraine, said it would have been unthinkable before Russia's invasion for his country to send large quantities of even basic weapons across its eastern border free of charge, never mind an old but still powerful Soviet-made anti-aircraft system.

"But this is the world's new reality," he said in an interview in Bratislava, the Slovak capital. "We are a frontline state. We have war on our border and more than 330,000 Ukrainians coming to our country. The paradigm is completely different now."

Mr. Putin, he said, "is equal to Hitler" and must be stopped in Ukraine before he can move further West. "Ukraine is literally fighting for our future," he said.

Like Slovakia, other countries are also steadily expanding the scope of their military aid. The No. 2 Pentagon official met in Washington on Wednesday with America's largest military contractors to discuss how ready they are to restock supplies and what new capabilities to send to Ukraine.

The meeting and a new package of weapons, including artillery and ammunition, is intended in part by the Biden administration to blunt criticism that it is not doing enough for Ukraine and is too hesitant to send long-range weapon systems.

Other NATO members are already sending Ukraine bigger and better weaponry than before, including T-72 tanks and short-range air defense systems from the Czech Republic.

The S-300 system from Slovakia is the biggest item a NATO country has sent so far. It was previously deployed in Nitra, a city east of Bratislava at the other end of the country.

From there, it was hauled by truck and train to Dobra, where the state-controlled rail yard has Soviet gauge tracks, wider than the standard in Europe, which means it can run trains to and from Ukraine, which also has Soviet tracks.

Other big items now under discussion for transport to Ukraine via Slovakia include aging MIG-29 warplanes and sophisticated, self-propelled Howitzers called Zuzana 2. Also under review is a plan for Ukraine to send hundreds of damaged tanks, some of them captured from Russian forces, across the border for repair in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland, all of which have experience fixing Soviet-made equipment.

Slovakia "is not going to send tanks because we don't have any spare tanks," Mr. Nad said, underscoring an issue confronting even Ukraine's most eager backers. "We have to keep enough capabilities for our own armed forces."

But Slovakia is transporting not only weapons from its own stocks into Ukraine. It is also sending military aid from many other countries, including the Czech Republic, Australia and what Mr. Nad described as "countries that claim that they are not sending military material to Ukraine."

Hungary, Slovakia's southern neighbor, for example, has declared itself neutral in the conflict and barred weapons from passing through its own territory to Ukraine -- largely to avoid upsetting deliveries of cheap Russian gas -- but it is believed to have quietly provided weapons through other countries.

Asked about this, a Hungarian government spokesman in Budapest declined to confirm or deny that his country is providing military material, saying only that "Hungary's standpoint is well known, and it has remained unchanged."

Alarmed by the flood of weapons flowing across the borders of Slovakia, Poland and Romania, Russia has sought to stop or at least slow it by declaring all foreign arms destined for Ukraine a "legitimate target." Russia's foreign minister vowed last month that Moscow "will not allow" the transfer of Slovakia's S-300 air defense system.

It is too late for that now, and after failing to thwart the delivery, the defense ministry in Moscow claimed on Sunday that Russia had already destroyed the Slovak missile system when sea-launched cruise missiles hit a hangar near the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

Mr. Nad, the Slovak defense minister, dismissed this as a "fake news," apparently aimed at saving Russia's face and calming the nerves of Russian pilots sent on missions to bomb Ukraine. Mr. Nad said he had spoken with Ukraine's defense minister on Monday and been assured that "this system is working and is working well" and was not in Dnipro.

Previous military cargo sent into Ukraine by rail through Dobra and the nearby town of Cierna nad Tisou contained mostly ammunition and basic military hardware.

A separate weapons conduit through Poland, the main route for American arms, has involved weapons like Javelin, NLAW and Stinger missiles, which are light, portable, high-tech and relatively easy to hide in trucks passing through Polish border crossings into western Ukraine.

An air-defense battery, however, is too big to hide, particularly when it travels on trains with more than 120 wagons in full view of drivers blocked by their passage. The cargo was so bulky it took two days to deliver it just a few miles from Dobra into Ukraine in two separate trains.

"Everyone knows what is going on," said Jakub Zsolt, a steel factory maintenance worker who lives across the road from the rail yard. He said his grandchildren were scared by all the commotion, but added that he had himself grown accustomed to the clatter of military helicopters and the rumble of trucks carrying weapons to the loading yard.

All the same, he said, he worries that Slovakia, a small country of just 5.4 million people, is now wading too deeply into Ukraine's war with Russia.

"The Russians might attack us," he said, adding that he did not understand why Ukrainians needed so much help when "they come here driving much nicer cars -- Porsches and Mercedes -- than we drive in Slovakia."

Most refugees fleeing the war, nearly all women and children, don't drive anything, but cross on foot carrying just a change of clothes.

Mr. Zsolt's jaundiced view of Ukraine highlights the success of opponents of the pro-Western Slovak prime minister, Eduard Heger, who in an interview last week said, "We need to help Ukraine in every possible way to win this war." His foes, playing to a substantial segment of the population traditionally favorable to Moscow, have sought to turn public opinion against support for Ukraine and seized on the war as a political opportunity.

Robert Fico, a scandal-tainted former Slovak prime minister, upended the government's efforts to keep the delivery of the S-300 battery secret until it had safely arrived in Ukraine when he posted a video on his Facebook page last Thursday that showed a train carrying the disassembled air-defense system on its way to Ukraine.

He denounced Mr. Heger as "a freak in American hands who will do whatever the Americans tell him to do" and demanded that the public immediately be told where the S-300 system was going.

Mr. Nad, the defense minister, said the delivery had been kept secret for security reasons. The opposition, he added, is playing "political games" against the interests of their own country and also Ukraine.

"Russia is killing thousands of people in Ukraine and I am not going to count the votes that I would lose -- or gain -- based on the decisions of the government to help. The only thing that I am counting is the lives we can save in Ukraine," he said.

Pavel Macko, a retired Slovak general who served with NATO in Afghanistan and Germany, said the S-300 system delivered to Ukraine dated from the 1980s, when Slovakia was a member of the Warsaw Pact as part of Czechoslovakia, and was inferior to American-made Patriot missiles. But, he added, Ukrainians know how to use it and will be able to reduce Russia's mastery of the skies.

"This is not just symbolic but an important addition that could help make Russia change their plans," he said.

The mayor in Dobra, Mr. Csoma, said he supported helping Ukraine, but was noncommittal when asked about the wisdom of sending a powerful weapon system like the S-300.

Miffed not to be informed in advance about the disruption to traffic caused by the S-300 trains, he said: "They don't tell me anything. They should at least let me know about this kind of thing."

Nobody really worried much about the war spreading into Slovakia, he said, but the authorities have nonetheless dusted off old civil defense plans, with police taking an inventory of potential bomb shelters. In the event of conflict, the mayor said, he had been assured that district authorities would send buses to evacuate his village's 520 people.

"If something bad happens, we will all leave," he said. "So there is no panic yet."

*--Reporting was contributed by Julian Barnes in Washington and Benjamin Novak in Budapest*

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## **8. Russia Warns It Could Station Nuclear Forces in Europe if Finland, Sweden Join NATO**

## ***The invasion of Ukraine has tilted public opinion in Finland and Sweden toward seeking membership in the U.S.-led alliance***

Wall Street Journal Online, Apr. 14 | Bojan Pancevski and Georgi Kantchev

Russia warned on Thursday that it could station nuclear forces in and around a Russian exclave in Northern Europe and bolster its military presence there if Finland and Sweden join the NATO alliance.

Finland and Sweden are considering joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and will make a decision in the coming weeks. Both countries have a long tradition of military neutrality, but the Russian invasion of Ukraine has tilted public opinion and the political consensus in both countries toward seeking membership in the U.S.-led alliance.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, said Thursday that Russia would have to bolster its defenses in Kaliningrad—a Russian exclave wedged between Lithuania and Poland—as well as in the Baltic Sea, if the two countries joined the alliance.

"In this case, it will no longer be possible to talk about any nonnuclear status of the Baltic—the balance must be restored," said Mr. Medvedev, who served as Russia's president from 2008 to 2012. "Until now, Russia has not taken such measures and was not going to take them."

Mr. Medvedev said Russia would need to enhance its ground forces and air defenses in the region and deploy significant naval forces in the waters of the Baltic Sea.

Mr. Medvedev's comments were echoed by the Kremlin on Thursday.

Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin had already instructed the Defense Ministry to submit proposals for strengthening Russia's "western flank against the backdrop of building up the potential of NATO near our western borders."

Mr. Peskov said that there was no timeline yet for when such plans would be presented.

Finland could apply to join NATO within weeks, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said Wednesday after a government report concluded that joining the alliance would boost security in the region.

Until becoming a sovereign country in 1917, Finland was part of the Russian empire for over a century. The country, which successfully fought off a Soviet invasion during World War II and has since been neutral, has long refused to join NATO amid a lack of popular support for the move.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, however, polls have shown that support for membership had surged to well over 60% from below 20%. Most political parties in Helsinki now also agree Finland should become a member to boost its security.

"We have to be prepared for all kinds of actions from Russia...There is no other way to have security guarantees than under NATO's deterrence and common defense as guaranteed by NATO's Article 5," Ms. Marin told reporters in Stockholm, referring to the alliance's article that says an attack on one member is to be considered an attack on all.

Ms. Marin, who stood alongside her Swedish counterpart, Magdalena Andersson, said the decision would be made within weeks. "Everything changed when Russia invaded Ukraine," said Ms. Marin. "I think people's mind-sets in Finland, also in Sweden, changed and shifted very dramatically because of Russia's actions."

Finland shares a border of more than 800 miles with Russia, which would become NATO's most exposed eastern flank if the country becomes a member.

Sweden, which has been militarily neutral since the Napoleonic Wars over 200 years ago, is considering the same move.

Both countries are members of the European Union, which has its own security and defense arrangements.

"There is a before and after 24 February," Ms. Andersson said in reference to the day of Russia's attack on Ukraine. "The security landscape has completely changed."

A security policy review commissioned by Ms. Andersson that will assess NATO membership as an option is set to be completed before parliamentary elections in September. NATO membership is expected to be a key issue in the election.

While NATO officials have signaled that both countries would be immediately welcomed into the alliance, any membership application must be approved by all 30 member states, a process that could take up to a year.

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## **9. Russia's latest nuclear threat rings hollow in Baltic states**

Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 14 | Joel Gehrke

RZESZOW, Poland -- Russia threatened to deploy nuclear weapons near the Baltic Sea if Finland and Sweden apply to join NATO, but eastern flank allies regard the threat as a laughable effort to intimidate the Nordic states.

"It's just rhetoric, because they have nukes in Kaliningrad already," a senior European official said. "It's just meant for the public, actually, to frighten the public and parliamentarians in Sweden and Finland as well. But they shouldn't be stupid."

That scornful response suggests that Russian President Vladimir Putin's reputation for bad-faith threats and aggression is undermining Moscow's ability to shape the balance of power in the region. A senior Russian Foreign Ministry official warned that Finland and Sweden's entry into the alliance "will seriously worsen the military situation and bring about the most undesirable consequences," but a former Russian president attempted to send a more ominous signal.

"There can be no more talk of any nuclear-free status for the Baltic — the balance must be restored," Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev, whose term as president from 2008 to 2012 helped Putin navigate a constitutional term limit, said earlier Thursday. "Until today, Russia has not taken such measures and was not going to."

That's not true, according to Baltic officials. "Russia's current threats seem rather strange in particular as we know that, leaving the current security situation aside, they keep those weapons 100 kilometers (62 miles) away from the Lithuanian border," Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas told local media. "Nuclear weapons have always been kept in the Kaliningrad region."

The region has been subject to Moscow since the end of the Second World War, giving the Kremlin a port on the Baltic Sea and territorial holdings that put pressure on NATO. Kaliningrad is separated from Belarus, which is ruled by a Putin client dictator, by a short stretch of territory where the borders of Poland and Lithuania meet. This area, known as the Suwalki Gap, has long been regarded as one of NATO's most vulnerable points.

"They keep nuclear weapons, delivery vehicles, and have warehouses [in Kaliningrad]," said Anusauskas. "The international community and countries in the region are perfectly aware of that."

The Russian military's presence in Kaliningrad is one of the factors that makes Finland and Sweden such attractive potential members of NATO, according to the senior European official. As the alliance stands, the main route to deliver supplies to the Baltic states — Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia — without leaving NATO territory runs through the Suwalki Gap, which Russia could threaten from Belarus and Kaliningrad in a crisis. If Finland and Sweden join the alliance, then the Baltic Sea would be ringed by NATO members, easing seaborne deliveries to the Baltic states.

"They try to use this threatening rhetoric and use the nukes as threatening rhetoric because it seemed that it worked a little bit in the beginning of this big Ukraine war," the senior European official said. "So, now they try to use the same card, to mention in a sentence the word 'nuclear' and [hope] everybody will pull back. In the West, we should say, 'Hey, we know you are there already. We have nukes as well. NATO has nukes.'"

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## **10. The World's Most Powerful Nuclear Missile Is a Russian ICBM Nicknamed 'Satan'**

Military.com, Apr. 14 | Blake Stilwell

In the late 1960s, the Soviet Union jumped ahead of the United States' first strike capability in a big way. The latest version of the R-36 intercontinental ballistic missile (called SS-18 by NATO) could hit anywhere in the U.S. with at least 10 18-25 megaton nuclear warheads.

The new missile could destroy the Americans' LGM-30 Minuteman III missiles before they ever left their silos. As time went on, more advanced designs only increased its nuclear payload. Eventually, it carried more power than anything in the U.S. arsenal. From the moment its existence was uncovered, NATO forces nicknamed the weapon the "Satan" missile.

The R-36 is a family of missiles. The original, designated SS-9 by NATO, was the USSR's second intercontinental ballistic missile. Its 1966 design allowed it to be shot into space and stay in orbit around the Earth for an indefinite period of time. This development led to Article IV of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which prohibits nuclear missiles and other weapons of mass destruction from remaining in Earth's orbit.

Although the Outer Space Treaty's stipulations calmed some of the panic around the R-36 missile, the USSR's second version of the weapon wasn't going to make anyone feel better for long. The first model featured only one 20-megaton warhead. The second version, the R-36M, featured multiple reentry vehicles (the actual nuclear warheads), which could hit more than one target with one missile launch.

By the mid-1970s, Multiple Independently-targetable Reentry Vehicles, or MIRV, became the standard for ICBMs. MIRV systems could not only hit multiple targets, but required the defender to fire three to 10 defensive missiles in response. On top of overwhelming missile defenses, it provided greater first strike firepower.

This was the age of mutually assured destruction, the military doctrine that both sides of a nuclear war would be destroyed in a nuclear exchange. If a nuclear war broke out, both sides would fire all their missiles. MIRV technology allowed for more targets and increased the odds of a first strike effectively wiping out the other side before it could retaliate.

The United States first developed MIRV-based missiles with the three-warhead Minuteman III in 1968, but the SS-18 "Satan" could carry eight to 10 more powerful warheads, with the explosive power to destroy American missiles inside protected silos. When the "Satan" system became fully operational in 1975, the U.S. worried it would no longer survive a Soviet first strike and began working on missiles with more and more warheads.

Inside the USSR, Soviet engineers and scientists kept making modifications for future iterations of the "Satan" ICBM. By the time the Soviet Union fell, it had gone through six different versions, each more powerful than the last. The sixth version of the SS-18 missile would be the most powerful nuclear weapon ever fielded by the Soviet Union.

By the time the USSR fell in 1991, Soviet-built SS-18 missiles could strike anywhere in the world.

It wasn't until the development of ballistic missile submarines that the United States could reasonably guarantee it would be able to retaliate in the event of a Soviet first strike. This third part of the nuclear triad -- the others are land-based ICBMs and nuclear-equipped bomber aircraft -- continues today. American ballistic missile submarines can carry up to 24 Trident II missiles, each with 14 reentry vehicles.

Land-based MIRV missiles like the Satan missile were banned by the 1993 United States-Russia START II agreement, but Russia withdrew from that accord in 2002 after President George W. Bush's administration withdrew the U.S. from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which limited the number of defensive missiles each country could maintain.

As of March 2022, Russia still fields 46 SS-18 missiles, each with 10 warheads, on top of its other deployed ICBMs, an estimated 320 in all, according to the Arms Control Association. While it plans to dismantle its Satan missile stockpile under the terms of the 2012 New START agreement, it is still building new ICBM technology.

Russia's newest weapon is the RS-28 Sarmat "Satan-2" missile, with 10 heavy reentry vehicles, each with enough payload to wipe out an area the size of Texas or France. It also features hypersonic glide vehicles to make it less detectable by U.S. or space-based sensor systems and could be immune to American missile defense systems.

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## **EUROPE**

### **11. Gibraltar port call offers British a glimpse of U.S. submarine**

Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 14 | Alison Bath

NAPLES, Italy -- The USS Georgia, an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine, docked at port in Gibraltar this week as part of an ongoing effort to enhance relations with the United Kingdom, Navy officials said.

The scheduled visit, the third by a U.S. submarine within a year, includes office calls with local and military leadership and lets sailors experience the history of Gibraltar, while building relationships with a key partner in the Mediterranean Sea, said Cmdr. Richlyn Ivey, a spokeswoman for the Naples, Italy-based U.S. 6th Fleet.

The Wednesday arrival drew the attention of nearby ship watchers, who posted photos of the submarine online. The U.S. seldom announces the positions of its submarines.

In June 2021, USS Alaska, also an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine, visited the navy base in Gibraltar, which is near Naval Station Rota in Spain. That visit was the first by an Ohio-class submarine to Gibraltar in more than 20 years, online news outlet The Drive reported last year, citing a 6th Fleet spokeswoman.

The USS Albany, a Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine, also visited the strategic port in December.

The visit coincides with heightened U.S. and NATO naval presence in the Mediterranean, including deployment of the USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group, as the U.S. seeks to reassure allies amid Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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## **CHINA**

### **12. Panel: China Planning a 'Go Big, Go Early' Strategy Against Taiwan**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 14 | John Grady

Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently boasted of possibly using nukes against both Ukraine, and, more ominously, those NATO countries who aided Kyiv. In response, French President Emmanuel Macron reminded Russia that NATO itself has an ample nuclear deterrent.

In theory, should NATO and the U.S. supply Ukraine tanks, artillery and planes, the fierce Ukrainians could push the entire Russian army entirely out of their country. But would a nuclear Mr. Putin allow that?

Over the last few weeks, nuclear talk has arisen over a myriad of issues. If the war continues to go badly for Russia, at what point will a seemingly erratic Mr. Putin begin issuing nuclear redlines to Ukraine and its allies?

Would a crushing defeat push over the edge a nuclear trash-talking Mr. Putin — facing the possible end of his regime?

Ukraine nuke talk spins off into lots of other places. Nuclear North Korea is resuming its ballistic missile launches to intimidate nonnuclear South Korea and Japan. China is rapidly expanding its nuclear stockpiles and now talks openly of ending a free Taiwan, warning Taiwan's friends and allies to keep out — or else.

Iran promises to become nuclear soon. Nuclear Russia has assumed the role of interlocutor of all discussions to restart a new nuclear "Iran deal."

Russia controls Syrian airspace. In theory, Russian President Vladimir Putin could stop nuclear Israel either from replying to terrorist attacks emanating from Syria, or from staging a preemptive attack on Iran's nuclear bomb facilities.

Suddenly, newspapers and blogs seemed fixated on hyping the relative stockpiles and megatonnage of various nuclear states, as if they were just GDP or energy output data.

The world has become nuclear obsessed. Is there a danger in daily normalizing the abnormal and casually thinking the unthinkable?

Curbing loose nuke talk won't calm tensions or guarantee peace, but it wouldn't hurt either.

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## **26. Arming for the Next Fight in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 15, Pg. A14 | Editorial

Ukraine won the battle of Kyiv in heroic fashion, but the war is set to enter a bloody new phase as Vladimir Putin prepares an offensive in the east. The question is whether President Biden will summon the mettle to make sure America's friends win.

The Biden Administration on Wednesday announced \$800 million more in weapons, ammunition and other security assistance for Ukraine, calling it "tailored to the wider assault we expect Russia to launch in eastern Ukraine." The awful images coming out of Mariupol are a sign of what is to come, and the miracle is that the city's defenders have managed to hold out as long as they have. Mr. Putin said this week that peace talks have reached a dead end.

The terrain in the eastern part of the country is a "bit like Kansas," as the Pentagon put it, more open and less amenable to, say, the supply ambushes the Ukrainians have been running in the north. The Russians are reinforcing their combat power, and they can concentrate it in a smaller area. The Russian supply and morale problems won't

disappear overnight, but Mr. Putin has appointed a single commander with experience in Syria. Expect him to organize a ruthless campaign.

This means tougher fighting, long on artillery and missiles, and the Ukrainians will need heavier weapons and equipment. Wednesday's package includes 18 155mm Howitzers and 40,000 rounds, and this artillery will be put to productive use. Ditto for 10 counter-artillery radars, two air surveillance radars and 200 armored personnel carriers.

One bad sign is that the Biden Team wobbled before deciding to send 11 Mi-17 helicopters, though the U.S. has provided this type of aircraft before. Ukraine also wants and needs multiple-launch rocket systems, which don't appear on the U.S. list. This suggests U.S. decisions are still governed to a puzzling extent by fear of crossing Mr. Putin.

Ukrainian antiship capabilities need upgrading, but the latest Biden package includes only unmanned coastal defense vessels. The Ukrainians claim to have hit the Russian cruiser Moskva, though the Russians blame a fire aboard the ship. The smoking ship is a humiliation to the Russian navy, and Ukraine is doing the U.S. and NATO a great favor by offering to sink these Black Sea assets.

The Ukrainians still need long-range air defenses, and these deals need to move faster than the weeks it took to deliver Slovakia's S-300. There is a question of urgency and will about U.S. deliveries. The White House announced the U.S. would send 100 Switchblade loitering munitions on March 16. The Pentagon said on Wednesday -- April 13 -- that the last of these would enter Ukraine "over the course of the next day."

The Biden package this week promises more Switchblades, which may be helpful in the east because they can strike targets from a distance. But they'll be less useful if they arrive in a month. And it'll take much more effort to get heavier stuff like artillery to the front fast.

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More broadly, the U.S. and NATO need to shift from sending Ukraine whatever is on the shelf to a more coordinated effort to train and equip a Ukrainian military that may be fighting for years. This means training the Ukrainians on more complex NATO weapons, such as Patriot missile defenses and fighter aircraft.

The Ukrainians need to prevent Russian domination of the skies. The American military trains plenty of foreign military pilots, and starting now means the Ukrainian pilots could fly NATO aircraft as the war drags on.

Western training since Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 has been crucial in helping the Ukrainians mount the impressive defense they have so far, and this is no time to slow down. That ought to include setting up maintenance and repair shops in NATO countries, as facilities in Ukraine are Russian targets.

The paradox of President Biden's response in Ukraine is that he has been too casual with words like "genocide," as he was again this week, while he's also too hesitant to offer the lethal weapons Ukrainians need to win.

Mr. Putin could still succeed in swallowing parts of Ukraine, and he'll use his gains to keep threatening the country's existence. The fastest end to the human suffering is to confront the Russian dictator with the gradual destruction of his military if he continues this war of conquest. Mr. Putin cares more about that than he does moral denunciations.

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## **27. Will the Russo-Ukrainian War Provoke Nuclear Proliferation in Asia?**

***Before Russia invaded Ukraine, U.S. security assurances to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were mostly unchallenged. Now, that has changed***

National Interest Online, Apr. 14 | Andy Cichon

Following Beijing's announcement that Chinese-Russian relations had "no limits," China's backing of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has subsequently created an existential threat to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The invasion violated an agreement that exchanged Ukraine's nuclear weapons for security assurances and undermined U.S. policy and credibility with other nations with similar formal or informal U.S. assurances. As a result, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan now question the wisdom of relying on U.S. security assurances instead of their own nuclear deterrent.

In Ukraine's case, Russia and the United States agreed to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which included assurances for Ukraine's independence in exchange for turning over Soviet nuclear weapons that were left behind in Ukraine when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. However, while the memorandum was not a defense treaty that guaranteed U.S. protection or intervention, it was an example of the United States using its post-Cold War soft power and a combination of economic, diplomatic, and military power to negotiate Ukraine's nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation—just as it had with South Korea and Taiwan.

Having experienced the horrors of a nuclear attack in World War II, Japan gave up on the idea of having nuclear weapons without much convincing. However, the United States has repeatedly stopped South Korea's and Taiwan's nuclear weapons programs. Taiwan's first nuclear program started in 1967 following China's first atomic test in 1964. At the behest of the United States, Taiwan officially terminated its program in 1976. South Korea, too, acquired plutonium reprocessing equipment following the initial pullout of over 27,000 U.S. personnel in 1971. This effort only stopped after the United States and France refused to deliver the appropriate equipment, and South Korea ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975.

Despite ratifying the NPT, South Korea and Taiwan's continued national security concerns, including frequent North Korean missile tests and Chinese threats of invasion, pushed both nations to pursue secret programs. Taiwan's secret program progressed to the point where it needed further miniaturization and a means of delivery, by either missile or plane, until Taipei conceded to U.S. pressure to end the program in 1987. South Korea's program did not progress very far, but the country can already develop intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to Beijing.

Furthermore, most South Koreans and Taiwanese favor acquiring nuclear weapons, particularly during a crisis. As late as 2017, following the 2017 North Korea crisis, most South Koreans supported building nuclear weapons and remained open to the possibility of requesting the return of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea. During the 1996 Third Taiwan Strait crisis, Taiwan's president briefly proposed the reactivation of Taiwan's nuclear program before the United States intervened with the deployment of U.S. naval forces to the Taiwan Strait.

Whether South Korea or Taiwan renew their respective nuclear ambitions, both countries are already responding to Russia's invasion. Days after Russia's invasion, South Koreans elected Yoon Suk-yeol as president, a conservative candidate advocating closer ties with the United States to hedge against China. Now weeks into the invasion, Taiwan is studying the war to adjust its defensive approach against a Chinese attack. Even former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe commented on the need for the United States to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Japan, citing similar deployments to NATO countries as justification.

While the United States labors to rally international support to oppose Russia's invasion, it is unlikely that China will help reassure South Korea and Taiwan. North Korea continues its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs, and the Chinese Communist Party threatens to invade Taiwan. However, by backing Russia's invasion with public statements and refusing to financially sanction Russia, China has created a new existential crisis that undermines U.S. security assurances to South Korea and Taiwan in exchange for non-proliferation. This recent crisis has already resuscitated arguments for Taiwan, in particular, to acquire nuclear weapons. Now, the United States will have to reevaluate how it will maintain its security interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Before Russia invaded Ukraine, U.S. security assurances to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were mostly unchallenged. Additionally, China could afford to assume no responsibility and feign disinterest in non-proliferation,

relying on the United States to keep Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, by backing Russia's invasion and discrediting U.S. security assurances to countries that relinquished or terminated their nuclear weapons programs, China has inadvertently created a more dangerous world. China must either assume more responsibility in promoting nuclear non-proliferation in the Indo-Pacific or accept the elevated risks associated with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan pursuing nuclear deterrence.

*--Andy Cichon is a retired United States Naval Officer, who has served in various ships and staffs, including as Air Warfare Project Manager at the Royal Australian Navy's Australian Maritime Warfare Centre, and in the Chief of Naval Operations' staff for the U.S. Navy's international engagement with Australia, China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Vietnam. He works for SAIC as a civilian war gamer at the U.S. Navy's Tactical Training Group Pacific. His views are his own*

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## **28. With the West distracted, China expands**

Washington Post, Apr. 15, Pg. A21 | Josh Rogin

Over the past few weeks, the world has been understandably transfixed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's horrific invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, though, his close ally Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quietly taking advantage of the West's distraction by expanding China's sphere of influence in the South Pacific. If Washington doesn't wake up to this threat, China's efforts to dominate the region will gain dangerous and perhaps irreversible momentum.

Officials and experts throughout Asia expressed shock last month when a leaked document emerged showing a draft of a "security cooperation" agreement between China and the Solomon Islands, a small former British colony in the South Pacific that has been independent since 1978. The draft agreement would enable Beijing to send armed police or military personnel, at the request of the Solomon Islands, for a variety of purposes, including to "assist in maintaining social order." Marked confidential, the agreement would also expand the Chinese military's ability to send ships and troops to protect Chinese people and projects on the islands.

If you haven't been paying attention to the Solomon Islands government, led by Beijing-friendly Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, you're like most policymakers in Washington. But if you doubt the islands' strategic significance, just look at the map. A Chinese military presence there would put People's Liberation Army troops less than a five-hour flight from the eastern coast of Australia and far closer to U.S. territories than ever before.

China surely hasn't forgotten the role played by the Solomon Islands in World War II, especially during the 1942-43 Battle of Guadalcanal.

"Ensuring that these islands, within striking distance of Australia and occupying critical strategic geography, remain free from Chinese coercion and military presence is a massive strategic imperative for the U.S. and Australia," Alex Gray, director for Oceania and Indo-Pacific Security at the National Security Council during the Trump administration, told me.

Predictably, Beijing says that the agreement is no big deal and is "beyond reproach." But the U.S. and Australian governments have been scrambling to try to stop its completion. Australian officials are engaged in frantic shuttle diplomacy with the Sogavare government. President Biden's top NSC official for Asia, Kurt Campbell, will become the administration's first senior official to visit the Solomon Islands next week, in a regional tour that will include several other stops.

It was Campbell who predicted in January that China would unveil a "strategic surprise" in the Pacific this year. Clearly, the U.S. and Australian governments had some indication that this was coming. Yet neither seems to have done much to try to prevent the Chinese move. Now, experts say, both governments are struggling to catch up to Beijing.

"Reversing momentum, rather than stopping it in the first place, is risky and expensive," said former Australian national security official John Lee, now with the Hudson Institute. "The failure to do more to prevent the deal from even being contemplated means the U.S. and allies will need to spend more resources and regional political capital than they would like."

Biden administration officials maintain that they are, in fact, heavily engaged in the Pacific Islands. Biden spoke to Pacific Island leaders in August, via Zoom. Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Fiji in February. Last month, Biden appointed Ambassador Joseph Yun as a special envoy to work on completing negotiations to renew U.S. compacts with three other Pacific Island nations. State Department climate envoy John F. Kerry attended a conference in Palau this week.

A senior Biden administration official told me that covid restrictions hampered face-to-face diplomacy until recently, but the official assured me that the Biden team is determined to step up the United States' game in this region. Nevertheless, details of exactly how the Biden administration plans to try to persuade Sogavare to turn away from China are scarce.

"This did not come as a surprise, and this is not the only place in the Pacific or globally where China is extraordinarily active," the official said. "This is but a recent manifestation, and it's probably one of the boldest."

To be sure, the Solomon Islands is only one of many places in the Pacific Islands where China is expanding its influence. Beijing has persuaded two Pacific island countries to drop diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in recent years, including the Solomon Islands. China offers tempting packages of economic, diplomatic and military aid while bribing any and all corrupt leaders in these countries. Rather than reacting case by case, the United States and allied governments need to come to the table with substantive, long-term offers of aid and investment to reassure these Pacific Island nations that they have another option besides betting their future on partnership with Beijing.

Russia is an urgent threat, but China is the more serious long-term competitor, only too happy to exploit our distraction. Xi has global ambitions, which means we must confront his aggression in many places at once. If the Pacific Islands become China's outposts, the region and the world will be a much more dangerous place.

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## **29. The Dangers of China's Decline**

***As China's economic miracle fades, its leaders may become more inclined to take risks***

Foreign Policy, Spring 2022 | Hal Brands

Decline is a tricky concept. The term makes us think of a country that is falling like a rock—one whose power and capabilities are dropping across the board. But a country can be in relative decline vis-à-vis a fast-growing adversary even if its own power is still increasing. It can be surging forward in some areas, such as military might, even as its underlying economic strength starts to wither. And decline doesn't always lead a country to scale back its objectives—the sense of urgency it creates can cause ambitious powers to grab what they can before the clock runs out.

Xi Jinping's China is about to give the world an education in the nuances of decline. Since the onset of its economic reforms in the 1970s, China has long defied predictions that it would soon stumble or collapse. Its spectacular growth challenged prevailing views about the sources of national success in the modern world. In some ways, China is still soaring: Its military power grows more formidable every year. When Xi declares that "the East is rising and the West is declining," he gives voice to this sense that China is a country on the make.

Yet military power is often a lagging indicator of a country's trajectory: It takes time to turn money into military muscle, and massive buildups often persist even after a country's economic fortunes begin to flag. And today, for reasons including demographic disaster and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, China is facing the end of the stunning economic growth that made it possible for Xi to assert that the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation"

As for London, the Ministry of Defence has built an equally unconvincing case and, perhaps worse for its security, one that exposes a deep reliance on an ally for its supposedly independent deterrent. The war in Ukraine and heightened tensions with Russia must not dictate unnecessary modernization spending.

*--Shane Ward is a member of the International Student/Young Pugwash and Student Pugwash USA Executive Boards, as well as a member of BASIC's Emerging Voices Network. He received his BA from Bates College and previously interned with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He studies transatlantic security and British nuclear policy*

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## **STATE-RUN MEDIA**

### **32. Nuclear weapons deployment in Baltic on hold before Defense Ministry's plan – Kremlin**

TASS (Russia), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed

Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov advised to wait until the Russian Defense Ministry comes up with a plan regarding the enhancement of the country's western borders before speaking about a possible deployment of nuclear weapons in the Baltic area.

His statement came in response to a question about a possible deployment of the Russian nuclear weapons in the Baltic area in case Sweden and Finland join NATO.

"I can say nothing in this regard, because only after a plan of our enhancement of the western borders is drafted. It will contain a number of measures and all necessary steps to be taken," Peskov told journalists.

"It will be considered at a separate presidential session, just like [President] Putin said himself previously," Peskov added.

He reminded that the president issued earlier a special decree for the Defense Ministry regarding the enhancement of national troops' presence near the country's western frontiers and the Defense Ministry needed some time to come up with a detailed plan.

"It will take some time, this is serious work to be done," Peskov added.

Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia Dmitry Medvedev announced earlier on Thursday that Russia would beef up security along its Western borders if Sweden and Finland join NATO and there would be no more talk of a nuclear-free Baltic.

In his statement posted on Telegram channel, Medvedev explained that it would be necessary to beef up the group of ground troops and the air defense system and deploy substantial naval forces in the Gulf of Finland. "If this is the case, there can no longer be talk about the Baltic's non-nuclear status - the balance must be restored," he stated.

### *Russia's special military operation in Ukraine*

On February 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced recognizing the sovereignty of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. Russia recognized the Donbass republics in accordance with the DPR and LPR constitutions within the boundaries of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions as of the beginning of 2014.

Russian President Putin said in a televised address on February 24 that in response to a request by the heads of the Donbass republics he had made a decision to carry out a special military operation in Ukraine in order to protect people "who have been suffering from abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years."

The Russian leader stressed that Moscow had no plans of occupying Ukrainian territories, noting that the operation was aimed at the denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine. The DPR and the LPR launched an operation to liberate their territories under Kiev's control.

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### **33. Russia to take defense measures if Sweden, Finland join NATO, senior diplomat warns**

TASS (Russia), Apr. 14 | Not Attributed

Moscow will take required security and defense measures if Sweden and Finland join NATO, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told TASS on Thursday.

"It is clear that our border with Finland is 1,300 km long. This will mean a radical change in the military and political situation and it is understandable that we will be forced to take security and defense measures that we will deem necessary. This is the essence of military development," the senior Russian diplomat said, responding to a question about the possibility of Russia deploying nuclear weapons in the Baltic region.

"In the current conditions, I am not ready to say whether this is real or not [the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO]," the high-ranking Russian diplomat said, replying to a corresponding question.

"For decades, the neutral status of these states had ensured a very high level of their security and generally the security in that region that had been a region of peace and cooperation and, importantly, a very reliable platform for building good neighborly relations with us," Grushko said.

The neutral status of Sweden and Finland did not impede these states in any way whatsoever from developing closer ties with the European Union and eventually becoming its members, the senior Russian diplomat pointed out.

Based on rational considerations and vital interests of the peoples living in the north of Europe, the current situation must be preserved, Grushko stressed.

"Otherwise, this will seriously worsen the military situation and bring about the most undesirable consequences that need to be avoided," he cautioned.

Replying to a question about Moscow's contacts with Helsinki and Stockholm in the wake of ongoing discussions in these countries about their possible accession to NATO, Grushko pointed out that "diplomatic contacts are always maintained and there are embassies." "But Sweden and Finland have joined the sanctions and are participating in the anti-Russia campaign unleashed in the West. This is today's reality."

The Times newspaper earlier reported, citing sources that both countries might join NATO already in the summer of this year. According to the paper, Finland is expected to file its NATO membership bid in June to be followed by Sweden. Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday that Russia would bolster its western borders, if Sweden and Finland joined NATO and in this case "there can be no talk about the nuclear-free status of the Baltic region."

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### **34. Visit of US delegation to Taiwan undermines China-US relations, Chinese top brass says**

TASS (Russia), Apr. 15 | Not Attributed

A recent visit of US congressmen to Taiwan undermines the political foundation of Chinese-US relations, the Friday statement by Chinese Defense Ministry Spokesman Wu Qian said.

"Such actions by the US grossly violate the 'One China' principle and the provisions of three Chinese-US joint communique, cause serious damage to the political foundation of the Chinese-American relations," he noted.

## CTR Media Clip Summary

April 8-11, 2022

**BLUF:** Though Russian and Chinese bio lab disinformation declined in volume, narratives evolved to include expansion of bio labs in Mongolia, coverage of anti-bio lab demonstrations in Armenia, and conspiracies of a secret underground bio laboratory in Mariupol.

**Russian Disinformation:** Russian state media consistently reported on relocation of U.S. biomaterials from Ukraine to Mongolia while a Telegram contingent honed in on a “secret underground NATO bio laboratory” beneath the Azovstal plant in Mariupol.

- Izvestia News, along with other state media outlets, reported heavily on alleged U.S. intentions to open bio labs in Mongolia.
- Izvestia listed the National Center for Zoonotic Diseases, Mongolian University of Natural Sciences, Mongolian Academy of Medical Sciences, and the Institute of Veterinary Medicine as vectors for U.S. bioactivity collaboration.
- Telegram user @Informburo\_sfd (daily reach to approximately 700k users) is central to the underground bio lab conspiracy in Mariupol. The user claimed that there is a secret subterranean NATO facility, PIT-404, housing bioweapons in Mariupol.
- Telegram users asserted there are NATO officers, French Foreign Legion members, and 3,000 Akhmetov financed guards in said secret NATO facility.
- Sputnik and other Russian state media channels covered protests in Yerevan where organizers demanded immediate closure of all U.S. bio labs in Armenia.
- Fringe site News Front claimed the U.S. engaged in psychotropic weapons research (a continuation of MK-ULTRA) in bio labs in Ukraine.
- Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan activists circulated a petition for the immediate elimination of U.S. bio lab facilities according to the fringe site Shnyagi.net.
- Several Russian state media outlets recirculated stories about a potential “mosquito attack” on Russia stemming from the Lugar Center in Georgia.
- Telegram and Twitter users continued the “Bio Biden” mantra as they posted about Hunter Biden’s supposed conspiratorial links through Rosemont Seneca to bio labs in Ukraine.
- An op-ed in Kenya’s second most read paper, The Standard, focused on U.S. bio labs in Ukraine but also raised concerns about DTRA’s suspected bio activities at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI).

**Chinese Disinformation:** Chinese state media concentrated on the opening of U.S. bio labs in Mongolia as Weibo users repeated conspiracies about Fort Detrick and Covid-19 origins.

- At a press conference, Zhao Lijian leveraged the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BWC to call for a reinvigoration of verification protocols and compliance measures. Zhao stated that China will “play a bigger role” in ensuring responsible, cooperative biological research.
- Chinese state media asserted the U.S. will relocate biomaterials from Ukraine to Mongolia to continue bioweapons research on China’s frontier.
- Weibo users recycled claims that Covid-19 originated from Fort Detrick and that U.S. bio labs in Ukraine could bestow a new Coronavirus.

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**From:** CENTCOM Macdill AFB CENTCOM HQ Mailbox CCCI JOC Desk

**Sent:** Thu, 7 Apr 2022 08:59:29 +0000

**To:** (b)(6)

**Cc:**

(b)(6)

**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 7 APR 22

**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 7 APR 22.docx, CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 7 APR 22.pdf, smime.p7s

## **CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS**

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 7, 2022

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### **COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

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1. Reuters reported the International Atomic Energy Agency announced Wednesday that Iran has moved all its machines that make centrifuge parts from its mothballed workshop at Karaj to its sprawling Natanz site just six weeks after it set up another site at Isfahan to make the same parts. The announcement raises the question of whether Iran will increase output by using both Natanz and Isfahan.
2. Reuters led media reporting stating Yemen President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi announced he dismissed his controversial vice president, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar and delegated his own powers to a presidential council. The move was reportedly backed by Saudi Arabia and characterized by media as removing some obstacles to revive U.N. peace negotiations to end the nearly eight-year war. Additionally, Saudi Arabia announced \$3 billion in financial aid to Yemen's Riyadh-backed government.
3. NBC News highlighted the Biden Administration's use of declassified intelligence which has led to a new tactic in fighting the information war: the use of intelligence to inform the public and blunt the enemy's information campaign. Citing several examples including the release of declassified information stating Russia was prepping to use chemical weapons in Ukraine – analysts stated the intelligence releases have shown that intelligence information could be used as an instrument of state power.

## **U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **TOP NEWS**

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- 1. Iran moves equipment for making centrifuge parts to Natanz, IAEA says**  
Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Francois Murphy

Iran has moved all its machines that make centrifuge parts from its mothballed workshop at Karaj to its sprawling Natanz site just six weeks after it set up another site at Isfahan to make the same parts, the UN nuclear watchdog said on Wednesday.

## **2. Yemen president cedes powers to council as Saudi Arabia pushes to end war**

Reuters, 7 Apr 22, Mohamed Ghobari and Ahmed Tolba

Yemen's president dismissed his controversial deputy on Thursday and delegated his own powers to a presidential council in a move backed by Saudi Arabia, removing some obstacles to U.N.-led efforts to revive negotiations to end the seven-year war.

## **3. In a break with the past, U.S. is using intel to fight an info war with Russia, even when the intel isn't rock solid**

NBC News, 6 Apr 22, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Dan De Luce

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions.

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## **NOTABLE TWEETS**

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**Iraq Ministry of Defense Security Media Cell; @SecMedCell (6 Apr):** (1) At a time when the Iraqi lands enjoy security and faith during the days of the holy month of Ramadan, outlaw groups are trying to disturb these blessed days. This evening, terrorist elements bombed Khabat district in Erbil governorate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq with three Katyusha rockets. (2) It fell in separate areas eliminated in empty and agricultural spaces near the Kurusk complex, the Great Zab River and the Kurokosk refinery, without recording human or material losses. It was found that these missiles were launched from the Hamdaniya crossing. (3) For their part, the competent security services have launched a search and search process for the terrorist elements that carried out this terrorist act. The security forces will work to bring those who tampered with security to justice, so that they may receive their just punishment.

**Yemen PM, Dr. Maeen Abdulmalek Saeed, @Yemen\_PM (6 Apr):** A meeting with the Vice President of the World Bank dealt with aspects of joint coordination to mobilize support and funds necessary for government programs to maintain food security, provide services, and help it carry out its duties and obligations in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

**U.S. State Dept - Near Eastern Affairs; @StateDept\_NEA (6 Apr):** The U.S. supports @UN peace efforts for #Yemen, including the negotiated truce. But ultimately, deep-rooted divisions need to be resolved by Yemenis through dialogue & compromise," said #USEnvoyYemen in a mtg w/Secretary-General People's Congress Advisor Alalimi. @USEmbassyYemen

**Inherent Resolve; @CJTFOIR (6 Apr):** Hope for a better future. Daesh attempts to destroy people's spirit in NE Syria during its brutal rule has failed. The @Coalition remains partnered

with the #SDF to ensure the lasting defeat of Daesh & help keep NE Syria safe & secure.  
#StrongerTogether

**President Biden; @POTUS (6 Apr):** I made clear that Russia would pay a severe and immediate price for its atrocities in Bucha. Today, along with our Allies and partners, we're announcing a new round of devastating sanctions.

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (6 Apr):** We are implementing sanctions on two of the largest Russian financial institutions, designating the adult children of President Putin, the wife and adult child of Foreign Minister Lavrov, and 21 members of Russia's National Security Council, including former President Medvedev.

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (6 Apr):** As the global security environment changes, @NATO adapts. Today, I met with Allied foreign ministers to continue work on the Strategic Concept, addressing new challenges while reaffirming core values. NATO will adopt the new Strategic Concept at the 2022 Madrid Summit in June.

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ISIS

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#### **4. Germany arrests Syrian accused of torturing captives with Daesh**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22

German investigators on Wednesday arrested a Syrian man accused of war crimes for allegedly torturing captives while he was with Daesh group in Syria in 2014.

#### **5. Former Islamic State hostages testify to cruelty of British-accented guards**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Aruna Viswanatha

When Federico Motka got on the witness stand to testify last week in the trial of Islamic State member El Shafee Elsheikh, he shared vivid memories about three prison guards who spoke with east London accents and dominated his 14 months as a hostage when the terrorist group controlled much of Syria.

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IRAN

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#### **6. Iran says it gave long-sought answers to UN atomic watchdog**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nasser Karimi

Iran on Wednesday said it supplied the United Nations' nuclear watchdog with documents explaining the discovery of suspect enriched uranium traces, state media reported, the first acknowledgement from Tehran that it had answered the agency's long-standing demands.

#### **7. Iran made deal to access frozen foreign funds, IRNA reports**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Arsalan Shahla

Iran has made an agreement to release a "considerable amount" of its assets frozen in overseas accounts because of U.S. sanctions, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said, citing an official source.

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## IRAQ

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### **8. Three missiles fall near refinery in Iraq's Erbil, no casualties -state media**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22

Three missiles fell near an oil refinery in Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Wednesday without causing any casualties or damage, Kurdistan anti-terrorism authorities said in a statement. Iraq's state news agency cited the statement as saying "initial information show the missiles were launched from Nineveh" province in Iraq.

### **9. Iraq reopens National Museum after thousands of smuggled artifacts return**

Al-Monitor, 6 Apr 22, Adnan Abu Zeed

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi inaugurated April 6 the National Museum, which has been rehabilitated and its halls restored, prompting many local and foreign visitors to visit.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **10. Al-Qaida leader circulates video, dispels rumor of his death**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Kathy Gannon

A rare video has appeared of al-Qaida's chief praising an Indian Muslim woman who in February defied a ban on wearing the traditional headscarf, or hijab. The footage is the first proof in months that the man who was once Osama bin Laden's No. 2 is still alive.

### **11. Iran condemns Afghan mosque attack after US, China, Russia, Pakistan talks**

Newsweek, 6 Apr 22, Tom O'Connor

Iran has voiced its condemnation of a recent grenade attack against Kabul's largest mosque just days after representatives of the United States, China, Russia and Pakistan met to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, a country beset by humanitarian crisis and militant threats.

### **12. University of Maryland to house Afghan refugees on campus**

Washington Examiner, 6 Apr 22

The University of Maryland announced it will provide temporary housing for refugee and evacuee families from Afghanistan as part of a partnership with the International Rescue Committee.

### **13. Afghan women rip down banners when Taliban refuse to talk about education**

Deutsche Welle (Germany), 6 Apr 22

They went to the meeting hoping to talk to the Taliban about Afghan women's right to education. Around 400 women and girls, many of them of high-school and university age, showed up on April 1 at a sports hall in the central city of Bamiyan for what they had been told would be a chance to discuss their right to get an education. But when it turned out to be a rally for the local Taliban – with not a word said about education – the women tore down a banner and demanded to be heard.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **14. Pakistan's top court likely to rule Thursday on Khan blocking his own ouster**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Asif Shahzad and Gibran Naiyyar Peshimam

Pakistan's top court could rule on Thursday on Prime Minister Imran Khan's move to block an opposition attempt to oust him, a step his critics say is unconstitutional and has touched off political turmoil.

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## YEMEN

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### **15. UN envoy says he's concerned about Yemen truce violations**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Samy Magdy

The U.N. envoy for Yemen expressed concerns on Wednesday about violations of a cease-fire in the war-wrecked country, urging the warring sides to uphold the first nationwide truce in six years. Hans Grundberg said that while the truce has led to "significant reduction of violence" in Yemen, there were reports of "some hostile military activities," particularly around the central city of Marib.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **16. Israel's government in crisis after senior lawmaker quits coalition**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Patrick Kingsley and Isabel Kershner

Israel's fragile government was thrown into crisis on Wednesday after a senior lawmaker quit the coalition, leaving it without a majority in Parliament and auguring a return to the political instability that has hobbled the country in recent years.

### **17. U.S. says potential F-16 sale to Turkey would serve U.S. interests, NATO**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Humeyra Pamuk

The Biden administration believes a potential sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey would be in line with U.S. national security interests and would also serve NATO's long-term unity, the State Department said in a letter to Congress that fell short of explicitly supporting the deal.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **18. U.S. satellites spying on Russia's War tap commercial technology**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

U.S. surveillance of Russia's Ukraine invasion has been buttressed by two newer satellite systems built with commercial parts and on-board imagery processes, the head of the intelligence agency that manages the programs said in a rare public statement.

### **19. Financial warfare: will there be a backlash against the dollar?**

Financial Times, 7 Apr 22, Robin Wigglesworth, Polina Ivanova and Colby Smith

Two weeks after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, South African president Cyril Ramaphosa held a phone call with Russia's Vladimir Putin. On the same day, European leaders meeting in Versailles warned democracy itself was at stake. Yet Ramaphosa struck a very different tone.

#### **20. US disrupts global 'botnet' controlled by Russian military intelligence, DOJ says**

The Guardian, 6 Apr 22, David Smith

The US has disrupted a global "botnet" controlled by Russia's military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday.

#### **21. U.S. government and energy firms close ranks, fearing Russian cyberattacks**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Ellen Nakashima

In February, as Russian troops massed on Ukraine's border, executives with a major energy firm here worked with U.S. energy and homeland security officials to draw up a playbook and help prepare the electricity sector to deal with potential cyberattacks by Russia.

#### **22. Hypersonic-Missile delay puts U.S. further Behind Russia, China**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

The first U.S. hypersonic weapon will be delayed for as long as a year under a new schedule, even as lawmakers protest that the Pentagon is lagging behind in a new technology that Russia has already used in Ukraine and China has demonstrated in a space launch.

#### **23. USS Gerald R. Ford's captain on why the carrier's new island design works**

The War Zone, 6 Apr 22, Howard Altman

For Navy Capt. Paul "Paulie" Lanzilotta, 140 feet makes a world of difference. That's how far the island superstructure of the \$13 billion USS Gerald R. Ford has been moved to the aft on the 1,106-foot long vessel, which leads a new class of aircraft carriers, compared to what's found on the previous Nimitz class.

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### ADJACENT AORs

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#### **24. NATO nations see differing paths as Ukraine War enters uncertain stage**

New York Times, Apr 6, 22, Steven Erlanger and Michael Crowley

Faced with the prospect that the war in Ukraine will be long and grinding, NATO countries are divided on how best to manage the next stage of the conflict and the uncertain period that promises to follow.

#### **25. US imposes 'severe' sanctions on Russian banks after Bucha atrocities**

Financial Times, 6 Apr 22, Courtney Weaver, James Politi, Colby Smith and Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe

The US has imposed its most severe level of sanctions on Sberbank, Russia's largest financial institution, and Alfa-Bank, the country's biggest private bank, escalating its economic punishment of Moscow in response to atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

## **26. Eastern Ukraine braces for renewed assault as Russia regroup**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, David L. Stern, Joby Warrick, Louisa Loveluck and Max Bearak

MUKACHEVO, Ukraine — Ukrainian officials called Wednesday for evacuations in three provinces near the Russian border amid new signs that President Vladimir Putin's troops are escalating their assault on eastern and southern cities following a failed attempt to take the country's capital.

## **27. Ukraine's surprise strike on Russian fleet hobbles Putin's Donbas strategy**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Brett Forrest and Nancy A. Youssef

A surprise Ukrainian strike on a Russian ship at a southern port city last month could curb Moscow's plan to expand its hold on the Donbas region, eliminating a key military advantage in the Russian attack plan, Ukrainian military analysts and U.S. officials said.

## **28. Russia is recruiting mercenaries and Syrians to Ukraine, Western officials say**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper

As Russian troops retreat from northern Ukraine and focus operations on the country's east and south, the Kremlin is struggling to scrape together enough combat-ready reinforcements to conduct a new phase of the war, according to American and other Western military and intelligence officials.

## **29. Pentagon: Russia has fully withdrawn from Kyiv, Chernihiv**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Karoun Demirjian and Dan Lamothe

Russian forces have fully withdrawn from the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the city of Chernihiv to its north, the Pentagon said Wednesday, as Moscow prepares to concentrate its invading forces in the eastern part of the country.

## **30. China's security deal with Solomons raises alarm in Pacific**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nick Perry and David Rising

A security alliance between China and the Solomon Islands has sent shudders throughout the South Pacific, with many worried it could set off a large-scale military buildup or that Western animosity to the deal could play into China's hands. What remains most unclear is the extent of China's ambitions.

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **31. Finland may finally want in on NATO; Sweden is not far behind.**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, Robbie Gramer and Amy Mackinnon

Just over two months ago, the prospect of Finland joining NATO was virtually unthinkable to most in the northern European country. It had grown closer to the military alliance over the last three decades but resisted the idea of becoming a full-fledged member. That all changed when tens of thousands of Russian troops rolled across Ukraine's border in late February.

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Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Daniel Henninger

In no sense now can Vladimir Putin be allowed to win in Ukraine. People shouldn't have to be shot in the back of the head with their hands tied behind them to make that clear, but such is history's record of humanity slow-walking counterattacks against mass slaughter.

### **33. Across South Asia, U.S. and India push back against China**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, C. Raja Mohan

When Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh hold a so-called two-plus-two dialogue with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in Washington on Monday, managing the discord between their countries over Russia's war in Ukraine will be a priority. India, a major customer of Russian weapons, has so far refused to condemn the brutal invasion at the United Nations or join the West in sanctioning Russia. The Biden administration and the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, are determined not to let their differences over Russia come in the way of strengthening the Indian-U.S. partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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### **34. Outgoing air force chief: Israel no longer has full freedom of action over Lebanon**

Times of Israel, 6 Apr 22

Outgoing air force chief Amikam Norkin said Israel no longer has unfettered air superiority and freedom of action in Lebanon's skies in an interview broadcast on Tuesday. After a drone was nearly shot down by an anti-aircraft missile over Lebanon about a year ago, Israel realized that Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group had some capabilities it was not previously aware of, Norkin said.

### **35. Israel concerned over Iranian takeover of Syrian Golan**

Arutz Sheva, 6 Apr 22

Terror groups seeking to enlist supporters among Shiite population in Syria have already enlisted a few hundred, report says. With the end of Syria's civil war, the IDF has identified a new threat brought about by the demographic change and significant growth of the Alawite and Shiite population in Syria.

### **36. Gantz speaks with Palestinian president for Ramadan**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 6 Apr 22

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz spoke with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas over the phone on Tuesday on the occasion of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Gantz's office said.

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Headquarters U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)

Communication Integration (CCCI) directorate

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## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 7, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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- 1) Reuters reported the International Atomic Energy Agency announced Wednesday that Iran has moved all its machines that make centrifuge parts from its mothballed workshop at Karaj to its sprawling Natanz site just six weeks after it set up another site at Isfahan to make the same parts. The announcement raises the question of whether Iran will increase output by using both Natanz and Isfahan.
- 2) Reuters led media reporting stating Yemen President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi announced he dismissed his controversial vice president, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar and delegated his own powers to a presidential council. The move was reportedly backed by Saudi Arabia and characterized by media as removing some obstacles to revive U.N. peace negotiations to end the nearly eight-year war. Additionally, Saudi Arabia announced \$3 billion in financial aid to Yemen's Riyadh-backed government.
- 3) NBC News highlighted the Biden Administration's use of declassified intelligence which has led to a new tactic in fighting the information war: the use of intelligence to inform the public and blunt the enemy's information campaign. Citing several examples – including the release of declassified information stating Russia was prepping to use chemical weapons in Ukraine – analysts stated the intelligence releases have shown that intelligence information could be used as an instrument of state power.

### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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#### TOP NEWS

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#### **1. Iran moves equipment for making centrifuge parts to Natanz, IAEA says**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Francois Murphy

Iran has moved all its machines that make centrifuge parts from its mothballed workshop at Karaj to its sprawling Natanz site just six weeks after it set up another site at Isfahan to make the same parts, the UN nuclear watchdog said on Wednesday.

#### **2. Yemen president cedes powers to council as Saudi Arabia pushes to end war**

Reuters, 7 Apr 22, Mohamed Ghobari and Ahmed Tolba

Yemen's president dismissed his controversial deputy on Thursday and delegated his own powers to a presidential council in a move backed by Saudi Arabia, removing some obstacles to U.N.-led efforts to revive negotiations to end the seven-year war.

### **3. In a break with the past, U.S. is using intel to fight an info war with Russia, even when the intel isn't rock solid**

NBC News, 6 Apr 22, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Dan De Luce

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions.

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### NOTABLE TWEETS

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**Iraq Ministry of Defense Security Media Cell; @SecMedCell (6 Apr):** (1) At a time when the Iraqi lands enjoy security and faith during the days of the holy month of Ramadan, outlaw groups are trying to disturb these blessed days. This evening, terrorist elements bombed Khabat district in Erbil governorate in the Kurdistan region of Iraq with three Katyusha rockets. (2) It fell in separate areas eliminated in empty and agricultural spaces near the Kurusk complex, the Great Zab River and the Kurokosk refinery, without recording human or material losses. It was found that these missiles were launched from the Hamdaniya crossing. (3) For their part, the competent security services have launched a search and search process for the terrorist elements that carried out this terrorist act. The security forces will work to bring those who tampered with security to justice, so that they may receive their just punishment.

**Yemen PM, Dr. Maeen Abdulmalek Saeed, @Yemen\_PM (6 Apr):** A meeting with the Vice President of the World Bank dealt with aspects of joint coordination to mobilize support and funds necessary for government programs to maintain food security, provide services, and help it carry out its duties and obligations in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

**U.S. State Dept - Near Eastern Affairs; @StateDept\_NEA (6 Apr):** The U.S. supports @UN peace efforts for #Yemen, including the negotiated truce. But ultimately, deep-rooted divisions need to be resolved by Yemenis through dialogue & compromise," said #USEnvoyYemen in a mtg w/Secretary-General People's Congress Advisor Alalimi. @USEmbassyYemen

**Inherent Resolve; @CJTFOIR (6 Apr):** Hope for a better future. Daesh attempts to destroy people's spirit in NE Syria during its brutal rule has failed. The @Coalition remains partnered with the #SDF to ensure the lasting defeat of Daesh & help keep NE Syria safe & secure. #StrongerTogether

**President Biden; @POTUS (6 Apr):** I made clear that Russia would pay a severe and immediate price for its atrocities in Bucha. Today, along with our Allies and partners, we're announcing a new round of devastating sanctions.

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (6 Apr):** We are implementing sanctions on two of the largest Russian financial institutions, designating the adult children of President Putin, the wife and adult child of Foreign Minister Lavrov, and 21 members of Russia's National Security Council, including former President Medvedev.

**Secretary Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (6 Apr):** As the global security environment changes, @NATO adapts. Today, I met with Allied foreign ministers to continue work on the Strategic Concept, addressing new challenges while reaffirming core values. NATO will adopt the new Strategic Concept at the 2022 Madrid Summit in June.

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## ISIS

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### **4. Germany arrests Syrian accused of torturing captives with Daesh**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22

German investigators on Wednesday arrested a Syrian man accused of war crimes for allegedly torturing captives while he was with Daesh group in Syria in 2014.

### **5. Former Islamic State hostages testify to cruelty of British-accented guards**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Aruna Viswanatha

When Federico Motka got on the witness stand to testify last week in the trial of Islamic State member El Shafee Elsheikh, he shared vivid memories about three prison guards who spoke with east London accents and dominated his 14 months as a hostage when the terrorist group controlled much of Syria.

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## IRAN

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### **6. Iran says it gave long-sought answers to UN atomic watchdog**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nasser Karimi

Iran on Wednesday said it supplied the United Nations' nuclear watchdog with documents explaining the discovery of suspect enriched uranium traces, state media reported, the first acknowledgement from Tehran that it had answered the agency's long-standing demands.

### **7. Iran made deal to access frozen foreign funds, IRNA reports**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Arsalan Shahla

Iran has made an agreement to release a "considerable amount" of its assets frozen in overseas accounts because of U.S. sanctions, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said, citing an official source.

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## IRAQ

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### **8. Three missiles fall near refinery in Iraq's Erbil, no casualties -state media**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22

Three missiles fell near an oil refinery in Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Wednesday without causing any casualties or damage, Kurdistan anti-terrorism authorities said in a statement. Iraq's state news agency cited the statement as saying "initial information show the missiles were launched from Nineveh" province in Iraq.

### **9. Iraq reopens National Museum after thousands of smuggled artifacts return**

Al-Monitor, 6 Apr 22, Adnan Abu Zeed

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi inaugurated April 6 the National Museum, which has been rehabilitated and its halls restored, prompting many local and foreign visitors to visit.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **10. Al-Qaida leader circulates video, dispels rumor of his death**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Kathy Gannon

A rare video has appeared of al-Qaida's chief praising an Indian Muslim woman who in February defied a ban on wearing the traditional headscarf, or hijab. The footage is the first proof in months that the man who was once Osama bin Laden's No. 2 is still alive.

### **11. Iran condemns Afghan mosque attack after US, China, Russia, Pakistan talks**

Newsweek, 6 Apr 22, Tom O'Connor

Iran has voiced its condemnation of a recent grenade attack against Kabul's largest mosque just days after representatives of the United States, China, Russia and Pakistan met to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, a country beset by humanitarian crisis and militant threats.

### **12. University of Maryland to house Afghan refugees on campus**

Washington Examiner, 6 Apr 22

The University of Maryland announced it will provide temporary housing for refugee and evacuee families from Afghanistan as part of a partnership with the International Rescue Committee.

### **13. Afghan women rip down banners when Taliban refuse to talk about education**

Deutsche Welle (Germany), 6 Apr 22

They went to the meeting hoping to talk to the Taliban about Afghan women's right to education. Around 400 women and girls, many of them of high-school and university age, showed up on April 1 at a sports hall in the central city of Bamiyan for what they had been told would be a chance to discuss their right to get an education. But when it turned out to be a rally for the local Taliban with not a word said about education the women tore down a banner and demanded to be heard.

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## PAKISTAN

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#### **14. Pakistan's top court likely to rule Thursday on Khan blocking his own ouster**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Asif Shahzad and Gibran Naiyyar Peshimam

Pakistan's top court could rule on Thursday on Prime Minister Imran Khan's move to block an opposition attempt to oust him, a step his critics say is unconstitutional and has touched off political turmoil.

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### YEMEN

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#### **15. UN envoy says he's concerned about Yemen truce violations**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Samy Magdy

The U.N. envoy for Yemen expressed concerns on Wednesday about violations of a cease-fire in the war-wrecked country, urging the warring sides to uphold the first nationwide truce in six years. Hans Grundberg said that while the truce has led to "significant reduction of violence" in Yemen, there were reports of "some hostile military activities," particularly around the central city of Marib.

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **16. Israel's government in crisis after senior lawmaker quits coalition**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Patrick Kingsley and Isabel Kershner

Israel's fragile government was thrown into crisis on Wednesday after a senior lawmaker quit the coalition, leaving it without a majority in Parliament and auguring a return to the political instability that has hobbled the country in recent years.

#### **17. U.S. says potential F-16 sale to Turkey would serve U.S. interests, NATO**

Reuters, 6 Apr 22, Humeyra Pamuk

The Biden administration believes a potential sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey would be in line with U.S. national security interests and would also serve NATO's long-term unity, the State Department said in a letter to Congress that fell short of explicitly supporting the deal.

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### NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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#### **18. U.S. satellites spying on Russia's War tap commercial technology**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

U.S. surveillance of Russia's Ukraine invasion has been buttressed by two newer satellite systems built with commercial parts and on-board imagery processes, the head of the intelligence agency that manages the programs said in a rare public statement.

#### **19. Financial warfare: will there be a backlash against the dollar?**

Financial Times (UK), 7 Apr 22, Robin Wigglesworth, Polina Ivanova and Colby Smith

Two weeks after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, South African president Cyril Ramaphosa held a phone call with Russia's Vladimir Putin. On the same day, European leaders meeting in Versailles warned democracy itself was at stake. Yet Ramaphosa struck a very different tone.

**20. US disrupts global 'botnet' controlled by Russian military intelligence, DOJ says**

The Guardian, 6 Apr 22, David Smith

The US has disrupted a global "botnet" controlled by Russia's military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday.

**21. U.S. government and energy firms close ranks, fearing Russian cyberattacks**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Ellen Nakashima

In February, as Russian troops massed on Ukraine's border, executives with a major energy firm here worked with U.S. energy and homeland security officials to draw up a playbook and help prepare the electricity sector to deal with potential cyberattacks by Russia.

**22. Hypersonic-Missile delay puts U.S. further Behind Russia, China**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

The first U.S. hypersonic weapon will be delayed for as long as a year under a new schedule, even as lawmakers protest that the Pentagon is lagging behind in a new technology that Russia has already used in Ukraine and China has demonstrated in a space launch.

**23. USS Gerald R. Ford's captain on why the carrier's new island design works**

The War Zone, 6 Apr 22, Howard Altman

For Navy Capt. Paul "Paulie" Lanzilotta, 140 feet makes a world of difference. That's how far the island superstructure of the \$13 billion USS Gerald R. Ford has been moved to the aft on the 1,106-foot long vessel, which leads a new class of aircraft carriers, compared to what's found on the previous Nimitz class.

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## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

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### **MIDDLE EAST**

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### **36. Gantz speaks with Palestinian president for Ramadan**

Riyadh, which last deposited funds into the Aden-based central bank in 2018, has struggled to exit the costly and unpopular conflict, which is widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Hadi took the helm of a crumbling Yemeni state in 2012 in a political transition plan backed by Gulf states after Arab Spring protests in 2011 that brought down President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The United Nations is pushing for inclusive political negotiations to end the conflict in which several Yemeni factions are vying for power.

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### **3. In a break with the past, U.S. is using intel to fight an info war with Russia, even when the intel isn't rock solid**

NBC News, 6 Apr 22, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee and Dan De Luce

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine.

President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions.

It's one of a string of examples of the Biden administration's breaking with recent precedent by deploying declassified intelligence as part of an information war against Russia. The administration has done so even when the intelligence wasn't rock solid, officials said, to keep Russian President Vladimir Putin off balance. Coordinated by the White House National Security Council, the unprecedented intelligence releases have been so frequent and voluminous, officials said, that intelligence agencies had to devote more staff members to work on the declassification process, scrubbing the information so it wouldn't betray sources and methods.

Observers of all stripes have called it a bold and so far successful strategy — although not one without risks.

“It's the most amazing display of intelligence as an instrument of state power that I have seen or that I've heard of since the Cuban Missile Crisis,” said Tim Weiner, the author of a 2006 history of the CIA and 2020's “The Folly and the Glory,” a look at the U.S.-Russia rivalry over decades. “It has certainly blunted and defused the disinformation weaponry of the Kremlin.”

Four days before the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the U.S. publicized spy plane photos to show the Soviet Union had deployed nuclear missiles not far from Florida's coast. The Biden administration began releasing reams of intelligence about what it said were Putin's plans and intentions even before the invasion of Ukraine began.

Just this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan stood at the White House podium and read out what officials said was more declassified intelligence, asserting that Russia's pullout from areas around Kyiv wasn't a retreat but a strategic redeployment that signals a significant assault

on eastern and southern Ukraine, one that U.S. officials believe could be a protracted and bloody fight.

The idea is to pre-empt and disrupt the Kremlin's tactics, complicate its military campaign, "undermine Moscow's propaganda and prevent Russia from defining how the war is perceived in the world," said a Western government official familiar with the strategy.

Multiple U.S. officials acknowledged that the U.S. has used information as a weapon even when confidence in the accuracy of the information wasn't high. Sometimes it has used low-confidence intelligence for deterrent effect, as with chemical agents, and other times, as an official put it, the U.S. is just "trying to get inside Putin's head."

Some officials believe, however, that trying to get into Putin's head is a meaningless exercise, because he will do what he wants regardless.

After this story was published, a U.S. official told NBC News that "the U.S. government's effort to strategically downgrade intelligence to share with allies and the public is underpinned by a rigorous review process by the National Security Council and the Intelligence Community to validate the quality of the information and protect sources and methods." The official added that "we only approve the release of intelligence if we are confident those two requirements are met."

### **'Spot on'**

The biggest success of the U.S. information offensive may have been delaying the invasion itself by weeks or months, which officials believe they did with accurate predictions that Russia intended to attack, based on definitive intelligence. By the time Russia moved its troops in, the West presented a unified front.

Before the invasion, the U.S. asserted that Russia intended to stage a false flag attack against members of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population as a justification for war and that the plans included a video featuring fake corpses. The video never materialized; Russia has consistently claimed it was invading to protect ethnic Russians from "Nazis" in Ukraine.

The U.S. accurately predicted that Putin intended to go through with the attack, even as other Western countries, notably France, argued otherwise. The head of France's military intelligence agency stepped down last week over the wrong call.

A former U.S. official said administration officials believe the strategy delayed Putin's invasion from the first week of January to after the Olympics and that the delay bought the U.S. valuable time to get allies on the same page in terms of the level of the Russian threat and how to respond.

CIA Director William Burns, a former ambassador to Russia, told lawmakers at a congressional threats hearing last month that "in all the years I spent as a career diplomat, I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians."

Now, he said, "by being careful about this we have stripped away the pretext that Putin, in particular, often uses."

“That has been a real benefit, I think, to Ukrainians,” he said.

The policy has drawn lavish praise even from some Republicans.

“You were spot on in your intelligence,” Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., said at the House’s annual worldwide threats hearing last month, addressing Burns and other intelligence agency leaders. “Your decision to declassify, both the form and the fashion in which you did so, saved lives. Sleep well, and thank you for doing that.”

But the strategy has its dangers. One of them, the Western official said, is that getting something clearly wrong would be extremely damaging to U.S. credibility and play into Moscow’s hands.

### **Disclosure as a deterrent**

As the war has proceeded, the administration has used intelligence to warn of possible Russian actions and draw attention to Russian military failings.

At times, the Biden administration has released information in which it has less confidence or about things that are possible rather than truly likely.

Last week, U.S. officials told reporters they had intelligence suggesting Putin is being misled by his own advisers, who are afraid to tell him the truth.

But when Biden was asked about the disclosure later in the day — after it made headlines around the globe — he was less than definitive.

“That’s an open question. There’s a lot of speculation,” Biden told reporters. “But he seems to be I’m not saying this with a certainty he seems to be self-isolating.

The degree to which Putin is isolated or relying on flawed information can’t be verified, said Paul Pillar, a retired career U.S. intelligence officer. “There’s no way you can prove or disprove that stuff,” he said.

Two U.S. officials said the intelligence about whether Putin’s inner circle was lying to him wasn’t conclusive — based more on analysis than hard evidence. Other officials disputed that, saying the intelligence was very reliable and had been vetted at the highest levels.

In another disclosure, U.S. officials said one reason not to provide Ukraine with MiG fighter jets is that intelligence showed Russia would view the move as escalatory.

That was true, but it was also true of Stinger missiles, which the Biden administration did provide, two U.S. officials said, adding that the administration declassified the MiG information to bolster the argument not to provide them to Ukraine.

Likewise, a charge that Russia had turned to China for potential military help lacked hard evidence, a European official and two U.S. officials said.

The U.S. officials said there are no indications China is considering providing weapons to Russia. The Biden administration put that out as a warning to China not to do so, they said.

The European official described the disclosure as “a public game to prevent any military support from China.”

Game or not, U.S. intelligence officials say it has been successful. Intelligence is rarely definitive, and Biden officials have calculated in some cases that it’s better to pre-empt something that might not happen, rather than stay silent and watch it unfold.

“It doesn’t have to be solid intelligence when we talk about it,” a U.S. official said. “It’s more important to get out ahead of them — Putin specifically — before they do something. It’s preventative. We don’t always want to wait until the intelligence is 100 percent certainty that they are going to do something. We want to get out ahead to stop them.”

The official said there was an extensive discussion about whether to reveal that the Russians had a blacklist of Ukrainian enemies whom they intended to arrest and possibly kill once they seized control. Officials weighed the potential harm of divulging the intelligence. “That was a big decision,” the official said.

But the intelligence appears to have been borne out by witness accounts from towns Russian once occupied and has now left, where political assassinations have been documented.

### **Leaning forward**

Some U.S. officials have advocated a strategy of leaning further forward in declassifying and releasing intelligence for years, as U.S. adversaries became adept at using modern communications platforms to spread propaganda.

In 2020, nine of 11 U.S. military combatant commanders signed a memo urging the U.S. intelligence community to declassify more information to counter disinformation and propaganda from Moscow and Beijing.

The U.S. can bolster support from allies only by “waging the truth in the public domain against America’s 21st century challengers,” the officers wrote. But efforts to compete in the battle of ideas, they added, are hamstrung by overly stringent secrecy practices.

“We request this help to better enable the US, and by extension its allies and partners, to win without fighting, to fight now in so-called gray zones, and to supply ammunition in the ongoing war of narratives,” the four-star generals wrote to the acting director of national intelligence at the time, Joseph Maguire.

“Unfortunately, we continue to miss opportunities to clarify truth, counter distortions, puncture false narratives, and influence events in time to make a difference,” the generals said.

In the past, the U.S. had sat on its hands as Russia waged information war.

In 2014, days before Russia invaded Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, Russia released a recording of an apparent phone conversation between senior U.S. diplomat Victoria Nuland and the ambassador to Ukraine at the time, in which Nuland disparaged the European Union.

The move was part of a wave of disinformation and propaganda from Moscow surrounding the seizure of Crimea. But the Obama administration didn't react.

That's because the U.S. had opted out of the great power propaganda wars after the 9/11 attacks, Weiner said.

"So what was the United States' response to all of this?" Weiner asked. "Crickets, nothing, zip. They had no response."

The Biden strategy has been different.

Pillar said the Biden administration took a significant risk in predicting Russia would invade Ukraine, a bold move that was vindicated by Putin's actions.

"That suggests that there are some pretty strong bases for this information," Pillar said. "Not only did it turn out to be correct ... but evidently it had been presented to the president with enough confidence that he felt confident going out on the limb as far as he did."

Said Pillar, "Boy, if there wasn't an invasion, this would have a huge 'cry wolf' effect and make our president look pretty bad."

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#### **4. Germany arrests Syrian accused of torturing captives with Daesh**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22

German investigators on Wednesday arrested a Syrian man accused of war crimes for allegedly torturing captives while he was with Daesh group in Syria in 2014.

Federal prosecutors said the man, identified only as Raed E. in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Berlin. He is suspected of membership in a foreign terrorist organization, crimes against humanity, war crimes and bodily harm.

The suspect joined Daesh in summer 2014 and participated in an attack that August on the Shueitat tribe in the Deir Ezzor region of eastern Syria, prosecutors said.

Activists reported death tolls ranging up to 700.

Raed E. is accused of abusing and torturing three captives after that attack. Prosecutors say that he had a man who was looking for a 13-year old brother kidnapped by Daesh arrested and then tortured him at various prisons run by the terrorist group.

That dilemma is particularly acute for China. With foreign currency reserves of \$3.2tn that need to be invested, it has no choice but to have extensive dollar holdings. Outside of Europe and potentially Japan, which have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with America in this case, there simply are not enough liquid financial assets in other currencies to meet that demand.

“We have very accommodative monetary policy, we are very open with our markets, things are easily convertible and we are safe as an economy. Until those things change, the rest of it ain’t changing,” says Brian O’Toole, a sanctions expert at the Atlantic Council and former senior official at the US Treasury. “If we’re acting with all of our partners and allies in this, where else are you going to go? There’s no place else that has anything approaching the level of liquidity and access that the US market has. It doesn’t exist anywhere.”

China also faces an intractable problem if it wants other countries to hold its currency in their reserves. Its capital controls are not as strict as they used to be, but the renminbi is still not a fully convertible currency. In the decade since it first started trying to internationalize the renminbi, the Chinese Communist party has come to realize it can have a global currency that might one day rival the dollar or it can retain tight control over its domestic financial system, but it cannot have both.

Prasad points out that despite the message that countries can no longer rely completely on “their carefully built up war chests at times of war” in light of the “quite dramatic moves by the western economies”, there is simply a paucity of viable alternatives. “The harsh reality though is that the renminbi at this stage is not a big enough player in international finance to be a viable alternative to the dollar,” he says.

Given the profound changes that have taken place in the global economy over the last four decades, it might seem an anachronism that the traditional western allies still dominate the financial world. But for the time being, there is little escape from the hold that their currencies enjoy.

Smith, the former Treasury official, points out that “the death knell of the US dollar in the international economy has been sounded every year” since roughly 2008, when Washington first blocked Iran from using the US dollar for its international energy transactions. But nothing tangible has ever come from it.

“There’s been a lot of hoopla ever since about the US dollar losing its status as the reserve currency and the currency of choice in the energy markets and in the international economy, [but] we have not seen that occur,” he says. “The US dollar has continued to remain strong as a source of stability in international financial transactions, and that is likely to continue even after the dust settles on the Ukraine war that Russia has unleashed.”

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**20. US disrupts global ‘botnet’ controlled by Russian military intelligence, DOJ says**  
The Guardian, 6 Apr 22, David Smith

The US has disrupted a global “botnet” controlled by Russia’s military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday.

A botnet is a network of hijacked computers used to carry out cyberattacks. “The Russian government has recently used similar infrastructure to attack Ukrainian targets,” Garland told reporters at the justice department.

“Fortunately, we were able to disrupt this botnet before it could be used. Thanks to our close work with international partners, we were able to detect the infection of thousands of network hardware devices.

“We were then able to disable the GRU’s [the military intelligence agency] control over those devices before the botnet could be weaponized.”

The attorney general also announced charges against Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev for sanctions violations. He said the billionaire had been previously identified as a source of financing for Russians promoting separatism in Crimea and providing support for the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic in eastern Ukraine.

“After being sanctioned by the United States, Malofeyev attempted to evade the sanctions by using co-conspirators to surreptitiously acquire and run media outlets across Europe,” Garland said.

The indictment is the first of a Russian oligarch in the US since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In a related move, a federal court in the southern district of New York unsealed a criminal indictment against TV producer John Hanick, 71, a US citizen charged with violations of sanctions and false statements because of his work for Malofeyev over several years.

Matthew Olsen, assistant attorney general of the justice department’s national security division, said: “The defendant Hanick knowingly chose to help Malofeyev spread his destabilizing messages by establishing, or attempting to establish, TV networks in Russia, Bulgaria and Greece, in violation of those sanctions.”

Last month Garland, who is America’s top law enforcement official, announced the launch of Task Force KleptoCapture, an interagency law enforcement task force dedicated to enforcing the sweeping sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

He vowed on Wednesday: “Our message to those who continue to enable the Russian regime through their criminal conduct is this: it does not matter how far you sail your yacht, it does not matter how well you conceal your assets, it does not matter how cleverly you write your malware or hide your online activity.

“The justice department will use every available tool to find you, disrupt your plots and hold you accountable.”

Garland, whose grandparents fled antisemitism at the border of western Russia and eastern Europe more than a century ago, acknowledged horrific images that emerged from Bucha in Ukraine his week. “We have seen the dead bodies of civilians, some with bound hands, scattered in the streets. We have seen the mass graves. We have seen the bombed hospital, theatre and residential apartment buildings.

“The world sees what is happening in Ukraine. The justice department sees what is happening in Ukraine. This department has a long history of helping to hold accountable those who perpetrate war crimes.”

He noted that one of his predecessors, Attorney General Robert Jackson, later served as a chief American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials after the second world war. “Today, we are assisting international efforts to identify and hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Ukraine and we will continue to do so.”

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## **21. U.S. government and energy firms close ranks, fearing Russian cyberattacks**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Ellen Nakashima

In February, as Russian troops massed on Ukraine’s border, executives with a major energy firm here worked with U.S. energy and homeland security officials to draw up a playbook and help prepare the electricity sector to deal with potential cyberattacks by Russia.

Berkshire Hathaway Energy officers were among the small group that wrote the guidelines, which stressed the importance of quickly sharing cyberattack information between industry and government.

With President Biden warning last month of evolving intelligence that Russia is exploring possible cyberattacks against American critical industries, companies such as Berkshire Hathaway Energy and the U.S. government are on high alert. After years of what critics saw as lip service, cybersecurity collaboration between the federal government and some critical industries has taken root, officials and industry leaders say, and it could be put to the test as Russian government hackers probe the defenses of American power plants, banks and telecommunications networks.

“The collaboration between government and the private sector has seen exponential improvement over the last couple of years,” said Bill Fehrman, president and chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway Energy (BHE), which provides electricity generated by wind, solar, natural gas and coal to 12 million customers in the United States, Canada and Britain. “The main benefit,” he said, “is the more efficient transfer of information from the front line — the companies — to the government, and getting usable information back from the government in a timely manner.”

In particular, he said, the declassification of information from the government “has gone from months to in some cases hours.”

BHE is so large — one of the biggest electricity companies in North America by number of customers — that if its systems were disrupted by a Russian cyberattack, officials say, the impact on Americans' lives would be substantial. At the same time, they say, practices such as those adopted by BHE, whose CEO chairs the electricity sector group that coordinates with the federal government, can serve as a model for the industry.

As a chill wind whipped off the farm fields an hour northwest of Des Moines, the warmth from a 10,000-horsepower engine and the smell of oil filled a compressor room. The engine, chugging so loudly workers wear earplugs, powers pistons that compress natural gas. The compressor station in Ogden is one stop along the 13,000-mile-long Northern Natural Gas pipeline, which is part of BHE and studded with similar stations every 60 miles or so. The compressed gas is fed from one station to another in relay fashion, serving homes, hospitals and power plants from Bakersfield, Tex., to Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

There has never been a cyberattack on any industrial control system within BHE and its 11 subsidiaries. That is because of strict security measures imposed over the past eight years, said Chief Security Officer Michael Ball. No operational network is connected to the Internet, and third-party vendors coming in to do maintenance follow stringent rules, including a ban on plugging any outside hardware into the system.

But although its industrial control or operational technology (OT) systems are not connected to the Internet, the company still has to ensure that traffic flowing within its systems is not contaminated by malware.

In a campaign launched by the White House a year ago to boost the cyberdefenses of critical sectors, BHE deployed sensor software in its OT networks to look for malicious activity and vulnerabilities. The software it chose, developed by a company called Dragos, detects suspicious traffic from nation-state actors. It also anonymizes the data and makes it available to analysts at the National Security Agency, the Energy Department and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

"We have confirmed foreign states are active in their targeting of U.S. energy industrial control systems," said Robert M. Lee, CEO of Dragos, whose software allows the government to send queries to the companies to see whether they have detected the presence of certain adversaries.

By the end of the first 100-day campaign, which focused on electricity companies, almost 60 percent of electricity customers in the United States were covered by companies that had or pledged to have commercial cyberthreat sensors on their OT networks, said Fehrman, who coordinated the effort across the sector.

Work with the natural gas sector followed, and in January an effort for the water sector began.

"If power is disrupted, or if oil and gas is disrupted, or if clean water is disrupted, that really affects Americans' lives," said Anne Neuberger, deputy U.S. national security adviser for cyber and emerging technology. "The collaboration between companies and with the government, the

deployment of commercial sensors, the deepened information-sharing has been an important contribution to the sectors' resilience," she said.

Though Biden's warning last month was based on intelligence gathered by the U.S. government, the sensors were helpful for additional insight, U.S. officials said.

Five years ago, Russian government hackers penetrated the OT systems of some American electricity companies, but the intrusions were not detected immediately. It took some companies months to realize they had been infiltrated. The sensors should cut that time drastically, U.S. and company officials said.

Last year, Russian criminals carried off a ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline, snarling up the company's administrative computer network. Out of fear that the malware might spread to the OT system, the company shut down its fuel pipeline for five days, prompting panic-buying at gas stations on the East Coast and raising concerns that Russia might target other critical companies.

The abundance of targets in American industry prompted CISA to issue a call in February to companies to harden their cyberdefenses in a campaign the agency dubbed "Shields Up."

On a recent day, a senior threat intelligence analyst at BHE's global security operations center pulled up a dashboard on a large screen on a wall, displaying some 3,000 Russian "indicators of compromise," or IP addresses and other digital clues that had been tied to cyberattacks on Ukraine government systems since January. The IOCs, as they are called, came from the DHS; the Canadian Center for Cyber Security, a government agency; and the Energy Department; as well as an industry information-sharing collective and private threat intelligence companies.

In years past, companies might get this sort of data, but by the time it got to them, "chances are really good I already knew about it," BHE's Ball said. "Now it's flipped, and we're seeing stuff faster, more of the stuff we haven't already heard about."

And, more importantly, company executives say, the quality of some of that information has improved.

"We have been getting 'actionable intelligence' — extremely helpful feedback that we can implement," Fehrman said. That is intelligence obtained through U.S. government penetration of adversaries' systems overseas and enhanced with more information that, for instance, tells companies what threat is really significant, what techniques the hackers are using, what machines they are targeting — sometimes down to make and model — and what defensive actions should be taken as a result.

A major milestone in facilitating some of the cooperation driven by the Ukraine crisis was a congressional mandate that CISA set up a 24/7 center for the real-time sharing of threat information that includes personnel from key industrial sectors as well as from the FBI, the DHS, the NSA and the Energy and Treasury departments. The result was the launch last summer of what CISA Director Jen Easterly named the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative.

The JCDC has “created a beachhead,” said Tom Fanning, CEO of the energy giant Southern and a member of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission, which recommended the formation of the collaborative. “As we mature the process, it will get better and better and better.”

Michael Ball, vice president and chief security officer for Berkshire Hathaway Energy, at the company's global security operations center in Urbandale, Iowa. (KC McGinnis for The Washington Post)

A major spoke off the JCDC information-sharing hub is the Energy Department’s Energy Threat Analysis Center, created in January to enable companies and the government to jointly analyze threats and develop measures to deal with them.

It will also feed that information back to the JCDC. “If we’re seeing a threat to an energy industrial control system, we certainly want to make sure that information gets out to other sectors like water and chemical, [which] have similar systems,” said Puesh Kumar, director of the department’s Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response.

In February, the White House put CISA Executive Director Brandon Wales in charge of an effort to ensure the government can handle a cyberattack from the Russians, including any resulting physical consequences in the public or private sectors.

“On the whole we are more prepared now than ever before,” Wales said.

“Russian malicious cyber actors have posed a high threat to the U.S. government and the critical infrastructure since before the invasion of Ukraine,” he said, “and they will present a threat after this current crisis is resolved.”

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## **22. Hypersonic-Missile delay puts U.S. further behind Russia, China**

Bloomberg, 6 Apr 22, Tony Capaccio

The first U.S. hypersonic weapon will be delayed for as long as a year under a new schedule, even as lawmakers protest that the Pentagon is lagging behind in a new technology that Russia has already used in Ukraine and China has demonstrated in a space launch.

The goal to declare an “early operational capability” for the Lockheed Martin Corp. missile by Sept. 30 has been moved back to sometime in the next fiscal year, according to an Air Force statement. The Pentagon has said the Air-Launched Rapid Response Weapon, or ARRW, is expected to be the “nation’s first operational hypersonic weapon.”

Hypersonic weapons are hard to track and destroy because they fly five times the speed of sound and can be maneuvered. Last month, Russia debuted a hypersonic air-to-ground missile in its attack on Ukraine, and in July China hit a demonstration target on Earth with a weapon in orbit. Adversaries don’t have to meet the rigorous standards set under the U.S. defense acquisition system or face public scrutiny over delays and failure.

That comes in handy, he added, when boaters try something stupid.

“Sometimes there are mariners out there that aren’t very smart, and they think it's smart to cross the bow of an aircraft carrier in tight quarters,” he said. “And I don't know how great his engineering plant is, you know, if you're on a small sport fisherman or something like that, if you lose your diesels right in front of me, I need to be able to stop and I know I can.”

For the world's largest warship, CVN-78 is surprisingly nimble, thanks largely in part to the massive amount of power at her crew's disposal thanks to her twin nuclear reactors.

Sometime later this year, Lanzilotta will finally get a better idea of just how well the new island design will work on the carrier’s first operational cruise, and what, if any, challenges it will create.

“I think so,” he said when asked about whether the new island design will prove more efficient. “But when we deploy later in the year we're going to learn more and improve more. And that's an important mindset.”

When asked what lessons he anticipates learning during that deployment, Lanzilotta waxed philosophical.

“The sailors are smarter than most of us old guys,” he said. “You know, I've been doing this for 28 years. So I have my own predisposed notions of how things are going. I've got sailors that are younger, super-intelligent, and always thinking like ‘hey, why don't we do it like this?’ Or ‘let's try something like that.’ So that I'm gonna stay open-minded on it. So I don't drive the solution too much.”

Still, that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have questions about how things will go.

“I think maybe just you know, how fast can I go?” he pondered., “Not speed to the water, but how quickly can I generate sorties? What is our limiting factor? Can we work on that?”

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### **24. NATO nations see differing paths as Ukraine War enters uncertain stage**

New York Times, Apr 6, 22, Steven Erlanger and Michael Crowley

Faced with the prospect that the war in Ukraine will be long and grinding, NATO countries are divided on how best to manage the next stage of the conflict and the uncertain period that promises to follow.

Central European members like Poland and the Baltic states want a total break with Moscow and an effort to bring Russia to its knees, two senior Western officials said. They worry that anything that Russia can present as a victory will do serious damage to European security.

But other nations believe that Russia cannot be easily subdued and that the war's outcome is likely to be messy — more exhausting cease-fire than resounding victory. Countries like France, Germany and Turkey want to keep contacts with Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, regardless of the allegations of war crimes committed by his troops, the officials said.

NATO foreign ministers, meeting this week to discuss how to help Ukraine prosecute the war, do agree on one major point: The war is far from over and — as badly as Russia's forces have performed and despite their retreat from areas around Kyiv, the capital — they are making slow and brutal progress in Ukraine's east.

“Moscow is not giving up its ambitions in Ukraine,” Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, said this week. “We now see a significant movement of troops away from Kyiv, to regroup, rearm and resupply. And they shift their focus to the east.”

That will take several weeks, officials believe, as Russian troops move back into Belarus to be resupplied and reorganized, and then must make their way with their equipment through Russia toward eastern Ukraine.

“In the coming weeks, we expect a further Russian push in the eastern and southern Ukraine to try to take the entire Donbas and to create a land bridge to occupied Crimea,” Mr. Stoltenberg said. “This is a crucial phase of the war.”

In response to the scenes of corpses in Bucha, the United States and the European Union are preparing more sanctions against Russia, but without much expectation that they will hasten the end of the war.

But at the NATO meetings, the talk will be of weapons and matériel, not sanctions.

There is a general agreement that Russia is no longer a strategic partner of the alliance, that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is no longer bound by the troop limits of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, and that its military posture must be sharply enhanced to deter a confrontational Russia, so long as Mr. Putin and his allies retain power there.

There is also a commitment to continue aiding Ukraine — some two-thirds of NATO members have already provided lethal weaponry, including the Czechs' contribution of Soviet-era tanks and armored personnel carriers.

But some stocks are running low in the West — U.S.-made Javelin antitank missiles, for example. And Ukraine is also going to need different weapons for the next phase of the war in the east, officials suggest, including longer-range artillery and more sophisticated armed drones, if they hope to push the Russians back, let alone drive them out of Ukraine.

The amount of matériel arriving in Ukraine remains a secret, but officials say that the overall flow is very large and has made an enormous difference to the war. But what sort of weapons are most useful, and how to think through the possible conclusion to the war, is preoccupying alliance leaders.

“On a number of fronts, we obviously have some changing battlefield dynamics,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, who is in Brussels for the NATO meetings, told reporters this week.

Mr. Blinken said the NATO meetings would focus on new ways to support Ukraine and to “put pressure on Russia,” and on Mr. Putin. More evidence of atrocities is likely to emerge, he said on Wednesday, as Russia pulls out of territories it controlled, “like a receding tide.”

On Tuesday, Mr. Blinken announced a further \$100 million worth of weapons and equipment from American stockpiles. Total U.S. military aid to Ukraine is worth some \$2.4 billion since President Biden took office and more than \$1.7 billion since the war began on Feb. 24, he said.

How the war might finally end is an important issue not just for Ukraine but for the entire alliance.

U.S. officials are skeptical that Russia is prepared to make real concessions in ongoing peace talks with Ukraine, although they do not rule out the possibility and want to ensure Kyiv’s leverage in the negotiations.

That is a key discussion. While Ukraine will decide for itself how and when to try to end the war and what it will negotiate with Moscow, President Volodymyr Zelensky and his government are in regular discussion with NATO country leaders, including the Americans.

“We believe that our job is to support the Ukrainians,” Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, said this week. “We are not going to define the outcome of this for the Ukrainians.”

Some countries, especially in Central Europe and including Britain, are anxious that any sort of Russian expansion into Ukrainian territory, let alone a Russian victory, would embolden Mr. Putin, undermining overall European security and values such as the adherence to international law, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They want Russia to be seen as the loser.

Even if the war ends with a new line of contact between Russian and Ukrainian forces, NATO aims to work with Kyiv to make Ukraine indigestible to Russia, as another senior Western official said. The point is to arm and train the Ukrainians so well that Mr. Putin would not wish to try again.

The foreign ministers will also begin a deeper discussion of NATO’s new strategic concept, the first since 2010, now in early draft. It is much tougher on Russia, and foresees a longer period of confrontation and expensive deterrence.

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## **25. US imposes ‘severe’ sanctions on Russian banks after Bucha atrocities**

Financial Times (UK), 6 Apr 22, Courtney Weaver, James Politi, Colby Smith and Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe

The US has imposed its most severe level of sanctions on Sberbank, Russia's largest financial institution, and Alfa-Bank, the country's biggest private bank, escalating its economic punishment of Moscow in response to atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

The announcement on Wednesday of "full blocking sanctions", which prevent the lenders from transacting with any US institutions or individuals, came after top officials including President Joe Biden warned this week that they were planning to impose harsher restrictions on Russia.

"There's nothing less happening than major war crimes," Biden said at an event in Washington on Wednesday, during which he listed some of the atrocities committed in Ukraine.

"Responsible nations have to come together to hold these perpetrators accountable. And together with our allies and our partners, we're going to keep raising economic costs and ratchet up the pain for [Vladimir] Putin," Biden added.

A senior US official said the latest measures were in response to "the sickening brutality in Bucha", a city near the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv where gruesome images of the bodies of civilians have emerged in recent days, indicating a possible massacre by Russian soldiers.

"Treasury is committed to holding Russia accountable for its actions so it cannot benefit from the international financial system," Janet Yellen, the US Treasury secretary, told Congress during a hearing on Wednesday.

The US also imposed sanctions on Putin's two adult daughters, Ekaterina Tikhonova and Maria Vorontsova; the wife and daughter of Sergei Lavrov, foreign minister; and members of Russia's Security Council, including Dmitry Medvedev, former president; and Mikhail Mishustin, prime minister.

In addition, the US said it would prohibit any new American investments in Russia, and announce new sanctions on large Russian state-owned enterprises on Thursday.

Immediately after the invasion, the US prohibited debt or equity transactions with Alfa and Sberbank, but its "full blocking sanctions" amount to much stricter curbs.

"This is the most severe action we can take in terms of financial measures," the US official said. "And in practice, the history of sanctions is when we impose full blocking sanctions . . . the rest of the world, even in other jurisdictions that have not yet imposed a full block, they respect the regime. So there tends to be a multiplier effect."

The official added that the US and EU had chosen to target Putin's daughters because they believed they were helping shield the Russian president's wealth.

The UK government on Wednesday also announced additional sanctions against Putin's regime, including full asset freezes against Sberbank.

The measures, which Liz Truss, UK foreign secretary, said marked “the toughest sanctions yet”, included a ban on imports of Russian iron and steel products alongside an outright ban on new investment in the country.

The UK also imposed sanctions on a further eight individuals linked to key Russian industries, including Andrey Akimov, chief executive of Gazprombank, and Leonid Mikhelson, founder and chief executive of Novatek.

The US and European allies had hoped that the initial burst of sanctions imposed after Russia’s invasion in late February, including cutting off Moscow’s access to its foreign reserves by banning transactions with its central bank, would isolate the country financially without causing excessive spillovers into the rest of the global economy.

But as the conflict has continued, they have been forced to consider additional targets, widening the net to include companies and individuals in third countries continuing to do business with Russian entities and sharpening enforcement of existing sanctions.

Edward Fishman, a former Russia and Europe sanctions lead at the state department, called Wednesday’s measures “the most significant sanctions taken since the [Russian] central bank sanctions” imposed in late February.

“We’re headed towards Iran-style sanctions,” he added, referring to the decades-long measures against Tehran beginning in 1979. “This is a conveyor belt and it only leads in one direction.”

Despite the new sanctions, some US legislators on Wednesday criticized the Biden administration for not doing enough, noting that the package stopped short of levying the harshest penalties on certain oligarchs and still included exemptions for Russian energy.

David Scott, a Democrat on the House financial services committee, told Yellen that the Treasury department’s decision to issue a special license for Alisher Usmanov — an oligarch he described as Putin’s “favorite” — which allowed him to continue doing business was becoming a “black mark” on the nation.

“Our reputation as the world leader is at stake when these types of things happen, and there’s no explanation for it,” Scott said.

Yellen said the US was prepared to wield further sanctions, including against China if it attacked Taiwan.

“We are concerned about Taiwan and will act as appropriate,” she said. “In the case of Russia, we’ve threatened significant consequences, we’ve imposed significant consequences, and I think that you should not doubt our ability and resolve to do the same in other situations.”

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## **26. Eastern Ukraine braces for renewed assault as Russia regroups**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, David L. Stern, Joby Warrick, Louisa Loveluck and Max Bearak

MUKACHEVO, Ukraine — Ukrainian officials called Wednesday for evacuations in three provinces near the Russian border amid new signs that President Vladimir Putin’s troops are escalating their assault on eastern and southern cities following a failed attempt to take the country’s capital.

Local officials reported renewed Russian shelling in the eastern Donetsk region, killing at least five people, and as many as 10 high-rise apartment buildings on fire in Severodonetsk, in the neighboring Luhansk district. U.S. analysts said Moscow has begun gradually shifting the focus of its military operations to the eastern border provinces after withdrawing thousands of troops that previously encircled the capital, Kyiv.

The continued violence came amid fresh reports of human-rights atrocities in Ukrainian cities and towns that had been under Russian control. Accounts of rape and summary executions of civilians by Russian occupiers prompted the United States and several allies to announce new economic sanctions, including measures targeting two of Russia’s largest banks and Putin’s adult children.

“We’re going to further increase Russia’s economic isolation,” President Biden said in a speech announcing the sanctions at a meeting of North America’s Building Trades Unions. “The United States will continue to stand with the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom.”

Biden again accused Russia of committing “major war crimes” and said the additional measures would further strain its economy. “Civilians executed in cold blood, bodies dumped into mass graves,” he said, ticking off a list of alleged war crimes. “A sense of brutality and inhumanity left for all the world to see unapologetically.”

The speech came as NATO and European Union leaders gathered to consider additional measures to punish Moscow and support Ukraine. A possible European ban on Russian coal is expected to be approved on Thursday, along with additional military aid for Kyiv from the NATO alliance.

Pentagon officials confirmed Wednesday that Russia had, in the past 24 hours, completed an evacuation of all forces from around Kyiv and Chernihiv, two cities it had tried unsuccessfully to capture in the opening days of the invasion, now in its sixth week.

While U.S. analysts have not observed a tangible increase in troops and tanks in the Donbas — the energy-rich region near the Russian border that includes Donetsk and Luhansk — the Pentagon believes that retreating units are regrouping for a concentrated assault on the eastern provinces. Some of the recently withdrawn troops are now in neighboring Belarus, where the pro-Moscow government is allowing Russia to resupply its exhausted battalions. Few, if any, have reentered Ukraine so far, a senior Defense Department official told reporters.

“Our assessment is that they won’t want to spend too much refitting and resupplying because they have made a very public show of saying that they’re going to prioritize their efforts on the Donbas region,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity according to rules set by the Pentagon.

For their part, Ukrainian forces are “absolutely adapting and adjusting in real time to Russian efforts now to increase their activities” in eastern Ukraine, the official said. “As they have beaten back the Russians or as the Russians have left, they are reoccupying that ground and making their own assessments about what their force posture ought to be going forward.”

Increased shelling in the eastern provinces claimed additional casualties on Wednesday, including the five people reportedly killed in Donetsk. Provincial Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said four people were killed by Russian artillery fire in the city of Vuhledar as they waited to receive humanitarian aid. The fifth victim, also a civilian, was killed during an attack on the town of Ocheretyn, he said, and six houses and a kindergarten facility were destroyed.

A regional military official in Luhansk reported “mass shelling” in Severodonetsk. The number of casualties was unclear. Video posted on Facebook and verified by The Washington Post shows townspeople scrambling for cover as shells explode in a residential street.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk, in broadcast remarks, urged residents of the Luhansk, Donetsk and Kharkiv regions to start preparing for the expected Russian onslaught. While the Kremlin has described the troop withdrawal from Kyiv as a “goodwill” gesture to facilitate peace talks, she said it was clear that more attacks were coming. Moscow has greater support in the east, where Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists have been locked in a grinding conflict for many years.

“We need to evacuate,” she said. “We must do it because then people will be on fire, they will be shot ... and we will not be able to help them.”

Elsewhere in Ukraine, rescue workers looked for survivors in rubble-strewn neighborhoods newly freed of Russian troops. Washington Post reporters witnessed scenes of devastation in Borodyanka, a community northwest of Kyiv that had been pummeled by airstrikes that gouged huge chunks out of residential buildings.

In a schoolyard that was converted into a garrison while Borodyanka was occupied, the Russians had cut a trench through a playground and built a sandbag wall along the perimeter fence, with openings for gun emplacements.

In a ruined apartment a few blocks away, Katia Palivshenko, 34, said she feared that some of her neighbors were still trapped, and likely dead, in the basements of bombed-out buildings nearby. Cellphone service had faltered when the town came under attack, and she had not heard from some of her friends since then.

“They were below ground but then messages stopped coming,” she said. “We don’t know what happened to them.”

In Bucha, a town associated with some of the war’s most disturbing assaults on Ukrainian civilians, soldiers and police continued the gut-wrenching work of removing and burying bodies, dozens of which still lay in the streets and in open fields. Some bodies were booby-trapped by the departing Russians, officials said.

The city remained almost entirely deserted, as mine-clearing teams searched methodically for hidden bombs. On Vokzalna Street near the train station, the blackened hulks of Russian tanks, all destroyed in a fierce counterattack by Ukrainian forces, sat in an eerie silence that was punctuated only by the barking of stray dogs.

The images from Bucha have evoked shock and condemnation around the world, including at the United Nations, where dozens of countries have backed an effort to boot Moscow from the body's Human Rights Council — a move reserved for countries that have repeatedly violated human rights. A vote of the 193-nation body could come as early as Thursday morning at the U.N. headquarters in New York.

The U.S. sanctions announced on Wednesday targeted Sberbank and Alfa Bank — two of Russia's biggest financial institutions — and two daughters of the Russian president, Katerina Tikhonova and Mariya Putina. U.S. officials say much of the Putin family's enormous wealth is stashed away in accounts held by family members. The White House also is seeking new economic sanctions against state-owned Russian enterprises involved in shipbuilding and aircraft manufacturing, as well as relatives of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Members of the 27-nation European Union were preparing to decide Thursday on a measure banning all imports of Russian coal, a key revenue source for Moscow, even as NATO leaders discuss ways to further isolate Russia while bolstering Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

"Today, tomorrow, we'll continue to talk about not only how we can sustain these efforts but how we can build upon them," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters. He was flanked by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who earlier in the day warned that the conflict could become protracted despite the surge of Western military support to Ukrainian forces.

"We have to be realistic and realize that this may last for a long time, for many months, for even years," Stoltenberg said. "And that's the reason why we need also to be prepared for the long haul."

Britain launched additional sanctions against eight Russian oligarchs and two Russian banks and vowed to end all dependency on Russian coal and oil by the end of 2022. "We are showing the Russian elite that they cannot wash their hands of the atrocities committed on Putin's orders," Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said.

In Washington, the Justice Department announced indictments against Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev, who U.S. officials accused of illegally supporting pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine. Speaking at a news conference, Attorney General Merrick Garland also announced the successful disruption of a global "botnet" — or network of hacked computers — that he said was controlled by the Russian military intelligence agency known as the GRU. Moscow has used similar networks to attack Ukrainian targets, Garland said.

"It does not matter how far you sail your yacht. It does not matter how well you conceal your assets. It does not matter how cleverly you write your malware or hide your online activity,"

Garland said. “The Justice Department will use every available tool to find you, disrupt your plots and hold you accountable.”

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## **27. Ukraine’s surprise strike on Russian fleet hobbles Putin’s Donbas strategy**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Brett Forrest and Nancy A. Youssef

A surprise Ukrainian strike on a Russian ship at a southern port city last month could curb Moscow’s plan to expand its hold on the Donbas region, eliminating a key military advantage in the Russian attack plan, Ukrainian military analysts and U.S. officials said.

The March 24 offensive against Russian navy ships docked at a captured port in Berdyansk on the Azov Sea was the first major strike on the Russian fleet, Ukrainian and U.S. officials said. The attack destroyed a ship laden with supplies, drove others back into the sea, and damaged the port facilities.

The strike ended the presumption that Russian ships could attack without the threat of a Ukrainian reply. And it has limited Russia’s ability to fire missiles and artillery as it pivots its assault toward Donbas in Ukraine’s east, said retired Adm. James Foggo, who commanded U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

Hours after the strike, Russia moved its ships in port out to sea, making it harder for them to attack Ukraine’s cities and preventing them from supporting ground forces.

“It’s a major logistical blow,” Adm. Foggo said. “It’s an ‘aha!’ moment for the Russians. Despite the damage they have done inside Ukraine, Ukrainian forces are still capable of conducting offensive strikes with precision.”

Residents in the Ukraine town of Borodyanka surveyed damage. Officials urged civilians to leave eastern regions as they braced for a major new Russian offensive. The West announced new sanctions on Russian banks and citizens, including on two daughters of Vladimir Putin.  
Photo: I-Images/Zuma Press

In the nearly two weeks since the strike, Russia’s navy hasn’t launched any major attacks on Ukrainian cities, although it has struck targets around a few of them. On Sunday, missiles from Russian ships struck the Ukrainian port city of Odessa, hitting infrastructure.

Russia’s military made port cities a priority during its assault into Ukraine. It seized the city of Berdyansk, a key foothold for its future attacks in strategically important cities such as Mariupol, just days into its invasion of Ukraine, soon boasting of the advantage the port would afford its war effort.

Quickly putting the port to use, Russia landed huge ships carrying as much as 2,000 tons of supplies each for its ground forces in the Ukrainian south. The Russians ejected Ukrainian cargo ships, dredgers and a tug, then berthed their own ships carrying multiple-launch rocket systems to provide cover for troops moving into the region.

The ships at Berdyansk were only lightly defended, as the nearest Ukrainian forces were about 60 miles away.

“The Russians thought Ukraine didn’t have any capability to reach them,” said Andrii Ryzhenko, a former Ukrainian navy captain now with the Center for Defense Strategies, a Kyiv think tank with close ties to the military. “But Ukraine had the capability.”

By the early weeks of the war, Russia had as many as 22 ships in the Black Sea and another dozen in the Azov Sea, U.S. officials said. At least half of those in the Azov Sea were docked at Berdyansk—“sitting ducks,” said Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington.

“It’s just an example of how cavalier Russia’s operations have been about keeping ships at shore,” Mr. Clark said.

Russia had major advantages over the Ukrainian navy for nearly a decade. It captured and destroyed much of the Ukrainian navy at the port of Sevastopol during Moscow’s 2014 seizure of Crimea, expanding its influence over the Black Sea. And in the run-up to the Feb. 24 invasion, Russia moved much of its navy from as far as the Baltic Sea toward Ukraine’s shores.

The Azov Sea, a small, shallow body of water bounded by Russia, Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula, has been strategically important for centuries. Ships operating off the Azov Sea coast took part in the Russian assault on the southern city of Mariupol, military analysts said, firing artillery into Mariupol with little risk from Ukraine’s defenses. The ships also held supplies for nearby ground forces and provided another line of defense to troops and tanks entering Mariupol.

The Azov Sea is also the fastest supply route between Russia and Crimea, because Ukrainian forces destroyed the rail lines between the two in 2014. From the Russian port of Temryuk, it is faster for Moscow to deliver troops and supplies by sea to Berdyansk than to drive them over the bridge that spans the Kerch Strait, then north through Crimea and eastward over a strip of captured Ukrainian coastline.

On March 24, Ukraine fired a Tochka-U ballistic missile at the port, Mr. Ryzhenko said. The missile struck the Saratov, a Cold War-era landing vessel designed to ferry troops and equipment ashore through a ramp at the bow. As the Saratov foundered, other ships fled the Berdyansk port under a plume of smoke. The attack also damaged the port, according to satellite images.

U.S. defense officials warned that Russia could be making adjustments in the sea, much as it is doing around the Ukrainian capital. Russia said it was repositioning its forces around Kyiv, which U.S. officials described as a regrouping based on battlefield losses and logistical challenges.

Since the strike, Russia had withdrawn all but three ships from the Azov Sea as of last week, a U.S. senior defense official said, hindering Moscow’s ability to supply troops in the Ukrainian south.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin late last month said it was shifting its mission to Ukraine's east, aiming to consolidate control over Donbas, its initial plan to quickly take Kyiv fading under relentless Ukrainian resistance.

The Berdyansk strike could also have a wide-reaching impact on the ability of Russia's navy to support its army.

With the damaged Berdyansk port off limits to ships for weeks, Russia's capacity to land troops there and in the vicinity of Odessa has diminished, especially as nearby Mykolaiv remains in Ukrainian control, analysts said.

"After the attack on landing ships in Berdyansk, the Russian Federation will be forced to take several, possibly two or three, landing ships from the Black Sea to the Azov Sea," said Andrii Klymenko, a defense and maritime analyst with the Black Sea Institute of Strategic Studies, a Ukrainian think tank. "This will weaken landing capabilities."

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## **28. Russia is recruiting mercenaries and Syrians to Ukraine, Western officials say**

New York Times, 6 Apr 22, Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper

As Russian troops retreat from northern Ukraine and focus operations on the country's east and south, the Kremlin is struggling to scrape together enough combat-ready reinforcements to conduct a new phase of the war, according to American and other Western military and intelligence officials.

Moscow initially sent 75 percent of its main ground combat forces into the war in February, Pentagon officials said. But much of that army of more than 150,000 troops is now a spent force, after suffering logistics problems, flagging morale and devastating casualties inflicted by stiffer-than-expected Ukrainian resistance, military and intelligence officials say.

There are relatively few fresh Russian troops to fill the breach. Russia has withdrawn the forces — as many as 40,000 soldiers — it had arrayed around Kyiv and Chernihiv, two cities in the north, to rearm and resupply in Russia and neighboring Belarus before most likely repositioning them in eastern Ukraine in the next few weeks, U.S. officials say.

The Kremlin is also rushing to the east a mix of Russian mercenaries, Syrian fighters, new conscripts and regular Russian army troops from Georgia and easternmost Russia.

Whether this weakened but still very lethal Russian force can overcome its blunders of the first six weeks of combat and accomplish a narrower set of war aims in a smaller swath of the country remains an open question, senior U.S. officials and analysts said.

"Russia still has forces available to outnumber Ukraine's, and Russia is now concentrating its military power on fewer lines of attack, but this does not mean that Russia will succeed in the east," Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security adviser, said on Monday.

“The next stage of this conflict may very well be protracted,” Mr. Sullivan said. He added that Russia would probably send “tens of thousands of soldiers to the front line in Ukraine’s east,” and continue to rain rockets, missiles and mortars on Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Lviv and other cities.

U.S. officials have based their assessments on satellite imagery, electronic intercepts, Ukrainian battlefield reports and other information, and those intelligence estimates have been backed up by independent analysts examining commercially available information.

Earlier U.S. intelligence assessments of the Russian government’s intent to attack Ukraine proved accurate, although some lawmakers said spy agencies overestimated the Russian military’s ability to advance quickly.

As the invasion faltered, U.S. and European officials have highlighted the Russian military’s errors and logistical problems, though they have cautioned that Moscow’s ability to regroup should not be underestimated.

The Ukrainian military has managed to reclaim territory around Kyiv and Chernihiv, attacking the Russians as they retreat; thwarted a ground attack against Odesa in the south and held on in Mariupol, the battered and besieged city on the Black Sea. Ukraine is now receiving T-72 battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and other heavy weapons — in addition to Javelin antitank and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles — from the West.

Anticipating this next major phase of the war in the east, the Pentagon announced late Tuesday that it was sending \$100 million worth of Javelin anti-tank missiles — roughly several hundred missiles from Pentagon stocks — to Ukraine, where the weapon has been very effective in destroying Russian tanks and other armored vehicles.

American and European officials believe that the Russian military’s shift in focus is aimed at correcting some of the mistakes that have led to its failure to overcome a Ukrainian army that is far stronger and savvier than Moscow initially assessed.

But the officials said it remained to be seen how effective Russia would be in building up its forces to renew its attack. And there are early signs that pulling Russian troops and mercenaries from Georgia, Syria and Libya could complicate the Kremlin’s priorities in those countries.

Some officials say Russia will try to go in with more heavy artillery. By focusing its forces in smaller geographic areas, and moving them closer to supply routes into Russia, Western intelligence officials said, Russia hopes to avoid the logistics problems its troops suffered in their failed attack on Kyiv.

Other European intelligence officials predicted it would take Russian forces one to two weeks to regroup and refocus before they could press a major offensive in eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting for eight years. Western officials said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia was desperate for some kind of win by May 9, when Russia traditionally celebrates the end of World War II with a big Victory Day parade in Red Square.

“What we are seeing now is that the Kremlin is trying to achieve some kind of success on the ground to pretend there is a victory for its domestic audience by the 9th of May,” said Mikk Marran, the director general of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service.

Mr. Putin would like to consolidate control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine, and establish a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula by early May, a senior Western intelligence official said.

Russia has already moved air assets to the east in preparation for the renewed attack on the heart of the Ukrainian military, and has increased aerial bombardment in that area in recent days, a European diplomat and other officials said.

“It’s a particularly dangerous scenario for the Ukrainians now, at least on paper,” said Alexander S. Vindman, an expert on Ukraine who became the chief witness in President Donald J. Trump’s first impeachment trial. “In reality, the Russians haven’t performed superbly well. Whether they could actually bring to bear their armor, their infantry, their artillery and air power in a concerted way to destroy larger Ukrainian formations is yet to be seen.”

Russian troops have been fighting in groups of a few hundred soldiers, rather than in the bigger and more effective formations of thousands of soldiers used in the past.

“We haven’t seen any indication that they have the ability to adapt,” said Mick Mulroy, a former senior Pentagon official and retired C.I.A. officer.

The number of Russian losses in the war so far remains unknown, though Western intelligence agencies estimate 7,000 to 10,000 killed and 20,000 to 30,000 wounded. Thousands more have been captured or are missing in action.

The Russian military, the Western and European officials said, has learned at least one major lesson from its failures: the need to concentrate forces, rather than spread them out.

But Moscow is trying to find additional forces, according to intelligence officials.

Russia’s best forces, its two airborne divisions and the First Guards Tank army, have suffered significant casualties and an erosion of combat power, and the military has scoured its army looking for reinforcements.

The British Defense Ministry and the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank that analyzes the Ukraine war, both reported on Tuesday that the Russian troops withdrawing from Kyiv and Chernihiv would not be fit for redeployment soon.

“The Russians have no ability to rebuild their destroyed vehicles and weapon systems because of foreign components, which they can no longer get,” said Maj. Gen. Michael S. Repass, a former commander of U.S. Special Operations forces in Europe who has been involved with Ukrainian defense matters since 2016.

Russian forces arriving from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two secessionist statelets that broke away from Georgia during the 1990s and then expanded in 2008, have been conducting peacekeeping duties and are not combat ready, General Repass said.

Russia's problems finding additional troops are in large measure why it has invited Syrian fighters, Chechens and Russian mercenaries to serve as reinforcements. But these additional forces number in the hundreds, not thousands, European intelligence officials said.

The Chechen force, one of the European intelligence officials said, is "clearly used to sow fear." The Chechen units are not better fighters and have suffered high losses. But they have been used in urban combat situations and for "the dirtiest kind of work," the official said.

Russian mercenaries with combat experience in Syria and Libya are gearing up to assume an increasingly active role in a phase of the war that Moscow now says is its top priority: fighting in the country's east.

The number of mercenaries deployed to Ukraine from the Wagner Group, a private military force with ties to Mr. Putin, is expected to more than triple to at least 1,000 from the early days of the invasion, a senior American official said.

Wagner is also relocating artillery, air defenses and radar that it had used in Libya to Ukraine, the official said.

Moving mercenaries will "backfire because these are units that can't be incorporated into the regular army, and we know that they are brutal violators of human rights which will only turn Ukrainian and world opinion further against Russia," said Evelyn N. Farkas, the top Pentagon official for Russia and Ukraine during the Obama administration.

Hundreds of Syrian fighters could also be heading to Ukraine, in what would effectively return a favor to Moscow for its helping President Bashar al-Assad crush rebels in an 11-year civil war.

A contingent of at least 300 Syrian soldiers has already arrived in Russia for regular training, but it was unclear if or when they would be sent to Ukraine, officials said.

"They are bringing in fighters known for brutality in the hopes of breaking the Ukrainian will to fight," said Kori Schake, the director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. But, she added, any military gains there for Russia will depend on the willingness of the foreign fighters to fight.

"One of the difficult things about putting together a coalition of disparate interests is that it can be hard to make them an effective fighting force," she said.

Finally, Mr. Putin recently signed a decree calling up 134,000 conscripts. It will take months to train the recruits, though Moscow could opt to rush them straight to the front lines with little or no instruction, officials said.

“Russia is short on troops and is looking to get manpower where they can,” said Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va. “They are not well placed for a prolonged war against Ukraine.”

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## **29. Pentagon: Russia has fully withdrawn from Kyiv, Chernihiv**

Washington Post, 6 Apr 22, Karoun Demirjian and Dan Lamothe

Russian forces have fully withdrawn from the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the city of Chernihiv to its north, the Pentagon said Wednesday, as Moscow prepares to concentrate its invading forces in the eastern part of the country.

“We are assessing that all of the Russians have left,” said a senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under terms set by the Pentagon. Their full departure was confirmed only in the last 24 hours, this person said, cautioning that Russian forces may have left mines in their wake that would still need to be cleared.

U.S. and European intelligence officials have been tracking for days that Russia is in the midst of reorienting after encountering fierce resistance and suffering thousands of casualties in northern Ukraine. Moscow enjoys greater support in the east, where Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists have been locked in a grinding conflict for many years.

But while Russia’s withdrawal from Ukraine’s capital region appears to be complete, with many units retreating through Belarus, the Pentagon has yet to see those personnel reenter eastern Ukraine, the senior defense official said Wednesday.

The United States announced Tuesday night the approval of an additional \$100 million in military assistance for Ukraine, a move made in part to ensure Ukrainian forces will have the weapons they need to fight for the Donbas region, the official said. There is a particularly “urgent” need for Javelin anti-armor systems, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby noted Wednesday.

Kirby said that earlier this week the United States also sent Ukraine 100 Switchblade drones, which can be loaded with explosives and flown into enemy targets, and that a “very small number” of Ukrainian soldiers receiving military education in the United States since the fall had been taught how to use them. The Switchblade — what some analysts have termed a “kamikaze” drone — is not a complex system, Kirby said, noting that personnel could be trained how to use them in about two days.

On average, it is taking the United States about four days to ship weapons to pass-off points outside Ukraine, and another day or two for those shipments to enter the country, Kirby said, adding that such transfers have “never been done that fast before.”

Kirby expressed some confidence Wednesday that Ukraine “can win this,” arguing that Russian President Vladimir Putin has achieved “exactly zero” of his strategic objectives thus far. But the

Pentagon continues to caution that even though the war's epicenter appears to be shifting, serious threats remain.

There are more than 30 Russian battalion tactical groups operating in the Donbas region, according to Pentagon estimates.

Earlier this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan predicted that if Russia could successfully regroup in the Donbas region, it may seek to push out from there into other parts of Ukraine.

"It's not like Kyiv is somehow immune from further attack," the senior U.S. defense official said Wednesday.

More than 80 of the approximately 130 battalion tactical groups that Russia deployed into Ukraine continue to operate in the country, this official added, estimating that such groups each contain 800 to 1,000 troops.

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### **30. China's security deal with Solomons raises alarm in Pacific**

Associated Press, 6 Apr 22, Nick Perry and David Rising

A security alliance between China and the Solomon Islands has sent shudders throughout the South Pacific, with many worried it could set off a large-scale military buildup or that Western animosity to the deal could play into China's hands.

What remains most unclear is the extent of China's ambitions.

A Chinese military presence in the Solomons would put it not only on the doorstep of Australia and New Zealand but also in close proximity to Guam, with its massive U.S. military bases.

China so far operates just one acknowledged foreign military base, in the impoverished but strategically important Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti. Many believe that China's People's Liberation Army is busy establishing an overseas military network, even if they don't use the term "base."

The Solomon Islands government says a draft of its agreement with China was initialed last week and will be "cleaned up" and signed soon.

The draft, which was leaked online, says that Chinese warships could stop in the Solomons for "logistical replenishment" and that China could send police, military personnel and other armed forces to the Solomons "to assist in maintaining social order."

The draft agreement specifies China must approve what information is disclosed about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

“They’re in much closer proximity to the Australian mainland, obviously, and that would change the way that we would undertake day-to-day operations, particularly in the air and at sea,” he told reporters.

But Jonathan Pryke, the director of the Pacific Islands Program at the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, said he thinks that leaders have overreacted to the agreement, perhaps in Australia's case because there is an election looming.

“It's clearly getting everyone very animated in the West and very alarmed,” Pryke said. “But I don't think it markedly changes things on the ground.”

He said the pact could be seen as the first step toward China establishing a base, but there would need to be many more steps taken before that could happen.

“I think the alarmism has strengthened China's hand by pushing the Solomon Islands into a corner,” Pryke said. “And they've reacted the way I imagine many countries would react from getting this outside pressure — by pushing back, and digging their heels in.”

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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### **31. Finland may finally want in on NATO; Sweden is not far behind.**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, Robbie Gramer and Amy Mackinnon

Just over two months ago, the prospect of Finland joining NATO was virtually unthinkable to most in the northern European country. It had grown closer to the military alliance over the last three decades but resisted the idea of becoming a full-fledged member.

That all changed when tens of thousands of Russian troops rolled across Ukraine’s border in late February.

Now, top Finnish leaders are edging closer to joining NATO, buoyed by a drastic turnaround in Finnish public opinion that went from opposing the move to supporting it virtually overnight.

“It has been a major change,” said Pete Piirainen, a visiting senior fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. “We feel Russia broke the rules, broke the international system and security architecture.”

Finland’s sudden shift on NATO membership is a sea change in Europe’s security environment in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, one that could drastically alter the map of the showdown between Russia and the West.

If Finland were to join the alliance, the total land border between NATO territory and Russia would more than double, from around 754 miles currently to nearly 1,600 miles. It would also extend NATO’s northern flank across the full length of the border with Russia’s strategically

important Murmansk region and Kola Peninsula, where a sizable chunk of Russia's navy is based.

A similar debate over NATO membership is playing out in neighboring Sweden, another longtime partner of the alliance that had spurned full membership for decades—until Russia's brazen invasion of Ukraine. Of the two countries, it is the Swedish public that has historically been more open to membership of the military alliance than their Finnish neighbors. That is no longer the case. "The biggest momentum is in Finland, and that has been a bit surprising actually," said Anna Wieslander, director of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, a Swedish think tank.

In the days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, support for NATO membership in Finland surged into the majority for the first time, reaching 62 percent in a second survey conducted in mid-March by the Finnish public broadcaster. In Sweden, 51 percent now support NATO membership, according to a poll from early March, up from 42 percent in January.

Although Finland is edging closer to NATO membership than Sweden, most analysts and diplomats agree that the countries are a package deal. If one joins, the other is likely to follow suit. Given their shared geography on the Scandinavian Peninsula—along with NATO member Norway—the alliance would prefer if the two countries joined at the same time. "[With] that, you will have one new solution for the security arrangements," Wieslander said.

"Finland is on a path toward membership. I think now it's a question of when, not if," said Erik Brattberg, an expert on trans-Atlantic security with the Albright Stonebridge Group, a consulting firm. "I think Sweden is still adjusting to the new geopolitical reality. It has been slower in that adjustment, but they are also moving in the same direction."

NATO members seem universally ready to welcome Sweden and Finland with open arms. Diplomats from Germany, Britain, France, Canada, Lithuania, and Estonia all told Foreign Policy their governments would likely support Finland and Sweden's membership bid.

Julianne Smith, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, said Washington would "welcome" the two new members but stressed it was up to the governments in Helsinki and Stockholm to make the first move. "They bring very capable militaries. They are some of our closest allies in Europe, and so I can't imagine a situation where there would be tremendous resistance to this idea," she told reporters in a briefing on Tuesday. "Quite the contrary, I think NATO allies would be generally enthusiastic."

The Finnish government is working on a white paper on security due to be released this month, which will fuel conversation about NATO membership ahead of the security alliance's summit in Madrid in June. The white paper will "clearly influence the debate here in Sweden as well," Wieslander said.

Brattberg said the ruling party in Sweden, the center-left Swedish Social Democratic Party, appears to be starting to shift its foreign-policy platform in the wake of Russia's war, prodded in part by the center-right parties in opposition to renewing a push for NATO membership. "The

Social Democratic Party has traditionally, historically stood for Swedish neutrality ... and military nonalignment,” Brattberg said. “But even amongst leading Social Democrats in Sweden, that stance is increasingly being seen as less and less relevant in a new era marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.”

The question of NATO membership is likely to factor higher than ever before in debate ahead of the Swedish general election scheduled for September. The country’s Moderate Party has already announced that it would back membership of the military alliance.

The prospect of Finland and Sweden joining NATO is likely to further inflame tensions between Russia and the NATO alliance. The Kremlin has characterized the alliance, borne out of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the West, as its top geopolitical foe and signaled that Ukraine’s prospective NATO membership played a major role in its decision to fully invade the country. A senior Russian diplomat warned last month that there would be “serious military and political consequences” if the two countries joined the alliance.

Finland’s ambassador to Washington, Mikko Hautala, told Foreign Policy in an interview that he expected a reaction from Moscow if Finland or Sweden were to move ahead with applying to NATO. “[At] a minimum, we will see information influencing ... those kind of activities,” he said. “But it’s hard to say what the reaction would be.”

During the Cold War, as Europe was carved up into spheres of influence, Finland opted for neutrality, serving as an important buffer between the East and the West. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave Finland more room to maneuver in its foreign policy, joining the European Union in 1995 and deepening its cooperation with NATO. “We are basically as close to NATO as you can get without being a member,” Hautala said.

Smith, the U.S. NATO ambassador, said the Kremlin’s fierce opposition to NATO enlargement wouldn’t deter allies from welcoming new members, even in the face of a full-scale Russian war in Ukraine. “Russia tried its very best in recent months to try and get NATO allies to revisit that policy,” she said. “It sent a treaty requesting that NATO basically turn off the process of NATO enlargement, and the answer that came back in stereo surround sound from all 30 allies was: absolutely not. NATO’s door will remain open—full stop.”

NATO diplomats say Finland brings more advantages to the alliance than just military hardware. Few countries know how Russia works better than Finland—at least as well as foreign countries can in the shadowy and opaque power structure that Russian President Vladimir Putin has built. They say adding Finland’s expertise and experience in balancing relations with its larger eastern neighbor would add significant value to the alliance.

Other experts on trans-Atlantic security said while Russia would likely condemn Finland and Sweden’s membership, it doesn’t view those countries in the same light as other prospective members that used to be in the Soviet Union and, at least in the eyes of Putin, should fall under Moscow’s orbit.

“Russia would be furious, but I don’t think it would react the same way if, say, Georgia or Ukraine were on a clear track to NATO membership now,” said Rachel Rizzo, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank.

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### **32. Don’t let Putin win in Ukraine**

Wall Street Journal, 6 Apr 22, Daniel Henninger

In no sense now can Vladimir Putin be allowed to win in Ukraine. People shouldn’t have to be shot in the back of the head with their hands tied behind them to make that clear, but such is history’s record of humanity slow-walking counterattacks against mass slaughter.

Mr. Putin was going to defeat Ukraine quickly. Now he isn’t. But he can still win if the West’s commitments to Ukraine, however impressive, produce a frozen conflict, as Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley predicted to Congress Tuesday when he said the conflict could last “years for sure.” Time like that is Mr. Putin’s friend because he has Stalin’s stomach for death, and eventually we won’t.

It is good in the wake of the Bucha atrocities that President Biden and Europe’s leaders are talking about holding Mr. Putin and his associates accountable for war crimes—once it is possible to collect evidence. Still, one doesn’t have to be Volodymyr Zelensky to notice that these good intentions have little to do with the reality that the current level of help from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization still leaves Ukraine in purgatory, with one foot in Mr. Putin’s hell and the other stretching toward deliverance by the West.

A stirring of moral sensibilities is always welcome, but Bucha, Mariupol and these events have surfaced new realities that the West’s political leadership can’t pretend away into some future when, as they hope, this is over.

A few weeks ago, it was possible at least to describe as an endgame talking point the possibility that Ukraine would be divided into western and eastern parts, ceding control to Russia of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Donbas and possibly Crimea if the Putin army establishes a land bridge through Mariupol.

That result, however, assumed the war would default into a traditional military standoff between competing armies. That’s not what is happening in Ukraine. It is increasingly clear that after failing to secure a quick win, Mr. Putin’s Plan B is scorched earth.

Using crudely targeted long-range missiles, land mines and his army’s historic instinct to barbarity, he is simply destroying Ukraine—its people, its economy, whole cities and infrastructure. After the current “pause,” he’ll go back for more.

The consequences of this obviously unexpected scale of destruction are significant for the West’s calculations. At this point all the arguments, such as they are, for affirming a negotiated settlement that turns so much of Ukraine over to Mr. Putin have become impossible to credit.

It will take a decade and unimaginable amounts of capital to rebuild what Mr. Putin has destroyed. Who exactly is going to do that? Dividing Ukraine in two would effectively turn the eastern part into a Cold War East Germany, which would create the destabilizing post-Yalta imbalances that existed for decades between the wealthy West and those living in the Third World East.

To rebuild the Ukraine under his control, Mr. Putin would have to send vast amounts of his oil and gas revenue into the region. Fat chance of that on the scale needed.

Any serious rebuilding of Mariupol, Mykolaiv and other cities ceded to Russia will never happen without capital investments from Western banks and governments, making us the morally humiliated paymasters for Mr. Putin's demolition. Why is this man smiling?

Until the invasion, Ukraine's economy was growing, including a vital new technology sector, and leaning toward the West. Absent the Putin lunacy, Ukraine could have become an economic "land bridge" between the European Union nations to the west and the modern economy younger Russians were building to the east. Now much of Ukraine is rubble, and the Russian market will be a ruin for years.

Any notion Russians themselves may have entertained that somewhere at the bottom of all this was a rationale for uniting with the medieval political state known as the Kievan Rus is now exposed as a gross lie by their leader. Mr. Putin was willing to settle for nothing more than the dirt.

In the absence of anything but passing press contact with the U.S. president, a question often put to those who interpret for Mr. Biden at the White House, Pentagon and State Department is whether we want Ukraine to win. After this week, I think the better question is: Are we willing to make Mr. Putin lose?

Saying that he's experiencing a "strategic defeat" is a dodge. Every day—or year—that he is killing and wrecking, he's winning. Vladimir Putin has to lose in Ukraine, not only in the eyes of the aghast outside world. NATO's current military and political status quo—the arms flows and ratcheting sanctions—just isn't enough.

It's a terrible thing to say, but one suspects that for some in Washington, Berlin and Paris, the world's roaring moral outrage at these atrocities lets them kick the harder decisions about raising the military costs for Mr. Putin into another week. If the media is writing about Bucha, genocide and war crimes, the argument fades for sending Ukraine high-altitude missile defenses, counter-artillery radar and other "escalatory" military equipment.

Eventually, Putin wins. Don't let him.

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### **33. Across South Asia, U.S. and India push back against China**

Foreign Policy, 6 Apr 22, C. Raja Mohan

"Israel is prepared to expand civilian measures during and after the month of Ramadan, in accordance with the security situation," Gantz added, according to AFP. The statement did not elaborate on the measures that would affect Palestinians.

He also expressed "appreciation" for Abbas' comments on an attack in the town of Bnei Brak near Tel Aviv late last month.

The Palestinian president had issued a rare condemnation of the March 29 attack in which five people were killed after a Palestinian opened fire at passers-by, saying that the killings "will only lead to further deterioration of the situation, while we are all striving for stability".

A total of 11 people have been killed in attacks in Israel since March 22, including some carried out by assailants linked to or inspired by ISIS.

Over the same period, eight Palestinians have been killed, according to an AFP tally, including two assailants in anti-Israeli attacks and six people the Israelis said had carried out attacks or were about to do so.

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### **37. Arab League foreign ministers discuss possibility of 'ceasefire' with Russian, Ukrainian counterparts**

Kurdistan 24, 6 Apr 22

A number of the Arab League foreign ministers met with their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts to discuss the possibility of a ceasefire between the two warring states, Iraq's foreign ministry announced on Wednesday.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit and foreign ministers from Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, and Sudan met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Warsaw and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow. The officials discussed ending the bloody conflict and resolving outstanding issues based on the United Nations Charter and international law.

Formed at the request of Egypt in March, the Arab Ministerial Communication Group aims to play a role in ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict that broke out in late February and displaced millions of Ukrainians.

The Middle Eastern ministers said they support any mediation initiatives to end the fighting.

the Arab Ministerial Communication Group poses for a group photo with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, April 4, 2022. (Photo: Iraqi Foreign Ministry)the Arab Ministerial

The ongoing war has had significant economic repercussions on Middle Eastern countries. Egypt imports nearly 80 percent of its wheat imports from Russian and Ukrainian suppliers.

The region's markets have also witnessed a surge in the price of cooking oil since 70 percent of the global supply comes from Russia and Ukraine.

Iraq previously announced that it supports dialogue and peaceful resolutions of the outstanding issues between the two sides.

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### **38. Lebanon loses UN fuel support as government urged to find long-term solution**

The National, 6 Apr 22, Jamie Prentis

An UN-led emergency operation to supply health and water facilities in Lebanon with fuel has ended after six months, with the Lebanese government urged to find a long-lasting solution to the country's devastating energy crisis.

Additional severe fuel and electricity shortages struck import-dependent Lebanon last summer, with the UN warning that critical services would be impeded and additional hardships placed on a population facing a raft of problems.

The UN-led operation, initially intended to last for three months but later extended, was launched in September in a bid to stop vital services from collapsing.

The World Food Program, in co-ordination with other UN agencies and NGOs, delivered more than 10.4 million liters of fuel to 350 water facilities and 272 health facilities throughout Lebanon.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Najat Rochdi described it as "one of the largest fuel service provision operations in the world".

She underlined her concern over basic services and people's welfare amid the energy crisis.

"I am appealing to the Lebanese government to find a sustainable solution to this issue, as the most vulnerable people need some form of assistance and protection," she said.

In September, the fuel deliveries were described by the UN as "exceptional emergency support for a maximum duration of three months".

Back then, Ms. Rochdi called on the government to "save no effort" in finding sustainable solutions to the energy crisis and to "protect the rights of families in Lebanon to access essential services".

Hospitals among those affected

Power cuts are a regular occurrence in Lebanon, with the embattled state-run power grid able to provide electricity for only a few hours a day at best. Many users, including hospitals, are forced to turn to private generators.

**From:** CENTCOM Macdill AFB CENTCOM HQ Mailbox CCCI JOC Desk  
**Sent:** Tue, 12 Apr 2022 08:53:55 +0000  
**To:** (b)(6)  
**Cc:** (b)(6)  
**Subject:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS, 12 APR 22  
**Attachments:** CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 12 APR 22.pdf, CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS 12 APR 22.docx, smime.p7s

## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate  
April 12, 2022

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### U.S./WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE

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TOP NEWS

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### **1. Islamic State morphs and grows in Pakistan, Afghanistan**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22, Kathy Gannon

Since coming to power in Afghanistan eight months ago, the Taliban have touted their success in repressing the Islamic State group, but the militants have expanded into neighboring Pakistan, stepping up attacks there. Analysts say IS has morphed into a borderless terrorist group, one of the deadliest in a region that has spawned many violent, radical organizations. In northwest Pakistan, the impact is brutally clear.

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Reuters, 11 Apr 22

Pakistan's parliament chose a more Western-friendly politician, Shehbaz Sharif, as prime minister on Monday, completing the ousting of predecessor Imran Khan in a political crisis that has sparked street protests and a mass resignation of lawmakers.

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Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Matthew Dalton, Yaroslav Trofimov and Mauro Orru

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday launched a fresh appeal for military aid as the country prepared for some of the conflict's heaviest fighting so far, while France sent a police unit from its armed forces to Ukraine to investigate possible war crimes, the first disclosed deployment of military personnel in Ukraine from a North Atlantic Treaty Organization country. Meanwhile, Ukrainian authorities said they were investigating a claim by its troops in the besieged city of Mariupol that they came under a Russian chemical weapons attack Monday. The Russian government hasn't commented publicly about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Mariupol.

### **4. White House expected to name new commander to lead allied forces in Europe**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Nancy A. Youssef and Gordon Lubold

A top American Army general in Europe is expected to be elevated to lead all U.S. and allied forces on the continent, U.S. officials said, marking the biggest change to NATO military leadership since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The Pentagon is also set to name a new general to lead Special Operation forces, the officials said. Both would replace commanders who are expected to retire this year as part of a normal rotation of commanders.

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**Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan; @ImranKhanPTI (11 Apr):** We are demanding immediate elections as that is the only way forward -- to let the people decide,

through fair & free elections, whom they want as their prime minister. On Wednesday I will be holding a jalsa in Peshawar after Isha - my first jalsa after being removed through a foreign-instigated regime change. I want all our people to come, as Pakistan was created as an independent, sovereign state not as a puppet state of foreign powers.

**Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi; @narendramodi (11 Apr):** Congratulations to H. E. Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror, so that we can focus on our development challenges and ensure the well-being and prosperity

**Minister of Defense of Israel, Benny Gantz; @gantzbe (11 Apr):** Regarding the Iranian challenge - I spoke about the critical need to expand operational and intelligence cooperation with the U.S. and regional partners, creating a united front in the face of common challenges and forces that seek to destabilize the Middle East.

**President Biden; @POTUS (11 Apr):** I spoke today with Prime Minister Modi of India. We committed to strengthening our defense, economic, and people-to-people relationship to together seek a peaceful and prosperous world.

**US Secretary [of State] Antony Blinken; @SecBlinken (11 Apr):** The United States is troubled by Russian authorities' detention today in Moscow of prominent civil society leader Vladimir Kara-Murza. We are monitoring this situation closely and urge his immediate release.

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ISIS

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### **5. ISIS 'lone-wolf' found guilty of murdering British MP**

Agence France-Presse, 11 Apr 22

A London jury on Monday unanimously found Islamic State follower Ali Harbi Ali guilty of murdering UK lawmaker David Amess in a ferocious knife attack in October last year.

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IRAN

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### **6. Politics, not substance, seen guiding US and Iran on terror listing**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Arshad Mohammed and Parisa Hafezi

One of the last obstacles to reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal - Tehran's demand to remove its Revolutionary Guards from a US terrorism list - is more an issue of politics than substance, analysts said.

### **7. Iran seeks more security for diplomatic sites in Afghanistan**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22

Iran on Monday urged the Taliban to provide better security at Iranian diplomatic sites in neighboring Afghanistan after angry Afghan protesters pelted the consulate in Herat with rocks, state media reported.

### **8. Iran says deal on prisoner release, foreign funds imminent**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said that more of Iran's blocked money would be released very soon in a deal involving the release of dual nationals in Iran. The move is a sign that the nuclear negotiations, while appearing deadlocked, are still moving along.

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## IRAQ

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### **9. Iraq's farmers pushed off land as drought and heat cripple crops**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22

Until a few years ago, farming in southern Iraq was "as lucrative as oil," Qasim Abdul Wahad remembers, and his one-hectare farm plot in the governate of Basra produced enough to feed his family of eight. Now dust kicks up under his feet as he walks through his land, after worsening extreme heat and drought linked to climate change killed 90 percent of his winter crops, including all of his okra and eggplant.

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## SYRIA

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### **10. In north Syria, business hub hopes to drive recovery from war**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Khalil Ashawi

In an industrial zone in northern Syria's rebel-held city of Al-Bab, Abu Omar al-Shihabi's smelter churns out iron bars he says can compete with any produced in Syria and beyond.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **11. Afghans protest after videos allegedly show Iranians beating refugees**

Agence France-Presse, 11 Apr 22

Dozens of Afghans chanting "Death to Iran" protested Monday outside Tehran's consulate in the western city of Herat after videos allegedly showing Afghan refugees being beaten by Iranians went viral over the weekend.

### **12. 'This isn't a wise decision': Taliban reversal on girls' education met with condemnation**

NBC News, 11 Apr 22, Mushtaq Yusufzai and Rhoda Kwan

On March 23, the Taliban turned away teenage girls, who had arrived excited and carrying new textbooks, from school gates across Afghanistan. Classrooms would be closed to girls from the sixth grade on, the leaders said, until an appropriate dress code could be decided on for girls and female teachers. The flip-flop signals fundamental divisions within the Taliban between hard-liners and moderates over how to rule the country as the regime faces mounting international condemnation amid a spiraling humanitarian crisis.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **13. What to know about Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan's new prime minister**

Washington Post, 11 Apr 22, Maite Fernández Simon

It's been a tumultuous week in Pakistani politics. The prime minister, Imran Khan, was ousted in a no-confidence vote Sunday after a week-long political drama that put the Muslim-majority country of 220 million on the brink of democratic collapse.

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## YEMEN

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### **14. UN envoy arrives in Yemen's capital for talks with rebels**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22, Samy Magdy

The U.N. special envoy for Yemen arrived Monday in the capital of Sanaa for the first time since he assumed his post eight months ago for talks with the Houthi rebels, his office said.

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## EGYPT

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### **15. Gulf states give Egypt \$22 billion to mitigate fallout from Ukraine war**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22, Marc Espanol

The pledge of some \$22 billion from Gulf states announced in a matter of days comes at a time when Egypt is experiencing a deep financial crisis that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing global economic uncertainty has only helped to accelerate. In this context, the assistance from the Gulf is expected to at least neutralize for now some of its more urgent imbalances and vulnerabilities, albeit at a considerable price.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **16. Israel army launches new operations around flashpoint W. Bank city of Jenin**

Agence France-Presse, 11 Apr 22

Israeli forces launched a third day of operations on Monday around the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin following heavy gun battles in recent days and 20 arrests overnight, the army said.

### **17. Hamas stops Islamic Jihad from military escalation with Israel in Gaza**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22

Hamas and Islamic Jihad are coordinating policies and activities, stepping up attacks in the West.

### **18. Explosion in south Lebanon kills 1, injures several**

Associated Press, 12 Apr 22, Ahmad Mantash

An explosion ripped through a building in southern Lebanon early on Tuesday, killing one person and wounding seven, a Lebanese security official said.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **19. Biden urges Modi not to increase India's reliance on Russian oil and gas**

New York Times, 11 Apr 22, Michael D. Shear and Mujib Mashal

President Biden on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India not to increase his country's reliance on Russian oil and gas, officials said, part of a global effort by the United States to maintain economic pressure on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Biden also emphasized growing defense cooperation with India in a virtual meeting with Mr. Modi — a line U.S. officials have increasingly highlighted in the hopes of convincing New Delhi to come off the fence over Russia's invasion.

### **20. U.S. aircraft carrier deploys off Korean peninsula amid tensions with North - official**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Idrees Ali and Josh Smith

The USS Abraham Lincoln strike group is operating in waters off the Korean peninsula, a U.S. official said, after South Korean media reported that the ships were deployed amid tensions over North Korea's missile tests.

### **21. British missile takes down Russian drone**

The Times (UK), 12 Apr 22, Charlie Parker and Larisa Brown

A state-of-the-art British missile has blown a Russian drone out of the sky in its first recorded use in Ukraine.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **22. Putin's war moves Finland and Sweden closer to joining NATO**

Washington Post, 12 Apr 22, Ishaan Tharoor

If one accepts the rationale that Russia invaded Ukraine to thwart Kyiv's entry into NATO and check the Western military alliance's eastward march — and there are plenty of reasons, of course, not to accept that rationale — then on those grounds alone, President Vladimir Putin's gambit has been a disaster.

### **23. NATO's 'Achilles heel': alliance conducts war games in nervous Lithuania**

The Guardian (UK), 11 Apr 22, Philip Oltermann

About 30km west of the Belarusian border, the enemy's tanks were rolling through the pine forests of Lithuania at speed until a makeshift obstacle made of barbed wire blocked their path. Soldiers carrying bolt cutters jumped out of the armored vehicle at the front to clear the road.

### **24. Ukraine braces for new offensive as Russia reinforces military in east**

Washington Post, 11 Apr 22, By Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

## **25. Western nations adapt their Ukraine help as war enters new phase**

Defense News, 11 Apr 22, Joe Gould

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to send heavier weapons to Ukraine in anticipation of Russia focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the country.

## **26. US orders consular staff to leave Shanghai amid COVID surge**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22

The U.S. has ordered all non-emergency consular staff to leave Shanghai, which is under a tight lockdown to contain a COVID-19 surge.

## **27. The Chinese companies trying to buy strategic islands**

Financial Times (UK), 11 Apr 22, Kathrin Hille

Small businesses from China have scoured the globe for important strips of land. Are they trying to make money or are they a front for Beijing?

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## ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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## **28. Afghan Resistance Groups eye spring offensive but internal divisions and the Taliban get a vote, too.**

Foreign Policy, 11 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Armed resistance against the Taliban is picking up momentum across Afghanistan, with militias run by former political and military leaders of the collapsed republic recruiting and arming fighters, notably from the ranks of the former republic's U.S.-trained security forces. Some are trying to drum up international support for forcible regime change, according to sources among the groups, who have eyes on a spring offensive. But the lack of unity among leaders of the armed opposition groups, who regard each other more as rivals than comrades, could mean they are unlikely for now to make much progress in their shared ambition to overthrow the Taliban, a movement that has been galvanized by the extremists' repression of women, girls, and ethnic groups.

## **29. Is the ceasefire in Yemen a gain for Iran?**

Middle East Forum, 11 Apr 22, Clifford Smith

The international community is elated at the April 2 announcement of a U.N.-brokered two-month long ceasefire in Yemen between the Saudi Arabia- and the United Arab Emirates--led coalition, which backs the officially recognized Yemeni government, and the Iranian-supported Houthi movement. This optimism is unearned. The ceasefire likely gives Iran an achievement. What gives theocrats in Tehran an advantage is unlikely to lead to a meaningful peace.

## **30. What's behind the new wave of terrorism against Israel**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Jonathan Spyer

The attack in Tel Aviv last Thursday, in which a gunman opened fire on a bar, killing three, brought the number of Israelis murdered in terror incidents since March 22 to 13. It confirms the

suspicion, raised and then suppressed with dread by many Israelis over the same period, that their country faces a new wave of terror.

### **31. What the U.S. Military needs to learn from the Ukraine War**

TIME, 11 Apr 22, James Stavridis

As the brutal fighting continues in the Ukraine War, it seems likely to fundamentally upend the way we wage war in the 21st-century. From new tactics to equipment, the Russian invasion of Ukraine may presage fundamental changes in how war is conducted. What can Western militaries learn from the war thus far?

### **32. What is the U.S.'s long-term policy toward Russia now?**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Sabrina Siddiqui and William Mauldin

In the six weeks since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration has imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow, armed the Ukrainians, mobilized Western allies in opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin and sought to make him an international pariah.

### **33. Putin's War in Ukraine is a watershed. Time for America to get real.**

New York Times, 11 Apr 22, Dr. Charles A. Kupchan

During his recent speech in Warsaw, President Biden said that Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power," only to clarify a few days later that he was merely expressing outrage, not announcing a new U.S. policy aimed at toppling Russia's leader. The episode, interpreted by many as a dangerous gaffe, underscored the tension in U.S. foreign policy between idealism and realism.

### **34. Could the Siloviki challenge Putin? What it would take for a coup by Kremlin insiders**

Foreign Affairs, 11 Apr 22 Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan

Among the many questions surrounding Russia's disastrous war in Ukraine, one of the most notable concerns the growing tensions between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his own security services and military.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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### **35. Rahi welcomes return of Arab ambassadors, calls for voting in favor of 'Lebanon's identity'**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 11 Apr 22

Maronite Patriarch Beshara al-Rai welcomed the return of the ambassadors of Gulf States to Beirut, saying the move "makes Lebanon feel that it is an active member of the Arab League."

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### IRAN

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### **36. Iran appoints IRGC-linked official as Iraq envoy**



## CENTCOM NEWS CLIPS

U.S. CENTCOM Communication Integration Directorate

April 12, 2022

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### COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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Associated Press, 11 Apr 22, Kathy Gannon

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### **6. Politics, not substance, seen guiding US and Iran on terror listing**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Arshad Mohammed and Parisa Hafezi

One of the last obstacles to reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal - Tehran's demand to remove its Revolutionary Guards from a US terrorism list - is more an issue of politics than substance, analysts said.

### **7. Iran seeks more security for diplomatic sites in Afghanistan**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22

Iran on Monday urged the Taliban to provide better security at Iranian diplomatic sites in neighboring Afghanistan after angry Afghan protesters pelted the consulate in Herat with rocks, state media reported.

### **8. Iran says deal on prisoner release, foreign funds imminent**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said that more of Iran's blocked money would be released very soon in a deal involving the release of dual nationals in Iran. The move is a sign that the nuclear negotiations, while appearing deadlocked, are still moving along.

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## IRAQ

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### **9. Iraq's farmers pushed off land as drought and heat cripple crops**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22

Until a few years ago, farming in southern Iraq was "as lucrative as oil," Qasim Abdul Wahad remembers, and his one-hectare farm plot in the governate of Basra produced enough to feed his family of eight. Now dust kicks up under his feet as he walks through his land, after worsening extreme heat and drought linked to climate change killed 90 percent of his winter crops, including all of his okra and eggplant.

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## SYRIA

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### **10. In north Syria, business hub hopes to drive recovery from war**

Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Khalil Ashawi

In an industrial zone in northern Syria's rebel-held city of Al-Bab, Abu Omar al-Shihabi's smelter churns out iron bars he says can compete with any produced in Syria and beyond.

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## AFGHANISTAN

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### **11. Afghans protest after videos allegedly show Iranians beating refugees**

Agence France-Presse, 11 Apr 22

Dozens of Afghans chanting "Death to Iran" protested Monday outside Tehran's consulate in the western city of Herat after videos allegedly showing Afghan refugees being beaten by Iranians went viral over the weekend.

### **12. 'This isn't a wise decision': Taliban reversal on girls' education met with condemnation**

NBC News, 11 Apr 22, Mushtaq Yusufzai and Rhoda Kwan

On March 23, the Taliban turned away teenage girls, who had arrived excited and carrying new textbooks, from school gates across Afghanistan. Classrooms would be closed to girls from the sixth grade on, the leaders said, until an appropriate dress code could be decided on for girls and female teachers. The flip-flop signals fundamental divisions within the Taliban between hard-liners and moderates over how to rule the country as the regime faces mounting international condemnation amid a spiraling humanitarian crisis.

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## PAKISTAN

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### **13. What to know about Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan's new prime minister**

Washington Post, 11 Apr 22, Maite Fernández Simon

It's been a tumultuous week in Pakistani politics. The prime minister, Imran Khan, was ousted in a no-confidence vote Sunday after a week-long political drama that put the Muslim-majority country of 220 million on the brink of democratic collapse.

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## YEMEN

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### **14. UN envoy arrives in Yemen's capital for talks with rebels**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22, Samy Magdy

The U.N. special envoy for Yemen arrived Monday in the capital of Sanaa for the first time since he assumed his post eight months ago for talks with the Houthi rebels, his office said.

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## EGYPT

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### **15. Gulf states give Egypt \$22 billion to mitigate fallout from Ukraine war**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22, Marc Espanol

The pledge of some \$22 billion from Gulf states announced in a matter of days comes at a time when Egypt is experiencing a deep financial crisis that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing global economic uncertainty has only helped to accelerate. In this context, the assistance from the Gulf is expected to at least neutralize for now some of its more urgent imbalances and vulnerabilities, albeit at a considerable price.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **16. Israel army launches new operations around flashpoint W. Bank city of Jenin**

Agence France-Presse, 11 Apr 22

Israeli forces launched a third day of operations on Monday around the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin following heavy gun battles in recent days and 20 arrests overnight, the army said.

### **17. Hamas stops Islamic Jihad from military escalation with Israel in Gaza**

Al Monitor, 11 Apr 22

Hamas and Islamic Jihad are coordinating policies and activities, stepping up attacks in the West.

### **18. Explosion in south Lebanon kills 1, injures several**

Associated Press, 12 Apr 22, Ahmad Mantash

An explosion ripped through a building in southern Lebanon early on Tuesday, killing one person and wounding seven, a Lebanese security official said.

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## NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE NEWS

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### **19. Biden urges Modi not to increase India's reliance on Russian oil and gas**

New York Times, 11 Apr 22, Michael D. Shear and Mujib Mashal

President Biden on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India not to increase his country's reliance on Russian oil and gas, officials said, part of a global effort by the United States to maintain economic pressure on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Biden also emphasized growing defense cooperation with India in a virtual meeting with Mr. Modi — a line U.S. officials have increasingly highlighted in the hopes of convincing New Delhi to come off the fence over Russia's invasion.

**20. U.S. aircraft carrier deploys off Korean peninsula amid tensions with North - official Reuters, 11 Apr 22, Idrees Ali and Josh Smith**

The USS Abraham Lincoln strike group is operating in waters off the Korean peninsula, a U.S. official said, after South Korean media reported that the ships were deployed amid tensions over North Korea's missile tests.

**21. British missile takes down Russian drone**

The Times (UK), 12 Apr 22, Charlie Parker and Larisa Brown

A state-of-the-art British missile has blown a Russian drone out of the sky in its first recorded use in Ukraine.

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ADJACENT AORs

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**22. Putin's war moves Finland and Sweden closer to joining NATO**

Washington Post, 12 Apr 22, Ishaan Tharoor

If one accepts the rationale that Russia invaded Ukraine to thwart Kyiv's entry into NATO and check the Western military alliance's eastward march — and there are plenty of reasons, of course, not to accept that rationale — then on those grounds alone, President Vladimir Putin's gambit has been a disaster.

**23. NATO's 'Achilles heel': alliance conducts war games in nervous Lithuania**

The Guardian (UK), 11 Apr 22, Philip Oltermann

About 30km west of the Belarusian border, the enemy's tanks were rolling through the pine forests of Lithuania at speed until a makeshift obstacle made of barbed wire blocked their path. Soldiers carrying bolt cutters jumped out of the armored vehicle at the front to clear the road.

**24. Ukraine braces for new offensive as Russia reinforces military in east**

Washington Post, 11 Apr 22, By Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

**25. Western nations adapt their Ukraine help as war enters new phase**

Defense News, 11 Apr 22, Joe Gould

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to send heavier weapons to Ukraine in anticipation of Russia focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the country.

#### **26. US orders consular staff to leave Shanghai amid COVID surge**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22

The U.S. has ordered all non-emergency consular staff to leave Shanghai, which is under a tight lockdown to contain a COVID-19 surge.

#### **27. The Chinese companies trying to buy strategic islands**

Financial Times (UK), 11 Apr 22, Kathrin Hille

Small businesses from China have scoured the globe for important strips of land. Are they trying to make money or are they a front for Beijing?

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### ANALYSIS/COMMENTARY

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#### **28. Afghan Resistance Groups eye spring offensive but internal divisions and the Taliban get a vote, too.**

Foreign Policy, 11 Apr 22, Lynne O'Donnell

Armed resistance against the Taliban is picking up momentum across Afghanistan, with militias run by former political and military leaders of the collapsed republic recruiting and arming fighters, notably from the ranks of the former republic's U.S.-trained security forces. Some are trying to drum up international support for forcible regime change, according to sources among the groups, who have eyes on a spring offensive. But the lack of unity among leaders of the armed opposition groups, who regard each other more as rivals than comrades, could mean they are unlikely for now to make much progress in their shared ambition to overthrow the Taliban, a movement that has been galvanized by the extremists' repression of women, girls, and ethnic groups.

#### **29. Is the ceasefire in Yemen a gain for Iran?**

Middle East Forum, 11 Apr 22, Clifford Smith

The international community is elated at the April 2 announcement of a U.N.-brokered two-month long ceasefire in Yemen between the Saudi Arabia- and the United Arab Emirates--led coalition, which backs the officially recognized Yemeni government, and the Iranian-supported Houthi movement. This optimism is unearned. The ceasefire likely gives Iran an achievement. What gives theocrats in Tehran an advantage is unlikely to lead to a meaningful peace.

#### **30. What's behind the new wave of terrorism against Israel**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Jonathan Spyer

The attack in Tel Aviv last Thursday, in which a gunman opened fire on a bar, killing three, brought the number of Israelis murdered in terror incidents since March 22 to 13. It confirms the

suspicion, raised and then suppressed with dread by many Israelis over the same period, that their country faces a new wave of terror.

### **31. What the U.S. Military needs to learn from the Ukraine War**

TIME, 11 Apr 22, James Stavridis

As the brutal fighting continues in the Ukraine War, it seems likely to fundamentally upend the way we wage war in the 21st-century. From new tactics to equipment, the Russian invasion of Ukraine may presage fundamental changes in how war is conducted. What can Western militaries learn from the war thus far?

### **32. What is the U.S.'s long-term policy toward Russia now?**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Sabrina Siddiqui and William Mauldin

In the six weeks since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration has imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow, armed the Ukrainians, mobilized Western allies in opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin and sought to make him an international pariah.

### **33. Putin's War in Ukraine is a watershed. Time for America to get real.**

New York Times, 11 Apr 22, Dr. Charles A. Kupchan

During his recent speech in Warsaw, President Biden said that Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power," only to clarify a few days later that he was merely expressing outrage, not announcing a new U.S. policy aimed at toppling Russia's leader. The episode, interpreted by many as a dangerous gaffe, underscored the tension in U.S. foreign policy between idealism and realism.

### **34. Could the Siloviki challenge Putin? What it would take for a coup by Kremlin insiders**

Foreign Affairs, 11 Apr 22 Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan

Among the many questions surrounding Russia's disastrous war in Ukraine, one of the most notable concerns the growing tensions between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his own security services and military.

## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **35. Rahi welcomes return of Arab ambassadors, calls for voting in favor of 'Lebanon's identity'**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 11 Apr 22

Maronite Patriarch Beshara al-Rai welcomed the return of the ambassadors of Gulf States to Beirut, saying the move "makes Lebanon feel that it is an active member of the Arab League."

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### IRAN

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Sharif said in an interview last week good relations with the United States were critical for Pakistan for better or for worse, in stark contrast to Khan's prickly ties to Washington.

Nawaz Sharif was barred by the Supreme Court in 2017 from holding public office and subsequently went abroad for medical treatment after serving just a few months of a 10-year jail sentence for corruption charges.

“There can’t be any bigger insult to this country,” Khan, ousted in a no-confidence vote by the same assembly in the early hours of Sunday, told reporters on Monday on the prospect of Sharif being elected.

No elected prime minister has completed a full term in the nuclear-armed nation since it won independence from colonial power Great Britain in 1947, though Khan is the first to be removed by a no-confidence vote.

The military has ruled the country of 220 million people for almost half its nearly 75-year history. It viewed Khan and his conservative agenda favorably when he won election in 2018. But that support waned after a falling-out over the appointment of military intelligence chief and economic troubles that last week led to the largest interest rate rise in decades.

Khan remained defiant following his defeat in parliament.

Thousands of his supporters in several cities held protests against his ousting that went on until Monday's early hours.

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### **3. Ukraine’s Zelensky calls for more military aid ahead of battles in eastern regions**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Matthew Dalton, Yaroslav Trofimov and Mauro Orru

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday launched a fresh appeal for military aid as the country prepared for some of the conflict’s heaviest fighting so far, while France sent a police unit from its armed forces to Ukraine to investigate possible war crimes, the first disclosed deployment of military personnel in Ukraine from a North Atlantic Treaty Organization country.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian authorities said they were investigating a claim by its troops in the besieged city of Mariupol that they came under a Russian chemical weapons attack Monday. The Russian government hasn’t commented publicly about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Mariupol.

In a virtual address to South Korean lawmakers Monday, Mr. Zelensky pressed Seoul to deliver more than the humanitarian assistance and nonlethal aid it has given so far, stating a need for heavier equipment to fight Russian tanks and missiles. “We thank South Korea for the help you have provided, but to survive from the war with Russia we need more help,” Mr. Zelensky said.

Ukraine has stepped up its pleas for heavy military equipment to fight the conventional tank and artillery battles that are expected in the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine. Having failed to capture

Kyiv, Russia has shifted its objective to seizing the parts of the eastern Donbas area it doesn't already control. Both Ukraine and Russia are moving troops and equipment into the region, with Ukraine redeploying combat units from northern areas that it recovered.

Skirmishes along the contact line in Donbas and nearby regions occur daily, and Russia has continued its long-range missile campaign on Ukrainian infrastructure. The Russian Defense Ministry said Monday that missiles destroyed a weapons and military equipment repair base of the Ukrainian air-defense forces overnight, as well as two ammunition depots. Those claims couldn't be independently verified.

The Ukrainian unit deployed in Mariupol, the Azov regiment, said Russian forces dropped an unknown chemical substance from a drone, causing respiratory and nervous-system symptoms among its defenders and civilians.

No independent evidence of the attack emerged Monday from Mariupol. Oleksiy Arestovych, a senior adviser to the Ukrainian president, said in a social-media post that the government is "checking the information about a possible chemical attack against the defenders of Mariupol."

The Azov regiment, a unit of the Ukrainian military formed from a far-right volunteer force that was created in 2014, has been resisting Russia's military in Mariupol alongside Ukrainian marines and other forces for more than a month, despite being surrounded and cut off from resupply.

Azov's commander Andriy Biletskiy said in a video recording that the chemical substance affected three people in the Azovstal industrial area of Mariupol, his unit's stronghold, but didn't cause "catastrophic consequences."

Western officials have warned for weeks that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, and Russian forces were supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad when its military was credibly accused of using chemical weapons.

Just hours before Monday's alleged attack, Eduard Basurin, military spokesman for the pro-Russian statelet in Donetsk, was quoted by Russia's RIA state news agency as calling for the use of "chemical troops, which will find a way how to smoke the moles out" in Mariupol.

In his nightly address, Mr. Zelensky said the government is preparing "for a new stage of terror against Ukraine," noting Mr. Basurin's comments. "We take this as seriously as possible," Mr. Zelensky said.

Mr. Basurin's Donetsk People's Republic, formed in 2014 and recognized by Moscow as an independent state in February, claims Mariupol as part of its territory and has sent its own fighters there alongside regular Russian troops.

Ukrainian authorities say as many as 10,000 people died in Mariupol in weeks of fighting that leveled much of the city. Some 400,000 people lived in Mariupol before the war.

Officials in the U.S. and U.K. said they were aware of the reports of a potential chemical munition used in Mariupol but hadn't confirmed their authenticity.

"These reports, if true, are deeply concerning and reflective of concerns that we have had about Russia's potential to use a variety of riot control agents, including tear gas mixed with chemical agents, in Ukraine," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement.

Ukrainian and Western authorities separately pushed ahead with investigations into alleged war crimes committed in formerly Russian-held towns in northern Ukraine before Moscow's withdrawal at the end of March. The French government said its gendarmes, a police force that is part of the French army, would assist local authorities in probing any war crimes around the capital, Kyiv.

French prosecutors said last week they were probing whether war crimes had been committed in Ukraine following accounts of rape and killings of hundreds of civilians in Bucha and other formerly Russian-occupied towns.

Prosecutors also opened a separate probe March 16 following the killing two days earlier of a Franco-Irish journalist and his research consultant near Kyiv.

Russia has denied targeting civilians in its military assault on Ukraine and called the video and photos from Bucha staged.

In Moscow, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in what was the first meeting between a European leader and Mr. Putin since the start of Russia's invasion.

Mr. Nehammer, who also met Saturday in Kyiv with Mr. Zelensky, asked the Russian leader for a cease-fire, for safe passage for civilians encircled by Russian forces and for supplies to occupied regions, the chancellor said in a statement. Ukrainian authorities have said Russia hasn't allowed civilians to flee along evacuation corridors toward central Ukraine.

He said he warned Mr. Putin that continuing the invasion would incur more sanctions and that those responsible for war crimes should be brought to justice.

"This is not a friendly visit," Mr. Nehammer said. "I have just returned from Ukraine and I have seen with my own eyes the immeasurable suffering caused by the Russian war of aggression."

Austria, which is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas, has been blocking sanctions against Russian energy imports to Europe together with Germany and other nations.

European Union foreign ministers discussed the bloc's efforts to pressure Russia's economy with sanctions at a meeting Monday, including the possibility of further energy sanctions. "Nothing is off the table, including sanctions on oil and gas," EU foreign-policy chief Josep Borrell said after the meeting, which was held in Luxembourg. "But today no decision was taken."

The EU approved a fifth package of sanctions Friday that included the first significant ban on imports of Russian energy – coal. However, the bloc remains deeply divided over whether to advance with further energy import bans, starting with oil.

A senior EU official briefed on Monday's discussions said there was little detailed discussion of the options Monday and no progress in narrowing the divide within the bloc. A group of countries, led by Germany, oppose a speedy cutoff of oil imports. Others, led by Poland, are urging the bloc to stop buying Russian energy.

U.S. officials say they have urged the Indian government not to increase imports of Russian energy. President Biden met virtually Monday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Washington presses New Delhi to take a tougher stance against Russia. India has avoided publicly denouncing Moscow. Mr. Modi said during the meeting that he has spoken several times with both Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelensky and advised the two leaders to engage in direct talks.

Western and Ukrainian officials say the timing of Russia's next major campaign is up to Moscow, which may press the eastern offensive imminently with available forces, or wait a few weeks to reconstitute units that suffered losses in northern Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that its missiles targeted a Ukrainian repair base near Velyka Novosilka in the Donetsk region, and that an ammunition depot it targeted near Mykolaiv, in southern Ukraine, was also destroyed.

More Western companies announced sales or suspensions of their Russian operations Monday following sanctions imposed by the European Union and the U.S. Further, French bank Société Générale SA said it would cease its banking and insurance activities in Russia, including selling Rosbank, while Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson AB said that it was suspending its business in Russia indefinitely.

Société Générale said it was selling its entire stake in Rosbank and its Russian insurance units to Interros, a conglomerate controlled by metals billionaire Vladimir Potanin. Mr. Potanin and Interros have eluded sanctions from the U.S., EU and the United Kingdom. He was included on Canada's list of sanctioned individuals last week. Société Générale has had investment banking operations in Canada since 1974.

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#### **4. White House expected to name new commander to lead allied forces in Europe**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Nancy A. Youssef and Gordon Lubold

A top American Army general in Europe is expected to be elevated to lead all U.S. and allied forces on the continent, U.S. officials said, marking the biggest change to NATO military leadership since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

The Pentagon is also set to name a new general to lead Special Operation forces, the officials said. Both would replace commanders who are expected to retire this year as part of a normal rotation of commanders.

Advisors to South Korea's president-elect sought redeployment of U.S. strategic assets, such as aircraft carriers, nuclear bombers and submarines, to the Korean peninsula during talks held on a visit to Washington last week. [read more](#)

South Korea's defense ministry said it is aware that the carrier group is in international waters but declined to comment on the reports, because it is a U.S. military asset.

North Korea has previously criticized U.S. military drills as a rehearsal for war, and said they increase tensions.

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## **21. British missile takes down Russian drone**

The Times (UK), 12 Apr 22, Charlie Parker and Larisa Brown

A state-of-the-art British missile has blown a Russian drone out of the sky in its first recorded use in Ukraine.

The Martlet, a laser-guided lightweight multirole missile (LMM), is understood to have been sent in secret to Ukraine by Britain but was filmed being launched by a soldier of the 95th Airborne Assault Brigade on Sunday.

Footage of the attack shows the soldier aiming a shoulder launcher at an Orlan-10 reconnaissance drone in the Kharkiv region before firing the 1,100mph missile. Cheers are heard moments later after the warhead hit the aircraft with a concentrated explosive charge and fragmentation blast.

An eight-mile convoy of military vehicles north of the eastern city of Izyum was “clear evidence” that Russia was following through with its goal of focusing on the east of Ukraine, according to the US military.

Until yesterday it was not known that Martlet missiles had been sent to Ukraine to help to secure the country's airspace against Russian jets, helicopters and surveillance drones. The weapon has not been named by officials who announced support shipments to the country. A senior defense source said LMMs had been delivered as part of Britain's “air defense package”.

It is understood that Martlets were deployed to Ukraine at the same time as Starstreak and have been in use since late March. The missiles have similar ranges and can be fired using the same platforms after minor adjustments. They are made in Belfast by Thales, an aerospace and defense company, which declined to comment.

A defense industry source said: “We are certain it's an LMM, not Starstreak. It's a much smaller, more compact, high-precision weapon designed to take out fast-moving targets. Starstreak is best against jets and helicopters, but LMMs can also be fired against boats and drones.”

The attack was the second of three successful strikes against high-altitude Russian Orlan drones in the past three days, according to the Ukrainian air assault forces. A member of the forces

praised the “British-made” weapon used in the second attack and suggested Starstreak had been used in the first strike on Saturday. Yesterday the unit confirmed that a third Orlan had been taken out of the sky by paratroopers in Mykolaiv, southern Ukraine.

Footage of a Russian helicopter chopped in half by a Starstreak missile emerged this month. Other countries are understood to have supplies of LMMs and may have given some to Ukraine.

Ukrainian soldiers released a video of a captured Orlan drone being dissected by a technician at the weekend. He discovered that it had been using a cheap digital camera to spy on Ukrainian troops and that a plastic water bottle had been used as a fuel tank.

The battle for airspace is considered the most important front in the war by the Ukrainian air force. Slovakia is considering providing Soviet-made MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine if alternative protection of its own airspace can be arranged, the country’s prime minister, Eduard Heger, said yesterday.

Western nations have supplied a variety of weapons, but earlier discussions on providing MiG-29s, which are also used by Poland and Bulgaria, were halted because the plans were perceived as too risky in increasing tensions between Russia and Nato.

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## ADJACENT AORs

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### **22. Putin’s war moves Finland and Sweden closer to joining NATO**

Washington Post, 12 Apr 22, Ishaan Tharoor

If one accepts the rationale that Russia invaded Ukraine to thwart Kyiv’s entry into NATO and check the Western military alliance’s eastward march — and there are plenty of reasons, of course, not to accept that rationale — then on those grounds alone, President Vladimir Putin’s gambit has been a disaster. The Russian assault on Ukraine has led to an almost unprecedented moment of solidarity in Europe, waves of Western military equipment pouring into Ukraine and the mass expulsion of suspected Russian spies in European capitals. Ukraine might not be in the queue to join NATO right now, but its dogged resistance has accelerated its prospect of joining the European Union and further unmooring itself from the Russian orbit.

On Sunday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the alliance was now planning a much larger, permanent military presence on its borders with Russia. “Regardless of when, how, the war in Ukraine ends, the war has already had long-term consequences for our security,” he told Britain’s Daily Telegraph newspaper. “NATO needs to adapt to that new reality. And that’s exactly what we are doing.”

Indeed, one of the lasting legacies of the Russian invasion may be how the war spurred NATO’s strengthening and expansion. Finland and Sweden, two Nordic countries with deep histories of nonalignment, now appear on the precipice of joining the bloc. A report Monday in the Times of London suggested that both nations could clinch NATO membership in a matter of months.

“I think we will end the discussion before midsummer,” Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin told reporters on Friday, referring to imminent deliberations on NATO membership that would conclude by the June 25 holiday. “We will have very careful discussions, but we will also not take any more time than we have to in this process, because the situation is of course very severe.”

A statement Monday from Sweden’s Social Democrats, who lead a minority government in Stockholm, made clear that the center-left party was reevaluating its traditional opposition to NATO membership. “When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden’s security position changed fundamentally,” the party said.

Public opinion in both countries lurched dramatically in favor of joining NATO after the invasion began. For the first time, a majority of Swedes support entry to the bloc, while a poll this weekend found that 68 percent of Finns would back gaining membership and that an even greater number would support the endeavor if it had the public endorsement of the country’s President Sauli Niinisto and Marin’s government. (Consider that, just in 2019, more than half of Finns were opposed to joining NATO.)

The swing in sentiment has prompted parties in and out of power in both countries to announce ongoing reassessments of their policy positions on NATO. Parliamentary processes will play out over the coming months but the conclusion seems clear: No NATO member state — not even Putin-friendly Hungary — is expected to veto the Finnish and Swedish membership bids, whenever they formally materialize.

On Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned the two Nordic countries against joining NATO, an alliance which he said “remains a tool geared towards confrontation.” Given the ongoing Russian campaign in Ukraine, Peskov’s admonishment — as well as a Russian foreign ministry threat in February of “serious military and political consequences” for Finland and Sweden — probably only strengthens the case to enter the alliance.

In one stroke, Finland joining NATO would more than double Russia’s existing land border with the member states of the Western military alliance, fencing in the Kremlin further. “How can this be anything but a massive strategic blunder for Putin?” a senior U.S. official scoffed to the Times.

Entry into NATO would be a historic move for both countries. Since the early 19th century, for reasons initially tied up in the geopolitics of the Napoleonic wars, Swedish governments maintained a studied neutrality that lasted through the end of the Cold War. After heroically resisting a Soviet invasion more than eight decades ago, tiny Finland settled for an uneasy status quo next to the Soviet juggernaut: It adopted a careful neutrality, accepted a degree of Soviet influence in its affairs, but avoided the same fate of Soviet domination experienced by countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

This arrangement became known as “Finlandization” — a nation converted into a process of geopolitical submission — and has been repeatedly mooted as a path through which Moscow and Kyiv can find some form of peaceful understanding. More than six weeks into the war, though,

it's hard to imagine Ukrainians accepting any kind of tacit subordination to Russia. Finlandization, meanwhile, has long been viewed as a pejorative term in Finland itself.

In practice, both Finland and Sweden already have close military ties with NATO partners and E.U. neighbors. According to the Economist, some experts even suggest that Finland's military capabilities are "more 'NATO interoperable' — capable of conducting joint operations alongside other allies — than some actual members."

The political journey toward NATO has taken longer. "It was only when Russia under Putin started to demonstrate that its threshold for using military force was lower than many had hoped — first with the war with Georgia in 2008 and then the invasions of Ukraine beginning in 2014 — that a debate on possible NATO membership started," wrote former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt in a Washington Post op-ed last month.

After Putin's war on Ukraine, Bildt added, "there is no way back to a past of illusory neutrality."

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### **23. NATO's 'Achilles heel': alliance conducts war games in nervous Lithuania**

The Guardian (UK), 11 Apr 22, Philip Oltermann

About 30km west of the Belarusian border, the enemy's tanks were rolling through the pine forests of Lithuania at speed until a makeshift obstacle made of barbed wire blocked their path. Soldiers carrying bolt cutters jumped out of the armored vehicle at the front to clear the road.

Then, a deafening bang. In its rush to victory, the advancing party had neglected to check the sandy terrain underneath the roadblock for mines. Luckily, for them, this was merely a dress rehearsal for a showdown between Russia and the North Atlantic alliance.

No live explosives were used in NATO's "Rising Griffin" maneuver at the Pabradė military base in eastern Lithuania. Instead, referees politely informed the tank commanders that their vehicles would have been ripped to shreds. The Russian enemy was being impersonated by American and Norwegian troops.

The western defenders may have notched up a tactical victory against an eastern aggressor on this sunny April morning, yet NATO's security architecture has never looked more fragile than in the spring of 2022, especially when viewed from Lithuania, a country long considered the alliance's Achilles heel.

An independent republic since 1990, the southernmost of the three Baltic states borders both Russia-allied Belarus on its eastern side and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on its western flank. On Russian television, pundits have openly urged the Kremlin to escalate the war in Ukraine by enforcing a military corridor along the "Suwalki gap" — Lithuania's short border with Poland — thus cutting off the Baltics from other NATO-allied lands.

“Until last November, we had the Russian army quite far away from NATO’s borders,” said Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania’s foreign minister. “Now the military activity is very close. To add to that, Lithuania lies between the territory of Belarus and the territory of Kaliningrad. Which puts us in a strategic situation that is, let’s say, interesting.”

Since 2016, after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, “enhanced forward presence” battlegroups have been stationed in four member states on NATO’s eastern flank: Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The war in Ukraine has led the alliance to further bolster its presence in the region, with multinational battalions to be dispatched to Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. The military presence in Lithuania has been increased from approximately 1,200 to roughly 1,600 soldiers and equipped with new hardware, such as the German army’s light and mobile Ozelot anti-aircraft system, which can be used to protect airports from aerial assaults.

But the function of these military units remains that of a “tripwire”: a reminder to hardliners in the Kremlin that invading what they may see as renegade breakaway nations of a former Russian empire would automatically trigger a military conflict with other western European states. But in their current state, there is little doubt the enhanced forward presence units would sooner or later be overrun.

The scenario being rehearsed in the Rising Griffin exercise was a David v Goliath one, with the attacking force taking the role of the giant. The priority of NATO’s troops in the maneuver, said one officer, was to “delay the enemy”, not to hold the line.

As NATO members prepare to meet in Madrid in June, Lithuania, along with its Baltic neighbor Estonia, is calling on NATO to urgently adjust its posture in the region from deterrence to what it calls “forward defense”.

“What we’re seeing in Russia and Belarus is now a dangerous country with the intention to attack other sovereign states,” Landsbergis told the Guardian. “It’s a double-edged sword: on the one hand Russia has proven in Ukraine that it is a declining regional power. On the other hand, it can still do a lot of damage on its way down, as it seems to have no regard for its own losses. We have to defend the Baltic states, especially those that are geographically interesting to Russia.”

In keeping with the “founding act”, a political agreement signed by NATO and Russia in 1997, there are restrictions on how many western allied troops are allowed to be deployed to the Baltics, and how close they can be stationed to the border.

The enhanced forward presence in Lithuania, which is made up of seven European nations and led by Germany’s Bundeswehr, has to be rotated every six months at considerable cost and effort, with hundreds of vehicles having to be transported by road, rail or air before each changeover.

While countries such as Germany and the UK remain committed to the founding act, Lithuania and other states in the region say the document is no longer viable as a treaty.

“We consider it null and void after what Russia has done,” Landsbergis said. “The new reality we have to accept is that the treaties that built the old security environment with Russia are no more. We have to look at this with new eyes. There has to be a permanent military presence with everything needed to defend the skies, defend the seas and defend the land of the Baltic states.”

Estonia’s prime minister last week called for the three Baltic states to be handed “war-fighting capabilities”, with divisions of up to 25,000 soldiers per country.

“The question we have to ask ourselves is: what will be the new global security architecture of the world after this war?” said Landsbergis. “At the moment, we are merely reacting to what is happening in Ukraine. But that has to change. We have to start thinking in strategic terms.”

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#### **24. Ukraine braces for new offensive as Russia reinforces military in east**

Washington Post, 11 Apr 22, By Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

U.S. intelligence has observed a massive Russian military convoy making its way south toward Izyum, a strategically important town in northeast Ukraine that Russia seized earlier this month and may use now as a staging point to carry out assaults on larger cities to the south, said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. The expectation, Kirby added, is that the “same brutal tactics, that same disregard for civilian life and civilian infrastructure, will probably continue” as Russian military commanders concentrate on the Donbas.

The bleak U.S. assessment came amid renewed concerns about the potential for a chemical weapons attack, and as Austria’s chancellor, Karl Nehammer, became the first Western leader to meet face to face with Russian President Vladimir Putin since the incursion began in late February. Nehammer’s trip, according to officials in Vienna, was intended to convey to the Russian leader that, morally, Putin had already lost the war.

“This is not a friendly visit,” the chancellor said in a statement. “I have just come from Ukraine and have seen with my own eyes the immeasurable suffering caused by the Russian war of aggression.”

Amid the global outrage over accusations that Russian troops committed atrocities targeting civilians in areas around the capital, Kyiv, French law enforcement officials prepared to start working on related investigations after arriving in Ukraine on Monday. Prosecutors in France have opened multiple probes into potential war crimes committed against French nationals there.

President Biden, meanwhile, met virtually with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and urged him not to increase Russian energy imports, as the international community seeks to impose greater financial pressure on Moscow to call off its war. Biden said after the meeting that the

United States and India are in “close consultation” in managing the “destabilizing” effects of Russia’s actions.

While Russia has pulled back from the suburbs of Kyiv and other parts of northern Ukraine, Putin’s forces continue to attack elsewhere.

Russia has continued to fire artillery, rockets and mortars at the northern city of Kharkhiv, Ukrainian military officials said. Russian forces, they said, attempted on Monday to storm the city of Sievierodonetsk in the Donbas region but were unsuccessful.

In a speech relayed via video to South Korean lawmakers, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday said the Russian buildup in eastern Ukraine includes “tens of thousands of soldiers and a huge amount of equipment.” With its new offensive, he said, Russia aims to “break our national resistance.”

Zelensky highlighted the destruction in Mariupol, a port city in the south that has been bombarded for weeks.

“There are tens of thousands of dead,” the Ukrainian leader said in his address. “But even despite this, the Russians do not stop the offensive. They want to make Mariupol a demonstratively destroyed city.”

The mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boychenko, said in an interview with the Associated Press that 10,000 civilians there have been killed. He estimated that the death toll could double amid the Russians’ unrelenting assault, which has made it difficult for rescue workers to reach the dead and the wounded.

The Pentagon also assessed that the number of people killed in Mariupol could be as high as Zelensky described.

“I don’t think anybody’s really going to know until Ukrainian authorities are able to get in there and look and see,” Kirby said. “But if you just look at the imagery, and you see how much the Russians have pounded Mariupol from the air, it’s inconceivable to imagine that there aren’t going to be civilian casualties and that it could be a significant number.”

Zelensky said in a separate video address released late Monday that the government in Kyiv takes “as seriously as possible” an apparent threat to unleash chemical weapons on the Ukrainian units remaining in Mariupol, which earlier in the day claimed on social media that such an attack had already occurred there.

Kirby acknowledged that U.S. officials were aware of those claims but were unable to confirm their veracity, saying that the Pentagon would closely monitor the situation. “These reports, if true, are deeply concerning and reflective of concerns that we have had about Russia’s potential to use a variety of riot control agents, including tear gas mixed with chemical agents, in Ukraine.”

The Russian Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Rescuers on Monday pulled seven more bodies from ruins in Borodyanka, an area northwest of Kyiv that was devastated by airstrikes. The dead there were found in the rubble of two apartment buildings, Ukraine's emergency services agency said in a Telegram post. Nineteen victims have been removed from the rubble, according to the update, and rescue efforts continue.

A senior European Union official, Josep Borrell, said that he "witnessed the brutal, brutal aggression of the Russian troops against the civilian population" during an official visit to Kyiv with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and that the E.U. would support the work of prosecutors from Ukraine and the International Criminal Court to collect evidence of possible war crimes committed by Russian forces.

Borrell, the E.U.'s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, predicted that more bloodshed is in store as Russia masses forces in the east and prepares to intensify operations in the next days.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under terms set by the Pentagon, said that it was unclear when Russia may launch the new assault but that there were signs it was preparing to do so. So far, this official said, Russia has reinforced its military posture around the city of Donetsk, where Ukrainian forces have battled Russian separatists for several years, by adding artillery units to the southwest.

The convoy now pressing south from the Russian border includes a command element, a support battalion, helicopter support and infantrymen for security, the U.S. official said, calling it "clear evidence" that Russia already is pursuing its goal to seize the Donbas after failing to take Kyiv. Russia has focused the majority of its airstrikes in recent days on the Donbas region, the official said.

Moscow's decision to name Gen. Alexander Dvornikov as its top commander in Ukraine is unlikely to alter Russia's tactics, U.S. officials said. Dvornikov has been dubbed the "butcher of Syria" for the violence his forces inflicted during Russia's military campaign there in the last few years.

"We're probably turning another page in the same book of Russian brutality," Kirby told reporters Monday.

Russia will not pause its military operations in Ukraine before the next rounds of peace talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday in an interview with state TV channel Rossiya 24. He added that while Putin had ordered a temporary halt in military action during an early round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegates, Moscow has since changed its stance.

"After we became convinced that the Ukrainians were not planning to reciprocate, a decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause until a final agreement is reached and signed," Lavrov said.

In the interview, Lavrov also appeared to recast Moscow's goals, saying its operations in Ukraine are meant to end a course by the United States "towards world domination." Russian officials previously justified their invasion by calling it an effort to "denazify" Ukraine.

Amid the bloodshed, the U.N. Development Program announced a new initiative to support Ukraine over the next two years as it seeks to deal with the devastation and rebuild its institutions for a possible postwar future.

The program will provide on-the-ground services including infrastructure repair, debris removal and new ways to generate income for those who have lost their jobs, U.N. officials said. They cited earlier research finding that the war could wipe out 18 years of socioeconomic progress in Ukraine if it is not resolved decisively, and soon.

"The war in Ukraine continues to inflict immense human suffering," UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner said in a statement. Early estimates, he said, "project that close to two decades of socio-economic progress could be lost if the war continues — with 9 out of 10 people at risk of falling into poverty."

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## **25. Western nations adapt their Ukraine help as war enters new phase**

Defense News, 11 Apr 22, Joe Gould

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to send heavier weapons to Ukraine in anticipation of Russia focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the country.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid a surprise visit to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Saturday, where he pledged 120 armored vehicles and new anti-ship missile systems. This came a day after he promised to send an additional £100 million (U.S. \$130 million) of high-grade military equipment to Ukraine, saying Britain wants to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression.

In the United States, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley forecast the war's new phase will play out in flat, open terrain and will increasingly involve armor and artillery. On Monday, a senior defense official said the Pentagon will send arms to Ukraine for that fight, including more Javelin anti-tank weapons as well as counter-artillery radars.

"I don't think they're in Ukraine yet, but they're on the move," the Pentagon official said of the Javelins. "That's a very specific example of how we're trying to help the Ukrainians in this particular new phase of the conflict."

Thwarted in its early plan for a quick takeover of the capital Kyiv, Russia is resupplying and reinforcing its invasion force in eastern Ukraine with an 8-mile convoy of vehicles. The group, which includes command-and-control support and possibly helicopters for air support, is apparently headed toward Iziurm in the Kharkiv region of eastern Ukraine — all while Russia is reinforcing its positions southwest of Donetsk with artillery units.

The action comes as Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called for more weapons for his country, and stronger sanctions against Moscow, during meetings with NATO foreign ministers in Brussels last week.

Ahead of the talks, Kuleba said his agenda was “very simple — it has only three items on it: It’s weapons, weapons and weapons.”

A \$100 million package of U.S. security assistance announced last week included Javelins, four counter-artillery and counter-UAV tracking radars, four counter-mortar radar systems, armored Humvees, and laser-guided rocket systems.

The Czech Republic became the first NATO member to send tanks to Ukraine, which included T-72 and BVP-1 infantry fighting vehicles, Reuters reported last week.

The package of military aid Britain announced last week includes more Starstreak anti-aircraft missiles, another 800 anti-tank missiles and precision munitions capable of lingering in the sky until directed to their target.

“Ukraine has defied the odds and pushed back Russian forces from the gates of Kyiv, achieving the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century,” Johnson said in a statement. “It is because of President Zelenskyy’s resolute leadership and the invincible heroism and courage of the Ukrainian people that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin’s monstrous aims are being thwarted.”

It’s a trickier political question in Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz is reportedly delaying a final decision on whether to send German tanks to Ukraine. While the Defense Ministry argues it needs them for its own use, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Monday that Ukraine needs “heavy weapons.”

“Now is not the time for excuses; now is the time for creativity and pragmatism,” Baerbock said at a meeting of European Union foreign affairs ministers in Luxembourg.

Russia warned Thursday that supplying weapons to Ukraine would thwart ongoing peace negotiations between the two countries.

“Pumping weapons into Ukraine will not contribute to the success of Russian-Ukrainian talks,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

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## **26. US orders consular staff to leave Shanghai amid COVID surge**

Associated Press, 11 Apr 22

The U.S. has ordered all non-emergency consular staff to leave Shanghai, which is under a tight lockdown to contain a COVID-19 surge.

### **31. What the U.S. Military needs to learn from the Ukraine War**

TIME, 11 Apr 22, James Stavridis

As the brutal fighting continues in the Ukraine War, it seems likely to fundamentally upend the way we wage war in the 21st-century. From new tactics to equipment, the Russian invasion of Ukraine may presage fundamental changes in how war is conducted. What can Western militaries learn from the war thus far?

First, the extraordinary success the Ukrainian forces (armed with western technology) are enjoying against Russia armor. The numbers of tanks, armored vehicles, and heavy trucks destroyed by the Ukrainians are almost certainly in the thousands. This is largely the result of the hand-held anti-armor weapons provided by NATO countries (NLAWs from Britain, Javelins from the U.S., etc.).

But it is also indicative of a tactical approach by the Ukrainians that fuses the intelligence provided by the West; the portability of the missile and drone systems; the employment of them by small, light special forces teams; and entirely new systems like the Switchblade drones.

Most importantly, each tank and armored vehicle destroyed means more dead Russians. Russian soldiers killed in action probably number around 15,000 over five weeks, which is staggering. As a point of comparison, the U.S. lost 7,000 in twenty years of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. And the lost armor stocks will be difficult to replace in the short term. Each Russian tank costs more than \$10 million, but each missile is only a hundred thousand dollars or so. War is hell, as General Sherman said in the American Civil War, but it is also expensive.

Is it time to write the obituary for the tank on the battlefield? Will they turn out to be the battleships of the 21st century, rendered obsolete by new technologies and tactics? It is certainly time to consider reducing tank inventories (as the U.S. Marine Corps is already doing) and using the resources to move toward new systems, notably unmanned. Tanks can still be effectively employed, but must be used in a coherent combined-arms manner that includes protection of them from such “cheap kill” mechanisms.

Second, the concept of close air support is increasingly at risk as well. Alongside the concerns about the efficacy of heavy armor are about the vulnerability of helicopters. We are seeing \$18 million Russian attack helicopters destroyed by a hundred thousand dollar stingers—over and over. This was a key tactic in allowing the Afghanistan mujahideen to defeat the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Again, the economics of this, especially for a weak economy like Russia, are daunting, as well as replacing trained pilots.

And that is before new swarm drone systems come into full force. As artificial intelligence becomes a wartime reality, the ability to control large numbers of unmanned systems and operate them in synch to attack large relatively less maneuverable platforms like helicopters and troop transports. We are at the leading edge of achieving this capability, and doing so augers badly for expensive manned aircraft, especially those that operate routinely near to the ground.

The lesson here is not (yet) to fully walk away from manned aircraft providing the close support on the battlefield. But the Ukrainian war is a warning that we should be spending more on research and development that improves unmanned air systems, both in ground attack and in anti-air capacities; leverage improvements in artificial intelligence to make them operate synergistically together; and experiment with such capabilities aggressively to be able to provide close air support from higher altitudes and with unmanned, less expensive vehicles controlled directly by ground forces.

Third, another key factor on the Ukrainian battlefield has been the ability of Western intelligence systems to track Russian formations and provide real-time targeting directly to the Ukrainians. This has led not only to high levels of Russians killed in action, but also to operations killing Russian general officers. This in turn creates chaotic conditions, with numerous reports indicating a lack of coherent command and control on the battlefield, and operations being directed from Moscow.

When I was Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, in strategic command of the Afghan operation, I could not have imagined taking tactical control of 150,000 troops in the field. Yet that is exactly what appears to be happening in Ukraine, with attendant failures. The lesson is that by providing real-time, highly precise targeting to forces in the field, a belligerent can help undermine one of the true centers-of-gravity in combat: a coherent command and control system anchored by capable senior leaders.

Finally, we should learn from the continuing Russian playbook of what are clearly war crimes. We need to appreciate that our opponents are going to utilize horrible tactics that are in fact war crimes: destruction of civilian infrastructure (including internet and cyber systems) with indiscriminate fires; false flag operations replete with deep fake videos; weaponizing civilian populations by creating the conditions for mass movements, taxing the logistics of the nation under attack; utilization of unprincipled mercenaries like the Wagner Group, Chechens, and Syrians; and at least threatening the use of chemical and nuclear weapons.

All of this has been called “hybrid” or “gray zone” warfare, and we’ve seen the Russians go to this list of dirty tricks in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Syria over the past several decades. We need to do a better job of preparing to face these new realities on the battlefield. Obviously, we will not use these techniques, but we need to reverse engineer and blunt them in our training and equipment choices. This means training our troops to operate in chemical and biological environments more effectively; providing more civil support to local populations to defuse the impact of refugees; sharpen our ability to collect evidence to undermine fake videos and propaganda; and hone our responses to battlefield cyber attacks to include offensive options.

A new tactical triad is emerging in the 21st century battlefield – special forces, unmanned systems, and cyber will be far more important going forward. While legacy systems from tanks to destroyers to close air support aircraft will retain utility, we need to rethink our way of war. Sadly, there is much to learn from the battlefields of Ukraine.

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*Rockefeller Foundation. He is the co-author of 2034: A Novel of the Next World War. His most recent nonfiction book is "The Sailor's Bookshelf: 50 Books to Know the Sea."*

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### **32. What is the U.S.'s long-term policy toward Russia now?**

Wall Street Journal, 11 Apr 22, Sabrina Siddiqui and William Mauldin

In the six weeks since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration has imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow, armed the Ukrainians, mobilized Western allies in opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin and sought to make him an international pariah.

The response has brought U.S.-Russia relations to their lowest point since the Cold War. Left unclear is the impact on Washington's posture toward Russia in the long term and how permanent the U.S. government's actions would be, should Moscow change its trajectory in Ukraine.

So far, the Biden administration has focused on using sanctions to inflict pain on Russia's energy and financial sectors, its wealthy oligarchs and military complex, in a bid to force Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and end hostilities.

Yet President Biden has also labeled Mr. Putin a war criminal whose actions merit a trial and suggested the Russian president cannot remain in power, a remark that prompted a swift White House follow-up that regime change wasn't U.S. policy.

That rhetoric has raised questions about whether the U.S. hopes to see Mr. Putin ousted and put on trial, or would look for a way to resume diplomatic and commercial relations should a cease-fire be achieved between Russia and Ukraine—or would chart a path somewhere in between.

A return to anything approaching normal while Mr. Putin remains in charge appears unlikely, some former officials and Russia experts say, and Mr. Biden himself has reaffirmed his view that the world would be better off without the current Russian president.

"Once this war is over—and of course, it may not be over for some time—it's very hard to see U.S.-Russia relations recovering as long as Vladimir Putin is in power," said Angela Stent, a professor at Georgetown University and a Russia specialist.

National security officials acknowledge that the Biden administration failed in its goal to have a "stable and predictable" relationship with Russia due to Mr. Putin's invasion, and that ties are unlikely to return to where they stood before the war. But it is too soon to draw up a new overarching approach toward Moscow, they say.

"There will be no relief from sanctions or other costs we have and will continue to impose on Russia until President Putin reverses course and relents in his brutal aggression," State Department spokesman Ned Price said last month, a refrain repeated by top White House officials in recent days.

Maintaining flexibility over the longer term to allow Mr. Putin to seek a diplomatic exit or to respond to changes on the battlefield could have its advantages.

So far, Ukraine and Russia have engaged in several rounds of cease-fire talks to no avail. Should Moscow and Kyiv reach a peace deal, the U.S. and European countries would likely be willing to lift some but not all sanctions on Moscow as part of the arrangement, assuming Ukraine supported the move, former administration officials said. The U.S. and its allies have avoided telegraphing what it would take to lift sanctions.

John Herbst, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine during the George W. Bush administration, said some kind of thaw could be possible with the Russian leader retaining power.

“I despise Putin, but if he tomorrow were to recognize that he can’t win in Ukraine, he’s stopping the war...then our relationship will get better,” said Mr. Herbst, who is now at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington. He said one way for Mr. Putin to achieve sanctions relief would be to return to the status quo before the invasion, which the Russian leader has shown no interest in doing.

After failing to seize Kyiv quickly and oust the government, Russian forces are now regrouping and are expected to launch a new offensive in the Donbas region of Ukraine in coming weeks.

Elsewhere, Russia and the U.S. are expected to continue cooperating on some strategic and security objectives. Biden administration officials point to negotiations with Iran over reviving the Obama-era nuclear accord, in which Russia is a key participant; talks about the reconstruction of Afghanistan following the U.S. withdrawal last summer; and arms control and involvement in the International Space Station.

A State Department spokeswoman said the U.S. government has no intention of suspending diplomatic relations with the Kremlin, despite Moscow’s threats to sever such ties. Diplomats with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, whose numbers have been reduced dramatically, continue to engage with Russian officials.

Still, alleged Russian war crimes are an issue that could complicate relations between the U.S. and Russia in the future.

Officials in the Biden administration and other allied countries have pointed to killings of civilians blamed on Russian forces in the town of Bucha and the city of Mariupol as potential evidence of wartime atrocities for which Russia should be held accountable. The U.S. Justice Department on Wednesday said it was helping foreign prosecutors gather evidence of possible war crimes in Ukraine.

“With the pounding of Mariupol that is happening in front of our eyes and the latest events in Bucha that really puts Putin beyond the pale,” said Eugene Rumer, a former intelligence officer who leads the Russia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “I don’t know what leader can sit down with Putin—even at that long table where world leaders meet with him—and negotiate something and shake hands on it.”

The Biden administration has also been bracing for potential escalation on Russia's part and recently said the U.S. has been supplying Ukraine with protective equipment and supplies in case the Russians used chemical or biological weapons.

The White House has repeatedly ruled out sending U.S. troops to Ukraine or instituting a no-fly zone, but it has signaled that a chemical-weapons attack by Russia would trigger a response from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Negotiations to end the war are likely to become more difficult as more allegations of civilian killings emerge, said Michael McFaul, U.S. ambassador to Russia in the Obama administration.

"There can be no return to business as usual with Putin as a leader," said Mr. McFaul, now a professor at Stanford University.

For now, the U.S. and its allies are left with the hope that sanctions and Ukrainian resistance will force Mr. Putin to back down. They have failed so far to stop Moscow's offensive, even though the Russian economy is headed into what the International Monetary Fund and other global financial institutions say will likely be a deep recession.

Officials note that punitive economic measures take time to bite. But sanctions programs against authoritarian regimes in North Korea, Iran, Venezuela and Cuba have failed to achieve major shifts in those governments.

Sen. Ben Cardin (D., Md.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said broad economic sanctions on Russia could be lowered as a part of a peace deal, should Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky agree. But he said he didn't want Mr. Zelensky to be pressured to accept a deal.

He also said sanctions aimed at Mr. Putin and efforts to hold Russians to account over human rights should remain in place.

"Putin has to be held accountable—that means war-crimes accountability," he said.

Said Sen. Thom Tillis (R., N.C.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee: "I hope at some point we'll be able to normalize relations with a leader of Russia. I just don't know if that could ever be with Vladimir Putin."

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### **33. Putin's War in Ukraine is a watershed. Time for America to get real.**

New York Times, 11 Apr 22, Dr. Charles A. Kupchan

During his recent speech in Warsaw, President Biden said that Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power," only to clarify a few days later that he was merely expressing outrage, not announcing a new U.S. policy aimed at toppling Russia's leader. The episode, interpreted by many as a dangerous gaffe, underscored the tension in U.S. foreign policy between idealism and realism.

Mr. Putin's invasion of Ukraine should provoke moral outrage in all of us, and, at least in principle, it warrants his removal from office. But Mr. Putin could well remain the leader of a major power into the next decade, and Washington will need to deal with him.

This friction between lofty goals and realpolitik is nothing new. The United States has since the founding era been an idealist power operating in a realist world — and has on balance succeeded in bending the arc of history toward justice. But geopolitical exigency at times takes precedence over ideals, with America playing power politics when it needs to.

During the Cold War, Washington promoted stability by tolerating a Soviet sphere of influence and cozying up to unsavory regimes willing to fight Communism. In contrast, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, America operated under conditions of geopolitical slack; great-power rivalry was muted, enabling Washington to put front and center its effort to promote democracy and expand a liberal, rules-based international order.

What, then, is the path forward? The war in Ukraine now confronts the United States with the need to tilt back toward the practice of realpolitik. Washington's commitment to keeping NATO's doors open to Ukraine was a laudable and principled stand against an autocratic Russia. Yet America's idealist cause has run headlong into Russian tanks; Washington's effort to do right by Ukraine has culminated in Russia's ruthless effort to put the country back under Moscow's sway.

Mr. Putin has just sent history into reverse. The United States should seek to foil and punish Moscow's aggression, but Washington also needs to be pragmatic to navigate a world that, even if more unruly, is also irreversibly interdependent.

### **The gap between means and ends**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exposed a gap between America's ideological aspirations and geopolitical realities that has been widening since the 1990s. During the heady decade after the end of the Cold War, Washington was confident that the triumph of American power and purpose cleared the way for the spread of democracy. A primary instrument for doing so was the enlargement of NATO.

But from early on, the American foreign policy establishment allowed principle to obscure the geopolitical downsides of NATO enlargement. Yes, NATO membership should be open to all countries that qualify, and all nations should be able to exercise their sovereign right to choose their alignments as they see fit. But geography and geopolitics still matter; major powers, regardless of their ideological bent, don't like it when other major powers stray into their neighborhoods.

It's true that Moscow's dismay at the prospect of Ukraine's membership in NATO most likely is fed in part by nostalgia for the geopolitical heft of the Soviet days, Mr. Putin's paranoia about a "color revolution" arising in Russia, and mystical delusions about unbreakable civilizational links between Russia and Ukraine. But it is also true that the West erred in dismissing Russia's

legitimate security concerns about NATO setting up shop on the other side of its 1,000-mile-plus border with Ukraine.

All major powers desire strategic breathing room — which is precisely why Russia has objected to NATO's eastern expansion since the end of the Cold War. NATO may be a defensive alliance, but it brings to bear aggregate military power that Russia understandably does not want parked near its territory.

Indeed, Moscow's objections to NATO membership for Ukraine are very much in line with America's own statecraft, which has long sought to keep other major powers away from its borders.

The United States spent much of the 19th century ushering Britain, France, Russia and Spain out of the Western Hemisphere. Thereafter, Washington regularly turned to military intervention to hold sway in the Americas. The exercise of hemispheric hegemony continued during the Cold War, with the United States determined to box the Soviet Union and its ideological sympathizers out of Latin America. When Moscow deployed missiles to Cuba in 1962, the United States issued an ultimatum that brought the superpowers to the brink of war.

After Russia recently hinted that it might again deploy its military to Latin America, the State Department spokesman, Ned Price, responded, "If we do see any movement in that direction, we will respond swiftly and decisively." Given its own track record, Washington should have given greater credence to Moscow's objections to bringing Ukraine into NATO.

NATO's open-door policy has meanwhile encouraged countries in Europe's east to lean too far over their strategic skis. While the allure of joining the alliance has encouraged aspirants to carry out the democratic reforms needed to qualify for entry, the open door has also prompted prospective members to engage in excessively risky behavior.

Not long after NATO in 2008 pledged that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO," Georgia's president, Mikheil Saakashvili, launched an offensive against pro-Russian separatists in South Ossetia with whom the country had been sporadically fighting for years. Russia promptly carved up Georgia, grabbing control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Mr. Saakashvili thought the West had his back, but he miscalculated and overreached.

In similar fashion, NATO encouraged Ukraine to beat a path toward the alliance. The 2014 Maidan Revolution toppled a pro-Moscow regime and put Ukraine on a westward course, resulting in Russia's intervention in Crimea and Donbas. NATO's open door then beckoned, prompting Ukrainians in 2019 to enshrine their NATO aspirations in the Constitution.

Now Russia has again invaded the country to block its westward path. Given its unenviable proximity to Russia, Ukraine would have been better off playing it safe, quietly building a stable democracy while sticking with the neutral status that it embraced when it exited the Soviet Union. Indeed, Ukraine's potential return to neutrality figures prominently in the talks between Kyiv and Moscow to end the war.

NATO has wisely avoided direct involvement in the fighting in Ukraine in order to avert war with Russia. But NATO's unwillingness to protect Ukraine has exposed a troubling disconnect between the organization's stated goal of making the country a member and its judgment that defending Ukraine is not worth the cost.

In effect, the United States and its allies, even as they impose severe sanctions on Russia and send arms to Ukraine, are revealing that they do not deem the defense of the country to be a vital interest. But if that is the case, then why have NATO members wanted to extend to Ukraine a security guarantee that would obligate them to go to war in its defense?

NATO should extend security guarantees to countries that are of intrinsic strategic importance to the United States and its allies, but it should not make countries strategically important by extending them security guarantees. In a world that is rapidly reverting to the Hobbesian logic of power politics, when adversaries may regularly test U.S. commitments, NATO cannot afford to be profligate in handing out such guarantees. Strategic prudence requires distinguishing vital interests from lesser ones and conducting statecraft accordingly.

### **Beginning the world all over again**

Americans have long understood the purpose of their power to be not only security but also the spread of liberty at home and abroad. As Thomas Paine wrote in 1776, "We have it in our power to begin the world all over again."

Paine was surely engaging in hyperbole. But successive generations of Americans have taken the nation's exceptionalist calling to heart, with quite impressive results. Through the power of its example as well as its many exertions abroad — including World War I, World War II and the Cold War — the United States has succeeded in expanding the footprint of liberal democracy.

But the ideological aspirations of the United States have at times fueled overreach, producing outcomes at odds with the nation's idealist ambitions. The founding generation was determined to build an extended republic that would stretch to the Pacific Coast. The exalted banner of Manifest Destiny provided ideological justification for the nation's westward expansion — but also moral cover for trampling on Native Americans and launching a war of choice against Mexico that led to U.S. annexation of roughly half of Mexico's territory.

President William McKinley in 1898 embarked on a war to expel colonial Spain from Cuba, insisting that Americans had to act "in the cause of humanity." Yet victory in the Spanish-American War turned the United States itself into an imperial power as it asserted control over Spanish possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific, including the Philippines. The resulting Filipino insurgency led to the deaths of some 4,000 U.S. troops and more than 200,000 Filipino fighters and civilians.

As he prepared the country for entry into World War I, President Woodrow Wilson declared before Congress that "the world must be made safe for democracy." After U.S. forces helped bring the war to a close, he played a leading role in negotiations over the League of Nations, a global body that was to preserve peace through collective action, dispute resolution and

disarmament. But such idealist ambitions proved too much even for Americans. The Senate shot down U.S. membership in the League; Wilson's ideological overreach cleared the way for the stubborn isolationism of the interwar era.

"The Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty," President George W. Bush proclaimed just before launching the invasion of Iraq in 2003. But the war resulted in far more bloodshed and chaos than liberty. Likewise, two decades of exhaustive U.S. efforts to bring stability and democracy to Afghanistan fell far short, with the American withdrawal last summer giving way to Taliban rule and a humanitarian nightmare. Across these historical episodes, noble ambitions became divorced from strategic realities, yielding dreadful results.

### **Getting Real**

NATO meant well in opening its doors to Ukraine, yet good intentions have again stumbled on geopolitical realities. To be sure, Mr. Putin had the opportunity to settle his objections to Ukraine's membership in NATO at the negotiating table. Last June, President Biden admitted that whether Ukraine joins the alliance "remains to be seen"; more recently, President Emmanuel Macron of France floated the idea of "Finlandization" for Ukraine — effective neutrality — and proposals for a formal moratorium on further enlargement circulated. Mr. Putin could have picked up these leads, but he instead opted for war — and now owns the resulting death and destruction.

Russia's relationship with the West is fast heading toward militarized rivalry. In light of the tight strategic partnership that has emerged between Moscow and Beijing — and China's own geopolitical ambitions — the next Cold War may well pit the West against a Sino-Russian bloc stretching from the Western Pacific to Eastern Europe.

The return of a two-bloc world that plays by the rules of realpolitik means that Washington will need to dial back its efforts to expand the liberal order, instead returning to a strategy of patient containment aimed at preserving geopolitical stability and avoiding great-power war. A new strategic conservatism will require avoiding the further extension of defense commitments into geographic areas that Russia and China consider their rimlands.

Instead, the United States should seek stable balances of power in the European and Asia-Pacific theaters. Washington will need to strengthen its forward presence in both theaters, requiring higher and smarter military spending and the strict avoidance of demanding wars of choice and nation-building adventures in the Middle East or other peripheral regions.

At the same time, taming an interdependent world will require working across ideological lines. Washington should ease off on the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad and the Biden administration should refrain from its tendency to articulate a geopolitical vision that too neatly divides the world into democracies and autocracies. Strategic and economic expedience will at times push the United States to partner with repressive regimes; moderating oil prices, for example, may require collaboration with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

Even though the United States will continue teaming up with its traditional democratic allies in Europe and Asia, many of the world's democracies will avoid taking sides in a new era of East-West rivalry. Indeed, Brazil, India, Israel, South Africa and other democracies have been sitting on the fence when it comes to responding to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia clearly poses the most immediate threat to geopolitical stability in Eurasia, but China, because of its emergence as a true competitor of the United States, still poses the greater geopolitical challenge in the longer term. Now that Russia and China are regularly teaming up, they could together constitute an opposing bloc far more formidable than its Soviet forbear. Accordingly, the United States should exploit opportunities to put distance between Moscow and Beijing, following the lead of the quintessential realists Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who in the 1970s weakened the Communist bloc by driving a wedge between China and the Soviet Union.

The United States should play both sides. Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks a fundamental breach with the Atlantic democracies, yet the West cannot afford to completely turn its back on Russia; too much is at stake. As during the Cold War, Washington will need a hybrid strategy of containment and engagement. Russia should remain in the penalty box for now, with the United States pushing back against the Kremlin's territorial expansionism and other aggressive behavior by reinforcing NATO's eastern flank and maintaining harsh economic sanctions.

But Washington should also remain on the lookout for opportunities to engage with Moscow. Its invasion of Ukraine has just made Russia an economic and strategic dependent of China; Mr. Putin will not relish being Xi Jinping's sidekick. The United States should exploit the Kremlin's discomfort with becoming China's junior partner by signaling that Russia has a Western option.

Assuming an eventual peace settlement in Ukraine that permits the scaling back of sanctions, the Western democracies should remain open to cautious and selective cooperation with Moscow. Areas of potential collaboration include furthering nuclear and conventional arms control, sharing best practices and technologies on alternatives to fossil fuels, and jointly developing rules of the road to govern military and economic activity in the Arctic.

Russia needs China more than China needs Russia, so Washington should also seek to pull Beijing away from Moscow. Beijing's ambiguous response to the invasion of Ukraine suggests at least a measure of discomfort with the economic and geopolitical disruption that has been produced by Russian recklessness. Yet Beijing continues to benefit from Russian energy and strategic cooperation and from the fact that Mr. Putin is forcing the United States to focus on Europe, thereby stalling the U.S. "pivot to Asia." Nonetheless, Washington should keep an eye out for opportunities to work with Beijing in areas of common interest—trade, climate change, North Korea, digital governance, public health—to improve relations, tackle global problems and potentially weaken the bond between China and Russia.

As during the Cold War, a world of rival blocs could mean economic as well as geopolitical division. The severe impact of the sanctions imposed on Russia underscores the dark side of globalization, potentially driving home to both the United States and China that economic interdependence entails quite considerable risk. China could distance itself from global markets

and financial systems, while Washington could seek to further decouple the United States from Chinese investment, technology, goods and supply chains. The world may be entering a prolonged and costly era of deglobalization.

The United States will always be an idealist country struggling to navigate a realist world. That's as it should be; the globe is a better place for it. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a geopolitical watershed: A more realist world is back, requiring that America's idealist ambitions yield more regularly to inescapable strategic realities.

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### **34. Could the Siloviki challenge Putin? What it would take for a coup by Kremlin insiders** Foreign Affairs, 11 Apr 22 Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan

Among the many questions surrounding Russia's disastrous war in Ukraine, one of the most notable concerns the growing tensions between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his own security services and military. The war started with Putin holding a televised security council meeting in which he humiliated Sergei Naryshkin, the chief of the foreign intelligence service, for insufficient enthusiasm about the invasion. Two weeks later, with Russian forces facing high casualties and unexpected resistance, Putin placed two generals of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) under house arrest and began an investigation into bad intelligence and the misuse of funds designated for cultivating pro-Kremlin groups in Ukraine. He also forced a deputy commander of the National Guard to resign, apparently because of a criminal investigation. In early April, one of the FSB generals who had been placed under house arrest was transferred to Lefortovo prison.

Then it was the military's turn. For nearly two weeks in March, amid rumors that Putin was furious with the progress of the invasion, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, the public face of the war and generally regarded as one of Putin's most trusted lieutenants, disappeared from view. When Shoigu finally resurfaced, first in a video clip of a security council meeting and then in person at a conference in the Ministry of Defense, he appeared somber and withdrawn. At the end of March, U.S. intelligence forces suggested that the Russian Defense Ministry has not been giving Putin a clear picture about the war, perhaps out of fear of further repercussions. And on April 9, Putin reorganized the military chain of command, appointing General Alexandr V. Dvornikov to be in charge of the operations in Ukraine.

At first glance, these developments suggest a striking change. In the years before the war, the siloviki, as Russia's security elite are known, had been one of the main power centers of Putin's regime. As a former KGB officer himself, Putin has long relied on the security services to enforce his policies and help him maintain his grip on power. And although the siloviki have been somewhat eclipsed by Shoigu's Defense Ministry in recent years, never before has Putin appeared to be so at odds with both the security services and the military as he is now. Given

Putin's increasingly ruthless crackdown on these men and the growing awareness in Moscow that the war has gone badly, some observers are wondering how long they will tolerate his catastrophic mistakes.

Such questions, however, overlook the historical relationship between the security forces and the Russian state—and the particular way that Putin has built his base of power. Although the recent developments are noteworthy, they do not suggest a larger breakdown of the existing order. Even amid the current tensions, the chances that leading members of the security or military elite might make a move against Putin remain slim. It is worth considering, then, why this is so, and what might have to happen for that to change.

### **Militarized, not mobilized**

To understand why the siloviki may be unlikely to turn against Putin, it is necessary to first understand the historic relationship between the military and the state. Historically, the Russian army has never posed much of a threat to the country's rulers. Unlike in other heavily militarized societies, there have been very few successful or attempted military coups in Russia. The last time the Russian army launched an open rebellion was in 1825, when the Decembrists tried to dethrone Tsar Nicolas I; the revolt failed disastrously, with most of the coup leaders killed or exiled. Nor has the Russian military given rise to alternative centers of power—in the mold of Egypt's Free Officers, for example, who toppled King Farouk in 1952. This is not for lack of trying: on several occasions since the collapse of the Soviet Union, groups of military veterans have sought to gain political power, but each time they have failed.

During the 1990s, before Putin came to power, the Russian government was weak, and the Kremlin was forced to balance between competing groups. Sometimes, this led to efforts by members of the military to gain influence or even overthrow the government. In October 1993, a group of former Soviet veterans calling themselves the Union of Officers took part in an ultraconservative revolt, but they were arrested before the rebellion got underway. Four years later, a Russian combat general named Lev Rokhlin left the army and formed his own political party called the Movement in Support of the Army, which aimed at taking over the Kremlin. It quickly gained popularity, but then in 1998, Rokhlin's wife shot him during a family feud at their dacha. The killing gave rise to numerous conspiracy theories, but one thing became clear: Rokhlin's movement didn't survive his death.

There have been very few successful coups in Russian history.

In those years, the security services and sometimes the generals and officers in the military would occasionally throw their weight behind powerful regional leaders, including the mayor of Moscow, as a counterweight to the president. But Putin has systematically eliminated that kind of threat. Russia no longer has any significant opposition forces. Putin's political opponents have either been killed off (like Boris Nemtsov, who was assassinated near the Kremlin in 2015), thrown in jail (like Alexei Navalny, who has been locked up since January 2021 and was recently given a new sentence of nine years in a maximum security penal colony), or forced into exile (like nearly all of Navalny's lieutenants and a growing number of former insiders, such as

Vladimir Milov, the former deputy minister of energy, Sergei Aleksashenko, the former deputy finance minister, and even Andrei Kozyrev, the former foreign minister of Russia).

On the few occasions that members of the military have challenged Putin, they have been easily stopped in their tracks. In 2005, for example, Vladimir Kvachkov, a retired colonel in military intelligence, tried to assassinate Anatoly Chubais, the economist who was known as the father of Russia's controversial privatization program of the 1990s. In the early 2000s, Chubais remained close to Putin and still enjoyed his support. Kvachkov's group detonated a roadside bomb and sprayed Chubais's car with automatic gunfire, but the assassination attempt failed, and Kvachkov was sent to prison. When Kvachkov was released, he mounted a political comeback that went nowhere, and he was later rearrested by the FSB. His popularity was limited to aging Red Army retirees who believed that the Soviet Union had been destroyed as a result of a Jewish conspiracy. Everyone else viewed him as a tainted has-been. As a Spetsnaz officer who heard one of Kvachkov's speeches told us at the time, "Why should we listen to him about politics if he failed to execute an ambush operation of the kind he supposedly brought to perfection in Afghanistan?"

### **Watched from behind**

In fact, quite apart from Putin's systematic elimination of opposition forces, there is a deeper structural reason for the military's inability to launch an effective challenge to the Kremlin. During the Soviet years, the secret police kept the army under its watchful eye. As early as 1918, less than a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Cheka, the precursor of the KGB, formed a unit to deal with dissent within the Red Army. This vigilance was continued under Stalin and his successors, all of whom kept a firm grip on the army: every military division had Communist Party cells planted in it, and the KGB established a large military counterintelligence force to spy on the army. And when the Soviet Union collapsed, the KGB was largely reconstituted as the FSB, with the new service occupying the same headquarters at Lubyanka and following many of the same practices.

Since coming to power, Putin has aggressively expanded these powers, giving the FSB wide latitude to monitor dissent within the military. As early as the beginning of 2000, when he was still acting president, Putin approved a new series of regulations that expanded the FSB's involvement in military counterintelligence. The FSB was empowered to investigate, as the law put it, any "illegal armed formations, criminal groups, and individuals and public associations" that may be seeking a "violent change of the political system of the Russian Federation and the violent seizure or violent retention of power." In 2004, the FSB's military counterintelligence unit was elevated to the rank of a full department of the security services. Soon it became the largest division of the FSB, with numerous agents deployed in the Russian army

As a result of this mandate, FSB agents are pervasive in Russia's military today. There are rules governing how many FSB agents must be assigned to each military unit and each military facility. According to FSB policy, for example, a small National Guard air base in Ermolino, in the region of Kaluga—a base that houses only six planes and perhaps a dozen helicopters—must be supervised by the local FSB chief, along with more than 20 recruited assets and 16 confidential contacts within the base's personnel.

The FSB has a pervasive culture of mistrust.

In the war in Ukraine, the official role of the FSB is to make sure that Russian troops are not sabotaged or attacked from behind. FSB agents are also in charge of establishing political control over occupied territories, including cities and areas that have fallen into Russian control. But they also keep a watchful eye on the troops themselves.

With such incessant surveillance, the Russian army has never produced the kind of officers who might lead an effective revolt. But what about the FSB men themselves? As Putin's own regime has shown, in contrast to the military, the KGB has produced one of the country's most powerful leaders since Stalin. Arguably, then, the biggest threat to Putin might well come from the agency whose powers he has steadily bolstered over the years: the officers at Lubyanka.

### **Putin's willing enforcers**

If anyone is expecting members of the security services to rise up against Putin, however, they would do well to consider the negligible record of effective FSB dissent. The Russian security services have always been prone to corruption, but they have not been particularly adept at building effective power bases and patronage networks of their own. Because of the way the FSB is structured, individual officers tend to be loyal to their rank and position, rather than to particular senior officers within the services; if an FSB general loses his job, he cannot rely on the continued loyalty of his former subordinates.

Members of the FSB are also acutely aware that they may be subject to Putin's crackdowns as much as anyone else. At present, there are dozens of FSB officers who have been jailed on charges of corruption and treason (often involving alleged spying for the United States). Although the charges are sometimes real, there often appear to be other motives determining who is targeted. In most cases, those who have been charged were arrested by the FSB's own internal security department. As a result of these practices, there has long been a pervasive culture of mistrust within the FSB: midlevel officers don't trust the generals, and the generals don't trust their subordinates. Older members still recall that the 1991 putsch led by Vladimir Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB, failed because the rank and file chose to stand by and wait rather than participate in his plot.

The present generation of FSB officers, men in their 30s and 40s, have no memory of any president other than Putin and have built their careers under one director, Aleksandr Bortnikov, who has led the agency since 2007. They present a striking contrast to the previous generation, active in the 1990s, when the FSB rank and file was forced to continually navigate between different political groups jockeying for power. These days, the FSB officers serve only the president by obeying orders. Their main function is to ruthlessly eliminate any potential sources of opposition or dissent, pure and simple, no questions asked. And the elevated status they enjoy in Russian society has tended to make them even more loyal to the regime.

### **The limits of loyalty**

Although Putin has long counted on the steadfast support of his military and security services, the war in Ukraine suggests that there may be limits to how far this can go. The increasingly visible tensions between him and senior members of his security elite suggest that Putin may be more paranoid than ever about possible challenges to his rule. On the other hand, such discord may also indicate that at least some members of his inner circle are displeased with the course he has set. And since Putin's chosen way of dealing with problems – including the bad intelligence and bad military performance in Ukraine – is to blame the siloviki, they don't feel particularly encouraged to give him an accurate picture about what is happening. They also don't want to stick their necks out.

Lacking political experience and a broad base of support, the siloviki – both the security services and the military – are hardly capable of producing and leading a coup d'état on their own. Nor are they likely to be swayed if popular sentiment in Russia turns dramatically against Putin. But the siloviki are ruthless in protecting their own interests, and there is one way, at least, that they might lose faith: if Russia's economic troubles reach the point that its regional governors begin to break ranks with Putin and the economic order that has sustained Putin's security state for more than 20 years begins to collapse, then the siloviki may well conclude that the Kremlin is losing control of the country and that their own future is threatened. In that case, they could step aside and let it happen – or even provide a hand.

*Andrei Soldatov is an investigative journalist and Co-Founder and Editor of Agentura.ru, a watchdog of the Russian secret services' activities. He is a co-author, with Irina Borogan, of The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Émigrés, and Agents Abroad. Irina Borogan is an investigative journalist and Co-Founder and Deputy Editor of Agentura.ru.*

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## REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

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### MIDDLE EAST

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#### **35. Rahi welcomes return of Arab ambassadors, calls for voting in favor of 'Lebanon's identity'**

Asharq Al-Awsat, 11 Apr 22

Maronite Patriarch Beshara al-Rai welcomed the return of the ambassadors of Gulf States to Beirut, saying the move “makes Lebanon feel that it is an active member of the Arab League.”

Rahi pointed to three “positive” signs that emerged in Lebanon over the past week, noting the announcement of Pope Francis' visit to Lebanon in June, the initial agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the return of ambassadors of the Gulf States to Lebanon.

“These positive steps come while important developments are taking place at the regional and international levels, which we hope the Lebanese state will benefit from within the national framework,” Rai said in comments during Palm Sunday's sermon in Bkirki.

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Apr 7, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your April 7, 2022 news.

COMPETE

I. NATO Chief Says Finland, Sweden Welcome to Apply to Join  
(AP, Lorne Cook, 6 Apr 22)...

NATO would quickly welcome Finland and Sweden into its ranks with open arms if they decided to apply, the military alliance's top civilian official said Wednesday, as Russia's war on Ukraine spurs public support in the two Nordic countries for membership. The military organization might also be ready to provide security guarantees to the countries if any potential membership bid angers Russia. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. A poll last month by Finnish broadcaster YLE showed that, for the first time, more than 50% of Finns support joining the Western military alliance. In neighboring Sweden, a similar poll showed that those in favor of NATO membership outnumber those against. "If they decide to apply, I expect that all allies will welcome them," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels, as NATO foreign ministers met to discuss the war in Ukraine. "We know that they can easily join this alliance if they decide to apply."

Before launching the war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin demanded that the 30-nation military organization stop expanding and pull its troops back from Russia's borders. So the prospect of neighboring Finland, and Sweden, joining is unlikely to be welcomed in Moscow. To shield them, Stoltenberg said NATO member countries might be prepared to provide a security guarantee to cover the two neutral nations from when they announce a possible membership bid until their applications are endorsed. Once members, they would benefit from NATO's collective defense clause, which obliges all members to come to the aid of any ally that comes under attack. "I am certain that we will find ways to address concerns they may have regarding the period between the potential application and the final ratification," Stoltenberg said. He declined to speculate about what those security guarantees might involve.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said his country's lawmakers are due this month to debate a government white paper on security, including an option for NATO accession. He said Russia's invasion of Ukraine has changed public opinion. "In three or four weeks we have a majority, first time ever" in favor of joining, Haavisto said. He said Finland knows that "Russia is ready to take bigger risks, as we can see in Ukraine, bigger risks also for its own security. We can also see that Russia is capable of gathering more than 100,000 men against just one country, even

without touching its reserves.” Haavisto added that “the threshold has been lowered, at least in the debate,” on Russia’s possible use of tactical nuclear or chemical weapons. He too was reluctant to go into detail about any security guarantee that Finland might need, particularly as debate about joining continues at home. But Haavisto did say it’s something that his country would want to discuss with “key” NATO members, and that Finnish leaders have been in contact with U.S. President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

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## 2. Stoltenberg: NATO Has Learned a Lesson From Ukraine, We Will Do More for BiH Because It Is Vulnerable (Sarajevo Times, 6 Apr 22)...

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told at yesterday’s news conference that NATO is determined to send more weapons to Ukraine and do more for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Georgia. Stoltenberg held a press conference ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers that will be held today and tomorrow in Brussels. Namely, the NATO Secretary General warned that they expect NATO will cause further escalation of relations with Eastern European countries. He stressed that NATO would supply even more weapons to Ukraine and that NATO would do more for partners such as BiH and Georgia, countries vulnerable to Russian threats and influence. Also, NATO will call on its allies to deliver additional weapons to Ukraine. “NATO will not recognize the Russian occupation of Ukraine, and especially the occupation of Crimea.” Stoltenberg pointed out NATO’s clear position on this issue.

As for relations with Finland and Sweden, which are not yet members of NATO, Stoltenberg noted that the alliance will respect the will of these two countries if they want to join the alliance. NATO expects additional evidence of Russian crimes against civilians and war crimes to emerge. Just before the end of the press conference, Stoltenberg explained that NATO had learned a lesson from Ukraine about the need to help countries that are not in NATO or the European Union (EU). NATO will consider how to help those countries and examine what it can do for BiH and Georgia.

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## 3. If Dayton Accords Are Not Reformed, the Agony of Bosnia-Herzegovina Will Be Prolonged (Deutsche Welle, Rüdiger Rossig, 6 Apr 22)...

Every year on April 6 the inhabitants of the Bosnian capital commemorate the Day of the City of Sarajevo. The day marks both the city’s liberation from the German occupying forces in 1945 and the start of the siege by Bosnian Serbs in 1992. The day before, the Bosnian parliament had declared the country’s independence from what had been communist Yugoslavia. On April 5, 1992, more than 100,000 people also took part in peace protests — until shots were fired on the demonstrators from the seat of the Serbian nationalist party. The bullets killed two women: the first victims of the Bosnian War. The following day, what had been the Yugoslav army, but was, at that point, under the control of Serbian nationalists, began encircling Sarajevo. The siege lasted 1,425 days and cost the lives of 11,541 people. Most Bosnians had not believed that it would come to war — irrespective of whether they belonged to the approximately 44% Muslim Bosniaks, the 17% Catholic ethnic Croatians, the 31% orthodox Christian ethnic Serbs or numerous minorities of the tiny West Balkan state’s 4.4 million population. And they had good reason. One-third of all marriages in the country were ethnically mixed. In previous decades, many people had migrated there from other parts of Yugoslavia, and there had never been any conflict up to then. But the future of Bosnia had long been in dispute. On March 1, 1992, 99.4% of the electorate had voted in favor of independence from Yugoslavia. But the turnout was only 63.4%, as most Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum. The majority of Serbian lawmakers had already left the Bosnian parliament by the end of 1991 and had founded a proto-state called the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) on January 9, 1992.

In early April 1992, Serbian nationalists began the brutal “ethnic cleansing ” of the area of Bosnia controlled by their troops. The aim was not just to crush the non-Serbian elites, but also any kind of opposition and civil society and

to unite with neighboring Serbia. In 1993, armed Bosnian Croat nationalists attacked their former Bosniak allies. They called for unification with neighboring Croatia. This "war in a war" lasted about a year. Who was fighting whom in Bosnia? It was not an ethnic conflict, but a conflict waged by nationalists, who were former communist apparatchiks, members of the intelligence services and the military. Their opponents were a population whose majority wanted western European-style democracy, the rule of law and prosperity, according to all opinion polls. That, however, would have meant an end to the primacy of the existing elites. And that was why those elites were determined to stop that process whatever it took.

From 1991 onwards international brokers — primarily the United Nations and the European Community (EC), the forerunner of today's European Union — intervened in the war that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia. However, they negotiated between the heavily armed aggressors and their almost defenseless targets as if this were a conflict between two equally strong parties. One consequence of this misreading of the situation was the deployment of the lightly armed UNPROFOR force to keep the peace in an area where war was already raging. The peacekeepers were not only unable to implement any of the countless "ceasefires" in the intervening three-and-half years; they also completely failed in the UN "safe area" Srebrenica, where Bosnian Serb forces murdered more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys in July 1995.

The genocide and Serbian attacks on UNPROFOR personnel led the international community to finally broker the Dayton Accords and forge a new constitution. According to the peace agreement, which was named after the venue of the negotiations in the US airbase in Dayton, in the US state of Ohio, Bosnia remained a state, but was divided into two "entities" — the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was, in turn, carved up into 10 cantons, as well as a self-governing administrative unit. The country has one of the most complicated institutional structures in the world with a confusing muddle of ministries and responsibilities. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) is in charge of keeping the peace and answers to the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), which is made up of the powers that guarantee the Dayton Accords and includes several European states, including Germany, as well as the United States and Russia.

The Dayton Agreement was a shabby compromise, but it was the only way to quickly end a war that had brought about 100,000 fatalities and displaced more than two million people. By 1995, the Serb side also had significant interest in bringing an end to the fighting in the face of huge military defeats against what had become a highly professional Bosnian army. While Bosnian Serbs were slaughtering people in Srebrenica, Bosnian forces advanced far into Republika Srpska. The Serbian entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be far smaller today were it not for the Dayton Accords. But instead of being grateful for this agreement, the Bosnian-Serb leaders interpreted Dayton as a victory. In the following years, Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska, extended his power base, turning it increasingly into a state within a state. But neither the Serbian entity nor the rest of Bosnia have developed positively from the perspective of its citizens. Nowadays, the western Balkan state has just 3.2 million inhabitants. Unemployment is high and wages are low. The country has an aging population, life expectancy continues to sink, and more and more young people are leaving. Former communist nationalists such as Dodik or the Bosnian Croat politician Dragan Covic are accused by the opposition and non-governmental organizations such as Transparency International of corruption, cronyism and human rights violations.

The politics of these nationalist leaders are characterized by aggressive rhetoric, continual obstruction of political business and regular secession threats. For years, Serbian nationalists have been supported largely by Putin's Russia, which hopes in this way to destabilize the political course adopted by the EU and the US in the western Balkans. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Bosnia-Herzegovina will break apart — its leaders live from the international subsidies that keep this jointly governed state alive. In addition, it is unlikely that the Serbian and Croatian governments really want a union with the Bosnian Serbs or Croats that would fundamentally change political relations in their countries.

If the would-be separatists in Bosnia were, nonetheless, to try to achieve their aims with violence, their uprising would be unlikely to last long. The next Russian barracks are far away, there are over 1,000 NATO troops from the EUFOR mission stationed in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself and thousands of others in all neighboring countries apart from Serbia. The threat that Bosnia does face is an endless prolonging of the agony that it has endured since the end of the war. To prevent that, the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) have to be turned into functioning institutions and mandated to reform the Dayton Agreement. That is only possible without Moscow, which obviously does not wish Bosnia-Herzegovina to become a functioning democracy governed by the rule of law. In addition, the country needs to be given a clear prospect of EU membership and economic aid to boost living standards. Democracy, the rule of law, prosperity and integration into the EU are the most effective weapons that could help democracies prevent the rule of powerful cliques in post-communist states. In Bosnia, Belarus or Russia.

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4. In a Break With the Past, U.S. Is Using Intel to Fight an Info War With Russia, Even When the Intel Isn't Rock Solid  
(NBC, Ken Dilanian, Courtney Kube, Carol E. Lee, and Dan De Luce, 5 Apr 22)...

It was an attention-grabbing assertion that made headlines around the world: U.S. officials said they had indications suggesting Russia might be preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. President Joe Biden later said it publicly. But three U.S. officials told NBC News this week there is no evidence Russia has brought any chemical weapons near Ukraine. They said the U.S. released the information to deter Russia from using the banned munitions. It's one of a string of examples of the Biden administration's breaking with recent precedent by deploying declassified intelligence as part of an information war against Russia. The administration has done so even when the intelligence wasn't rock solid, officials said, to keep Russian President Vladimir Putin off balance. Coordinated by the White House National Security Council, the unprecedented intelligence releases have been so frequent and voluminous, officials said, that intelligence agencies had to devote more staff members to work on the declassification process, scrubbing the information so it wouldn't betray sources and methods. Observers of all stripes have called it a bold and so far successful strategy — although not one without risks. "It's the most amazing display of intelligence as an instrument of state power that I have seen or that I've heard of since the Cuban Missile Crisis," said Tim Weiner, the author of a 2006 history of the CIA and 2020's "The Folly and the Glory," a look at the U.S.-Russia rivalry over decades. "It has certainly blunted and defused the disinformation weaponry of the Kremlin." Four days before the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the U.S. publicized spy plane photos to show the Soviet Union had deployed nuclear missiles not far from Florida's coast. The Biden administration began releasing reams of intelligence about what it said were Putin's plans and intentions even before the invasion of Ukraine began. Just this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan stood at the White House podium and read out what officials said was more declassified intelligence, asserting that Russia's pullout from areas around Kyiv wasn't a retreat but a strategic redeployment that signals a significant assault on eastern and southern Ukraine, one that U.S. officials believe could be a protracted and bloody fight. The idea is to pre-empt and disrupt the Kremlin's tactics, complicate its military campaign, "undermine Moscow's propaganda and prevent Russia from defining how the war is perceived in the world," said a Western government official familiar with the strategy. Multiple U.S. officials acknowledged that the U.S. has used information as a weapon even when confidence in the accuracy of the information wasn't high. Sometimes it has used low-confidence intelligence for deterrent effect, as with chemical agents, and other times, as an official put it, the U.S. is just "trying to get inside Putin's head." Some officials believe, however, that trying to get into Putin's head is a meaningless exercise, because he will do what he wants regardless. After this story was published, a U.S. official told NBC News that "the U.S. government's effort to strategically downgrade intelligence to share with allies and the public is underpinned by a rigorous review process by the National Security Council and the Intelligence Community to validate the quality of the information and protect sources and methods." The official added that "we only approve the release of intelligence if we are confident those two requirements are met."

The biggest success of the U.S. information offensive may have been delaying the invasion itself by weeks or

months, which officials believe they did with accurate predictions that Russia intended to attack, based on definitive intelligence. By the time Russia moved its troops in, the West presented a unified front. Before the invasion, the U.S. asserted that Russia intended to stage a false flag attack against members of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population as a justification for war and that the plans included a video featuring fake corpses. The video never materialized; Russia has consistently claimed it was invading to protect ethnic Russians from "Nazis" in Ukraine. The U.S. accurately predicted that Putin intended to go through with the attack, even as other Western countries, notably France, argued otherwise. The head of France's military intelligence agency stepped down last week over the wrong call. A former U.S. official said administration officials believe the strategy delayed Putin's invasion from the first week of January to after the Olympics and that the delay bought the U.S. valuable time to get allies on the same page in terms of the level of the Russian threat and how to respond. CIA Director William Burns, a former ambassador to Russia, told lawmakers at a congressional threats hearing last month that "in all the years I spent as a career diplomat, I saw too many instances in which we lost information wars with the Russians." Now, he said, "by being careful about this we have stripped away the pretext that Putin, in particular, often uses." "That has been a real benefit, I think, to Ukrainians," he said. The policy has drawn lavish praise even from some Republicans. "You were spot on in your intelligence," Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., said at the House's annual worldwide threats hearing last month, addressing Burns and other intelligence agency leaders. "Your decision to declassify, both the form and the fashion in which you did so, saved lives. Sleep well, and thank you for doing that." But the strategy has its dangers. One of them, the Western official said, is that getting something clearly wrong would be extremely damaging to U.S. credibility and play into Moscow's hands.

As the war has proceeded, the administration has used intelligence to warn of possible Russian actions and draw attention to Russian military failings. At times, the Biden administration has released information in which it has less confidence or about things that are possible rather than truly likely. Last week, U.S. officials told reporters they had intelligence suggesting Putin is being misled by his own advisers, who are afraid to tell him the truth. But when Biden was asked about the disclosure later in the day — after it made headlines around the globe — he was less than definitive. "That's an open question. There's a lot of speculation," Biden told reporters. "But he seems to be — I'm not saying this with a certainty — he seems to be self-isolating." The degree to which Putin is isolated or relying on flawed information can't be verified, said Paul Pillar, a retired career U.S. intelligence officer. "There's no way you can prove or disprove that stuff," he said. Two U.S. officials said the intelligence about whether Putin's inner circle was lying to him wasn't conclusive — based more on analysis than hard evidence. Other officials disputed that, saying the intelligence was very reliable and had been vetted at the highest levels. In another disclosure, U.S. officials said one reason not to provide Ukraine with MiG fighter jets is that intelligence showed Russia would view the move as escalatory. That was true, but it was also true of Stinger missiles, which the Biden administration did provide, two U.S. officials said, adding that the administration declassified the MiG information to bolster the argument not to provide them to Ukraine. Likewise, a charge that Russia had turned to China for potential military help lacked hard evidence, a European official and two U.S. officials said. The U.S. officials said there are no indications China is considering providing weapons to Russia. The Biden administration put that out as a warning to China not to do so, they said. The European official described the disclosure as "a public game to prevent any military support from China." Game or not, U.S. intelligence officials say it has been successful. Intelligence is rarely definitive, and Biden officials have calculated in some cases that it's better to pre-empt something that might not happen, rather than stay silent and watch it unfold. "It doesn't have to be solid intelligence when we talk about it," a U.S. official said. "It's more important to get out ahead of them — Putin specifically — before they do something. It's preventative. We don't always want to wait until the intelligence is 100 percent certainty that they are going to do something. We want to get out ahead to stop them." The official said there was an extensive discussion about whether to reveal that the Russians had a blacklist of Ukrainian enemies whom they intended to arrest and possibly kill once they seized control. Officials weighed the potential harm of divulging the intelligence. "That was a big decision," the official said. But the intelligence appears to have been borne out by witness accounts from towns Russian once occupied and has now left, where political assassinations have been documented.

Some U.S. officials have advocated a strategy of leaning further forward in declassifying and releasing intelligence for years, as U.S. adversaries became adept at using modern communications platforms to spread propaganda. In 2020, nine of 11 U.S. military combatant commanders signed a memo urging the U.S. intelligence community to

declassify more information to counter disinformation and propaganda from Moscow and Beijing. The U.S. can bolster support from allies only by “waging the truth in the public domain against America’s 21st century challengers,” the officers wrote. But efforts to compete in the battle of ideas, they added, are hamstrung by overly stringent secrecy practices. “We request this help to better enable the US, and by extension its allies and partners, to win without fighting, to fight now in so-called gray zones, and to supply ammunition in the ongoing war of narratives,” the four-star generals wrote to the acting director of national intelligence at the time, Joseph Maguire. “Unfortunately, we continue to miss opportunities to clarify truth, counter distortions, puncture false narratives, and influence events in time to make a difference,” the generals said. In the past, the U.S. had sat on its hands as Russia waged information war. In 2014, days before Russia invaded Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula, Russia released a recording of an apparent phone conversation between senior U.S. diplomat Victoria Nuland and the ambassador to Ukraine at the time, in which Nuland disparaged the European Union. The move was part of a wave of disinformation and propaganda from Moscow surrounding the seizure of Crimea. But the Obama administration didn’t react. That’s because the U.S. had opted out of the great power propaganda wars after the 9/11 attacks, Weiner said. “So what was the United States’ response to all of this?” Weiner asked. “Crickets, nothing, zip. They had no response.” The Biden strategy has been different. Pillar said the Biden administration took a significant risk in predicting Russia would invade Ukraine, a bold move that was vindicated by Putin’s actions. “That suggests that there are some pretty strong bases for this information,” Pillar said. “Not only did it turn out to be correct ... but evidently it had been presented to the president with enough confidence that he felt confident going out on the limb as far as he did.” Said Pillar, “Boy, if there wasn’t an invasion, this would have a huge ‘cry wolf’ effect and make our president look pretty bad.”

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#### 5. Satellite Companies Join the Hunt for Russian War Crimes (Politico, 6 Apr 22)...

It’s an unlikely theme here at the largest annual gathering of space industry executives: how to help bring war criminals to justice. The expanding constellations of commercial spy satellites that have been capturing high-resolution photos and radar images of Russian troop movements are now proving to be a game-changing tool for international authorities and human rights groups who are aggressively working to document Russia’s targeting of civilians in Ukraine. And companies are stepping up their efforts to help build war crimes cases. They are cueing their satellites to pinpoint mass graves, bombed-out hospitals and shattered schools. They are helping to identify military units that have targeted civilians. And their real-time data is being used to deploy investigators, such as those from the International Criminal Court and United Nations, to collect more physical evidence or personal testimony from witnesses on the ground in Ukraine. “There is truth in imagery,” Steve Butow, director of the space portfolio at the Defense Innovation Unit, the Pentagon’s Silicon Valley outpost, said in an interview at the Space Foundation’s National Space Symposium. “We know where the hospitals, schools and other things are and the analytics are showing these are exactly the things being targeted.” “It is not propaganda from the West,” he added. “The global community is seeing this for what it is. They can show exactly what is happening on the ground.”

President Joe Biden singled out the indiscriminate killing of hundreds of civilians in the Ukrainian town of Bucha over the weekend as a war crime and highlighted the need to collect evidence that could implicate Russian military or political leaders. “What’s happening in Bucha is outrageous,” he said. The White House also said it has other evidence showing Russia violating the laws of war. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. government is working “to provide the information that we have to the relevant institutions and organizations that will put all this together and there needs to be accountability for it.” The International Criminal Court has an “active investigation” underway into war crimes in Ukraine after referrals from dozens of nations. And on Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called for a coordinated international effort to collect evidence, citing the wholesale destruction of civilian areas and growing reports of rape and other human rights violations committed by Russian troops. After the “horrifying images” of what took place in Bucha, Guterres said, “I immediately called for an independent investigation to guarantee effective accountability.” Many of those probes are being guided by images captured from commercial satellites orbiting the Earth.

One of the leading commercial satellite providers, Maxar Technologies, has been working “24-7 operations on this,” said CEO Dan Jablonsky. He said the company has “shouldered out” other customers who are waiting for imagery so that Maxar can continue to make the Ukraine crisis a high priority. And one of those increasing demands is to chronicle the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. “Buildings getting blown up, holes being dug for graves, those kinds of things are being tracked and recorded and documented in a way that we think is very important,” Jablonsky said in an interview. The global network of imaging satellites operated by Maxar and other U.S. and international companies are proving to be “an unblinking, unclassified eye that is not information from the government but it can be used to hold people accountable for behavior,” Butow added. Stacey Dixon, the deputy director of national intelligence, also revealed at the conference on Tuesday that, at the outset of the Ukraine conflict, the U.S. government encouraged satellite companies to share their imagery far and wide. “Early on, we also asked a few commercial companies ... to rapidly make available imagery like the buildup that was happening around Ukraine’s borders to help shed a light on what Russia was doing,” she said. “This allowed others to independently interpret the images, piecing them together with other information, and tell the world what was about to happen.” Members of Congress have also urged U.S. spy agencies to declassify intelligence they have collected on alleged Russian war crimes. But it’s the widespread availability of commercial satellites — that can collect images day or night — that is reshaping how war crimes are being investigated.

While the technology has been used piecemeal in the past to illuminate Chinese human rights abuses against the Uyghur Muslims in China, genocide in Sudan and other human catastrophes, its role putting the war in Ukraine under the microscope is seen as revolutionary. The commercial satellite constellations have grown dramatically in size and capability in recent years, providing higher resolution images and allowing much more frequent coverage over areas of interest. Dozens of companies and universities in the U.S. alone have government licenses to operate “remote sensing” technologies from orbit. “We’re able to know in real-time,” said Ritwik Gupta, a research scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California who is assisting U.S. European Command in Germany. “You want to see human rights violations in Bucha? We can get Maxar tasked and get imagery over that same exact region in a couple of minutes.” Another company that has been working “around the clock” on the task is Planet Labs, which for years has coordinated with and supported human rights organizations. Now, international war crimes investigators are “spending enormous amounts of time using these tools to try to identify instances of the intentional targeting of civilians,” said Andrew Zolli, its chief impact officer. Zolli also said what’s different in Ukraine than previous conflicts is that these investigations can now take place in real-time, in large part due to publicly available satellite data that was once the sole purview of secret government spy agencies. “The satellites will guide the war crimes prosecutors to sites where they will collect ground evidence,” Zolli said. “And the combination of the ground evidence and satellite imagery and other digital sources of evidence will be collected for future prosecutions.” “Normally, you have these events occur and people are scattered to the winds and it takes years to track them down,” he added. “And then you have faulty memories, and you have to collect more evidence ... to more firmly establish the facts of what happened.”

But it also means international authorities don’t have to wait for the shooting to stop to begin their painstaking work. “The prosecutions may come in the future, but the investigation doesn’t come in the future anymore,” Zolli said. “The investigation comes right now. This is about getting real-time information and deploying war crimes prosecutors in the moment when the conflict is still raging.” “And unfortunately,” he added, “there are just more instances than we can count.” For Butow, the war crimes task is also a test of how the space community can use its enormous technological capacity to advance democratic interests. “That to me is a strategic impact,” he said. “If you really want to shape the world we live in and make sure that democracy and freedom prevails, you want this kind of information to be out there.” Some executives are pushing for more. HawkEye 360 operates satellites that can track radio frequencies, such as those emitting from military units in confined areas — another possible line of investigation to pinpoint units or individuals responsible for atrocities. It is urging symposium attendees to harness more of their capacity, in both resources and technology. The company is circulating a “concept paper” at panel discussions and cocktail receptions proposing that space companies contribute to a “Space Industry for Ukraine” initiative to finance “high-value” projects, such as providing satellite data to assist aid groups operating in Ukraine “to maximize their command and control especially during refugee evacuation missions.” “We believe there is an

additional humanitarian role that our shared space community can serve in supporting the people of Ukraine," it says, citing "communications support, and imagery, radar and [radio frequency] data."

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6. Drones, Phones and Satellite Technology Are Exposing the Truth About Russia's War in Ukraine in Near Real-Time  
(CNN, Nic Robertson, 6 Apr 22)...

Russia's lies may be catching up with it faster than it ever imagined. The war in Ukraine is defying President Vladimir Putin's expectations at every turn, not only with Russia's failure to capture Kyiv as planned but with the war crimes his soldiers are alleged to have committed in Bucha, a city close the capital, exposed for the world to see. Throughout history, wars have been won by forces turning new technologies to their advantage. The 1415 victory of English King Henry V over the French at the Battle of Agincourt came courtesy of his archers and their newly developed longbows, raining arrows over a range the French could not match. The war in Ukraine may see another historic first, with technology cutting through the fog of war, exposing the aggressors' lies and accelerating efforts to bring about their defeat. Satellite images of murdered civilians that match videos, recorded weeks later, of bodies at the roadside are providing compelling evidence of Russian war crimes, convincing Western leaders to ramp up sanctions on Russia and accelerate weapons supplies for Ukraine. How this will affect the final outcome of the war is unclear. But what is evident at a time when Ukraine is urgently seeking any additional leverage as Russian forces regroup for a new offensive, is that Russia's actions in Bucha are strengthening Ukraine's hand. While battlefield satellite imagery has been available to governments for decades and was instrumental in pinpointing war crimes during the Bosnian civil war in the 1990s -- notably locating a mass grave of many of the 7,000 Bosnian Muslims slaughtered in the town of Srebrenica in 1995 -- it has never been so immediately available in the public domain as now.

Putin and his battlefield commanders appear not to care or not to have grasped the fact that orders and actions now leave an indelible record beyond their control that could come back to haunt them. They will be aware that in many past conflicts -- even as recent as the Syrian civil war -- leaders like Bashar al Assad escaped conviction and have even been rehabilitated, despite vast troves of incriminating documents spirited from government offices and police stations. But this is not the only lesson to which Putin should pay attention. Following the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian civil war, the war crimes tribunal in the Hague used political and military leaders' own words to help convict them. When the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) put Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic on trial, it had video of him looking over Sarajevo, condemning the civilians below to artillery and mortar fire. His military partner in war crimes there, General Ratko Mladic, also saw his words come back to help convict him, as video showed him on the outskirts of Srebrenica directing the filtering of civilians, many of whom would shortly be slaughtered by his soldiers, following his orders. That type of link may be harder to pin on Putin, but his 20-page thesis published last summer on why Ukraine is not a country, and his TV comments on why Russia should invade, will, if previous war crime courts are a precedent, count against him as author and director of the war. If Putin were to come to trial, his unravelling may turn out to have begun with his inability to understand his army's weaknesses and Ukraine's strengths. Failure to fulfil his first major objective, the capture of Kyiv, forced his troops to retreat, leaving their tide of terror exposed. They did what they have done so many times before, in Syria, in Chechnya, in Georgia: committed awful abuses. And Putin and his officials did what they have done so many time before: lied to cover their crimes.

Russian defense officials claimed photos and videos that emerged on April 2, showing murdered civilians -- shot in the head, some with their hands and legs bound -- were fake, saying their troops left before the killings occurred. "The troops left the city on March 30," the defense ministry said in a statement. "Where was the footage for four days? Their absence only confirms the fake." They were very clear about the date. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, one of Putin's most seasoned spin masters, doubled down on the clumsy cover-up, insisting "Russian forces left the Bucha town area as early as the 30th of March." But publicly available satellite images from space-tech company Maxar, taken March 18 while Russian troops were in control, showed the civilians lying dead at the road side in

exactly the same locations as Ukrainian forces discovered them when they re-entered the town in early April. And drone video shot before March 10 showed a cyclist being shot and killed by Russian troops. Ukrainian forces found his body weeks later, exactly where he fell. In the months prior to Russia's invasion and the days since Maxar's images appeared, tracking Russian forces and their destruction, the public's understanding of the battlefield has been revolutionized. Coupled with the near-ubiquitous use of smartphone cameras, geolocation technology and sophisticated drones, Putin faces the possible reckoning he escaped in previous conflicts.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wants more cameras, and wider access, to let the public see for themselves: "This is what we are interested in, maximum access for journalists, maximum cooperation with international institutions, enrolment of the International Criminal Court, complete truth and full accountability," he said in a video address on Monday. Ukraine's enigmatic leader has realized it's not just high-tech, tank-busting weapons like Javelins and NLAWs, or surface-to-air missiles like Stingers and Starstreaks, that could turn the tide in the war. It's truth, and the tools -- satellites, drones and smartphones -- to deliver it. Unparalleled in any modern war, technology could hand the underdog this surprising advantage, undermining the lies of an oversized aggressor. Zelensky was at pains for the United Nations to understand this when he spoke to them Tuesday: "It is 2022 now. We have conclusive evidence. There are satellite images. And we can conduct full and transparent investigations." Like Henry V in 1415, Zelensky knows an advantage when he sees it. While satellite imagery may not be as game-changing as a six-foot yew branch and a length of hemp string, if he can use it cleverly, he may force Putin to talk much sooner than the Russian President would like.

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7. US Disrupts Global 'Botnet' Controlled by Russian Military Intelligence, DoJ Says (Guardian, David Smith, 6 Apr 22)...

The US has disrupted a global "botnet" controlled by Russia's military intelligence agency, Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Wednesday. A botnet is a network of hijacked computers used to carry out cyberattacks. "The Russian government has recently used similar infrastructure to attack Ukrainian targets," Garland told reporters at the justice department. "Fortunately, we were able to disrupt this botnet before it could be used. Thanks to our close work with international partners, we were able to detect the infection of thousands of network hardware devices. "We were then able to disable the GRU's [the military intelligence agency] control over those devices before the botnet could be weaponised." The attorney general also announced charges against Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev for sanctions violations. He said the billionaire had been previously identified as a source of financing for Russians promoting separatism in Crimea and providing support for the so-called Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine. "After being sanctioned by the United States, Malofeyev attempted to evade the sanctions by using co-conspirators to surreptitiously acquire and run media outlets across Europe," Garland said. The indictment is the first of a Russian oligarch in the US since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In a related move, a federal court in the southern district of New York unsealed a criminal indictment against TV producer John Hanick, 71, a US citizen charged with violations of sanctions and false statements because of his work for Malofeyev over several years. Matthew Olsen, assistant attorney general of the justice department's national security division, said: "The defendant Hanick knowingly chose to help Malofeyev spread his destabilizing messages by establishing, or attempting to establish, TV networks in Russia, Bulgaria and Greece, in violation of those sanctions." Last month Garland, who is America's top law enforcement official, announced the launch of Task Force KleptoCapture, an interagency law enforcement task force dedicated to enforcing the sweeping sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. He vowed on Wednesday: "Our message to those who continue to enable the Russian regime through their criminal conduct is this: it does not matter how far you sail your yacht, it does not matter how well you conceal your assets, it does not matter how cleverly you write your malware or hide your online activity. "The justice department will use every available tool to find you, disrupt your plots and hold you accountable."

Garland, whose grandparents fled antisemitism at the border of western Russia and eastern Europe more than a century ago, acknowledged horrific images that emerged from Bucha in Ukraine his week. “We have seen the dead bodies of civilians, some with bound hands, scattered in the streets. We have seen the mass graves. We have seen the bombed hospital, theatre and residential apartment buildings. “The world sees what is happening in Ukraine. The justice department sees what is happening in Ukraine. This department has a long history of helping to hold accountable those who perpetrate war crimes.” He noted that one of his predecessors, Attorney General Robert Jackson, later served as a chief American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials after the second world war. “Today, we are assisting international efforts to identify and hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Ukraine and we will continue to do so.”

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#### 8. Hackers’ Fake Claims of Ukrainian Surrender Aren’t Fooling Anyone. So What’s Their Goal? (New York Times, Kate Conger, 5 Apr 22)...

Andriy Taranov, a board member at the Ukrainian public broadcasting company Suspilne, was sitting in his office last month when he noticed a strange message running across the bottom of the television screen. It said Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, had announced a surrender. Mr. Taranov was stunned because there had been no chatter about a surrender among reporters covering Russia’s invasion of the country. “There’s nothing like that in any journalist circle,” he remembered thinking. “It looks absolutely contradictory.” The message was fake, he quickly realized. It had been planted on the chyron of Media Group Ukraine’s live broadcast by hackers. Since Russia’s invasion began in late February, hackers have repeatedly broken into the social media accounts and broadcasting systems of trusted information sources in Ukraine, like government officials and prominent media outlets. They used their access to spread false messages that Ukraine was surrendering, sometimes using fake videos to bolster their claims. And while there is no evidence that the misinformation campaign has had any discernible effect on the conflict, experts say the hackers’ intentions might not be to actually trick anyone. Instead, the hackers are most likely trying to erode confidence in Ukrainian institutions and show that the government and news media cannot be relied upon for information or to keep hackers out of their systems. The tactics mirror those used in other Russian disinformation campaigns, which have focused on fomenting divisions and cultural conflict. “You can build uncertainty, confusion and distrust,” said Ben Read, a director at the cybersecurity firm Mandiant. “It doesn’t need to stand up to a close reading to have some effect on the population; it erodes trust in all messages.”

Facebook traced one hacking campaign, which targeted military officials, to state-sponsored hackers in Belarus. Other cyberattacks, including those against media outlets and telecommunications networks, have not yet been attributed to specific state actors. But Ukrainian officials suspect that Russia is behind the hacking and disinformation. “Of course they are behind these attacks,” said Victor Zhora, deputy head of Ukraine’s cybersecurity agency, the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection. “This is the first time in history we deal with a conventional war and a cyberwar at the same time.” Mr. Zhora said. “It completely changes our landscape for what is happening around Ukraine.” The attempts to spread disinformation about a Ukrainian surrender started days after Russia’s invasion began. Hackers broke into the Facebook accounts of high-profile Ukrainian military leaders and politicians, then used their access to post false messages announcing a surrender. They accompanied some of the posts with videos of soldiers waving a white flag, falsely claiming that the footage depicted Ukrainian soldiers. Meta, the parent company of Facebook, said it quickly detected the attack and in some cases was able to prevent the hackers from posting fake messages from the compromised accounts. The hackers were affiliated with a group that security researchers call Ghostwriter, Meta said, which has been linked to Belarus. Ghostwriter frequently targets public figures in Europe, security researchers said, often using compromised social media and email accounts to push messages intended to chip away at support for NATO. Since the war in Ukraine began, the group has focused its efforts there, according to researchers. “They’re aligned with Russian goals,” Mr. Read said of Ghostwriter.

In mid-March, Ukrainian officials detected another hacking campaign that tried to spread false information about a

surrender. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, the country's law enforcement and intelligence agency, a hacker set up a relay system to help route calls for the Russian military. The system was also used to send text messages to Ukrainian security forces and civil servants, urging them to surrender and to support Russia, the law enforcement agency said. The Security Service of Ukraine said it had arrested the person responsible for the messages, who it said had placed thousands of calls each day on behalf of the Russian military. Another, more visible attempt to spread disinformation about a surrender soon followed. On March 16, a "deepfake" video of Mr. Zelensky asking Ukrainians to lay down their weapons and surrender to Russia emerged on social media. Hackers targeted television stations and news outlets in Ukraine to spread the digitally manipulated video, broadcasting it on Ukraine 24, a television station operated by Media Group Ukraine, and posting it to the outlet's YouTube channel. Media Group Ukraine said it believed Russian hackers were responsible. "Our systems have been under constant attack for over two weeks, before being hacked," said Olha Nasyk, a spokeswoman for the company. "We have strengthened the protection and applied the necessary technical means to prevent such incidents from recurring."

Deepfakes like the one of Mr. Zelensky use artificial intelligence to create seemingly realistic footage of people doing and saying things that they did not actually say or do. Researchers have warned that the technology could be exploited during elections and other high-profile political moments to spread lies about prominent politicians. Oleksiy Makukhin, an expert who has worked on combating misinformation in Ukraine, said he first saw the digitally manipulated video of Mr. Zelensky circulating on the messaging app Telegram. But many of the messages about the video highlighted the fact that it was a fake and poked fun at it for being poorly made, Mr. Makukhin said. "I hardly can think of any person in Ukraine who believed in it," he said. "People in Ukraine are already rather educated about disinformation, which Russia is distributing all the time." Still, Mr. Zelensky took to his official channel on Telegram to deny the video's claims. "We are defending our land, our children, our families," he said. "So we don't plan to lay down any arms until our victory." On Friday, the Security Service of Ukraine said it had discovered another text message campaign that had pushed over 5,000 messages about surrendering using a bot farm linked to Russia. "The outcome of events is predetermined!" the text messages said, according to the agency. "Be prudent and refuse to support nationalism and leaders of the country who discredited themselves and already fled the capital!!!" Mr. Makukhin said he believed the disinformation was an effort to frighten civilians, comparing it to the shelling of neighborhoods. "I think the only reason for it is to terrorize the population, to make pressure and eventually try with this pressure to make our government surrender," he said. "There is still general consensus in society that we cannot surrender. Otherwise all this pain and death were for nothing."

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9. Russia's Failure to Take Down Kyiv Was a Defeat for the Ages  
(AP, Robert Burns, 6 Apr 22)...

Kyiv was a Russian defeat for the ages. The fight started poorly for the invaders and went downhill from there. When President Vladimir Putin launched his war on Feb. 24 after months of buildup on Ukraine's borders, he sent hundreds of helicopter-borne commandos — the best of the best of Russia's "spetsnaz" special forces soldiers — to assault and seize a lightly defended airfield on Kyiv's doorstep. Other Russian forces struck elsewhere across Ukraine, including toward the eastern city of Kharkiv as well as in the contested Donbas region and along the Black Sea coast. But as the seat of national power, Kyiv was the main prize. Thus the thrust by elite airborne forces in the war's opening hours. But Putin failed to achieve his goal of quickly crushing Ukraine's outgunned and outnumbered army. The Russians were ill-prepared for Ukrainian resistance, proved incapable of adjusting to setbacks, failed to effectively combine air and land operations, misjudged Ukraine's ability to defend its skies, and bungled basic military functions like planning and executing the movement of supplies. "That's a really bad combination if you want to conquer a country," said Peter Mansoor, a retired Army colonel and professor of military history at Ohio State University. For now at least, Putin's forces have shifted away from Kyiv, to eastern Ukraine. Ultimately, the Russian leader may achieve some of his objectives. Yet his failure to seize Kyiv will be long remembered — for how it defied prewar expectations and exposed surprising weaknesses in a military thought to be one of the strongest in the world. "It's stunning," said military historian Frederick Kagan of the Institute for the Study of War, who says he knows of no parallel to a major military power like Russia invading a country at the time of its choosing and

failing so utterly.

On the first morning of the war, Russian Mi-8 assault helicopters soared south toward Kyiv on a mission to attack Hostomel airfield on the northwest outskirts of the capital. By capturing the airfield, also known as Antonov airport, the Russians planned to establish a base from which to fly in more troops and light armored vehicles within striking distance of the heart of the nation's largest city. It didn't work that way. Several Russian helicopters were reported to be hit by missiles even before they got to Hostomel, and once settled in at the airfield they suffered heavy losses from artillery fire. An effort to take control of a military airbase in Vasylkiv south of Kyiv also met stiff resistance and reportedly saw several Russian Il-76 heavy-lift transport planes carrying paratroopers downed by Ukrainian defenses. Although the Russians eventually managed to control Hostomel airfield, the Ukrainians' fierce resistance in the capital region forced a rethinking of an invasion plan that was based on an expectation the Ukrainians would quickly fold, the West would dither, and Russian forces would have an easy fight. Air assault missions behind enemy lines, like the one executed at Hostomel, are risky and difficult, as the U.S. Army showed on March 24, 2003, when it sent more than 30 Apache attack helicopters into Iraq from Kuwait to strike an Iraqi Republican Guard division. On their way, the Apaches encountered small arms and anti-aircraft fire that downed one of the helos, damaged others and forced the mission to be aborted. Even so, the U.S. military recovered from that setback and soon captured Baghdad.

The fact that the Hostomel assault by the Russian 45th Guards Special Purpose Airborne Brigade faltered might not stand out in retrospect if the broader Russian effort had improved from that point. But it did not.

The Russians did make small and unsuccessful probes into the heart of Kyiv, and later they tried at great cost to encircle the capital by arcing farther west. Against enormous odds, the Ukrainians held their ground and fought back, stalling the Russians, and put to effective use a wide array of Western arms, including Javelin portable anti-tank weapons, shoulder-fired Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and much more. Last week the Russians abandoned Hostomel airfield as part of a wholesale retreat into Belarus and Russia. A sidelight of the battle for Kyiv was the widely reported saga of a Russian resupply convoy that stretched dozens of miles along a main roadway toward the capital. It initially seemed to be a worrisome sign for the Ukrainians, but they managed to attack elements of the convoy, which had limited off-road capability and thus eventually dispersed or otherwise became a non-factor in the fight. "They never really provided a resupply of any value to Russian forces that were assembling around Kyiv, never really came to their aid," said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. "The Ukrainians put a stop to that convoy pretty quickly by being very nimble, knocking out bridges, hitting lead vehicles and stopping their movement." Mansoor says the Russians underestimated the number of troops they would need and showed "an astonishing inability" to perform basic military functions. They vastly misjudged what it would take to win the battle for Kyiv, he says. "This was going to be hard even if the Russian army had proven itself to be competent," he said. "It's proven itself to be wholly incapable of conducting modern armored warfare."

Putin was not the only one surprised by his army's initial failures. U.S. and other Western officials had figured that if the invasion happened, Russia's seemingly superior forces would slice through Ukraine's army like a hot knife through butter. They might seize Kyiv in a few days and the whole country in a few weeks, although some analysts did question whether Putin appreciated how much Ukraine's forces had gained from Western training that intensified after Putin's 2014 seizure of Crimea and incursion into the Donbas. On March 25, barely a month after the invasion began, the Russians declared they had achieved their goals in the Kyiv region and would shift focus to the separatist Donbas area in eastern Ukraine. Some suspected a Putin ploy to buy time without giving up his maximalist aims, but within days the Kyiv retreat was in full view. Putin may yet manage to refocus his war effort on a narrower goal of expanding Russian control in the Donbas and perhaps securing a land corridor from the Donbas to the Crimean Peninsula. But his failure in Kyiv revealed weaknesses that suggest Russia is unlikely to try again soon to take down the national capital. "I think they learned their lesson," said Mansoor.

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#### 10. U.S. Training Small Number of Ukrainians on Switchblade Drones -Defense Official (Reuters, Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, 6 Apr 22)...

A small number of Ukrainians have been trained in the United States on how to operate killer "Switchblade" drones, single-use weapons that fly into their targets and detonate on impact, a senior U.S. defense official disclosed on Wednesday. The Ukrainians undergoing training on the Switchblades and other weaponry number less than a dozen. They had arrived in the United States for regular military education programs prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. "We took advantage of the opportunity to pull them aside for a couple of days and provide them some training, particularly on the Switchblades UAV," the senior U.S. defense official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity. "UAV" refers to an unmanned aerial vehicle. The United States withdrew its military advisers from Ukraine ahead of Russia's invasion, seeking to avoid a direct military confrontation between U.S. and Russian forces that could escalate into a broader war. As a result of the withdrawal, the United States and NATO have largely constrained their provision of weaponry to Ukraine to systems that Ukrainian forces knew how to operate prior to Russia's invasion. That includes U.S. weapons that have given Ukraine an edge against Russian forces, like Javelin anti-tank missiles and portable Stinger surface-to-air missiles that can target Russian aircraft. It also includes Soviet-era systems that are still in the inventories of some NATO nations.

But Switchblades, which are relatively easy-to-use and could be highly effective in attacking Russian ground forces, had not been part of training packages prior to Russia's invasion. The drones are made by AeroVironment Inc(AVAV.O). The drones, which have a range of 40 km (25 miles), can be used against vehicles including trucks, tanks and armored personnel carriers. In recent testimony, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, Celeste Wallander, said the United States had committed to sending Ukraine 100 Switchblade systems. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Tuesday that the Pentagon is sending Ukraine two variants of the Switchblade, including one with an anti-armor warhead. "The Switchblade 600 and 300 will move as quickly as they possibly can," Austin told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee. Ukrainians are expected to quickly use the first 100 systems sent. "I'm convinced that when we get the first set of Switchblades in, there will be an immediate request from the Ukrainians for more," the top U.S. commander in Europe, Air Force General Tod Walters, told Congress on March 30. The senior U.S. official declined to say on Wednesday where in the United States the training of Ukrainians was taking place or offer more information on other weapons systems they're being trained on. "Our expectation is that these individuals will be heading back into Ukraine relatively soon as they were originally anyway," the official told reporters.

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#### 11. Russia Has Completed Withdrawal From Around Kyiv -U.S. Defense Official (Reuters, Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, 6 Apr 22)...

The United States assesses that Russia has now completed its withdrawal from around Kyiv and is refitting and resupplying its troops for an expected redeployment into Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official said on Wednesday. Over the weekend, Ukraine said its forces had seized back all areas around Kyiv, claiming complete control of the capital region for the first time since Russia launched the invasion. "We are assessing that all the Russians have left," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity, adding that the U.S. assessment was completed in the past 24 hours. The withdrawal included Russian troops leaving the city of Chernihiv as well. But the official said Kyiv remained under threat, even if Russian ground troops had left the area. Out of the 130 Russian battalion tactical groups that were sent to Ukraine for the invasion, more than 80 still remained in the country. "The threat of (a) ground invasion (of Kyiv) is clearly gone for the moment... but it's not clear what their longer-range goals are," the official said. The troops leaving the area were withdrawing to Belarus and Russia to reconsolidate, but it was not clear how many would eventually be sent back to Ukraine," the official added.

As Russian troops regrouped for battles in east Ukraine, towns surrounding Kyiv bore scars of five weeks of fighting. Western policymakers have denounced the killings in the town of Bucha as a war crime, and Ukrainian

officials say a mass grave by a church there contain between 150 and 300 bodies. Moscow, which refers to the conflict as a "special military operation" designed to "denazify" Ukraine, denied targeting civilians there or elsewhere. Russia's foreign ministry said images of dead bodies in Bucha were staged to justify more sanctions against Moscow and derail peace talks with Kyiv. "When you see individuals with their hands tied behind their backs and evidence of being shot in the head, that certainly appears to be premeditated, it appears to be planned, it certainly appears to be very, very deliberate," the U.S. official said. It was not clear to the United States who gave the order for the killings and unclear what the motivation was for the killings.

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## 12. NATO Must Prepare for 'Long Haul' in Ukraine, Stoltenberg Says (Politico, Lili Bayer, 6 Apr 22)...

NATO allies must plan for the possibility that the war in Ukraine could last months or even years, the military alliance's chief Jens Stoltenberg warned on Wednesday. Stoltenberg made his remarks as NATO foreign ministers gathered in Brussels on Wednesday to discuss how to best support Ukraine as Russian troops regroup and Moscow plots its next move. Speaking to reporters, Stoltenberg called the coming weeks "a critical phase of the war." "We have to be realistic and realize that this may last for a long time, for many months, for even years," he said. "We have to be prepared for [the] long haul," the secretary-general added. "both when it comes to supporting Ukraine, sustaining sanctions and strengthening our defenses."

Since the war started in late February, NATO allies have been providing a wide range of support to Ukraine, including weapons, while maintaining the position that no NATO planes or troops will enter Ukrainian territory. Now, the alliance is under growing pressure to offer more weapons, tanks and even jets to Ukraine amid concerns about Russian atrocities against Ukrainian civilians. Another source of pressure: NATO allies expect Russia will soon launch a renewed push in Ukraine's east after drawing back from Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. Putin has made frozen conflicts a trademark of his foreign policy for years, including in the occupied territories of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. While Russian forces failed to capture Kyiv and topple the Ukrainian government, the NATO chief has said Putin now wants to conquer and occupy a larger part of Donbas. "We see that Russia is moving forces out of the north to reinforce them, to resupply them, to rearm them and then to move them to the east, where we are expecting a major offensive," Stoltenberg told reporters. Still, he added, "we have seen no indication that President Putin has changed his ambition to control the whole of Ukraine."

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## 13. Russia's War Against Ukraine Entering a Critical Phase – Stoltenberg (Ukrinform, 6 Apr 22)...

Russia's war against Ukraine is entering a critical phase, and NATO allies are ready to provide Kyiv with all necessary assistance to counter another possible offensive of the invaders. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said this ahead of the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs on April 6-7, 2022. an Ukrinform correspondent reported. "We are now in a critical phase of the war. We see that Russia is moving forces out of the north to reinforce them, to resupply them, to rearm them and then to move them into the east where we are expecting a major offensive. President Putin's aim is to try to control the whole of Donbas and to establish a land bridge [to Crimea]. We have seen no indication that President Putin has changed his ambition to control the whole of Ukraine and also to rewrite the international order," he said. Stoltenberg noted that Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba will take part in the NATO ministerial meeting, and this will be a good opportunity to get information about the situation in Ukraine and the needs of the Armed Forces. "We will be joined by Foreign Minister Kuleba from Ukraine, and I think it's important that we have this opportunity to engage directly with him. To discuss with him to listen, to hear Minister Kuleba and also to discuss the way forward together. We'll also be joined by other partners, the Foreign Minister of Georgia, Finland, Sweden, the European Union, and also by our partners from the Asia Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. And these are all highly valued partners," he said.

According to the NATO secretary general, tonight, Foreign Ministers will discuss NATO's New Strategic Concept which will address the new security reality, including the security consequences of Russia's aggressive actions, of the shifting global balance of power, the security consequences of a much stronger China, and the challenges Russia and China are posing together to our rules based international order and our democratic values. Stoltenberg stressed that the mass killings of civilians in Bucha and other Ukrainian cities, occupied by Russian invaders, revealed the true nature of Putin's war. "We have all seen the atrocities that have been committed in Bucha and other places in Ukraine. This reveals the true nature of President Putin's war, and the targeting and killing of civilians is a war crime and therefore, NATO allies are supporting the international efforts to establish all the facts, to investigate, and to make sure that perpetrators are punished," he said.

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#### 14. NATO Scours the Skies for Incursions Amid Rising Russia Tensions (Bloomberg, Natalia Drozdiak, 6 Apr 22)...

An unidentified Russian aircraft flying off the northern coast of Norway raised up an alert among NATO officials this week, prompting a Norwegian fighter jet to lift off into the sky and investigate. Huddled in a control center deep in a bunker in Uedem, western Germany, operators monitor air traffic 24/7 for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization territory from the Alps up to Iceland. A green blip on radar screens on Tuesday showed what appeared to be a Russian plane likely looking to collect intelligence on anything from radar capabilities and air bases to logistics on the ground. A duty controller at the operations center ordered a so-called alpha scramble, which sends a fighter jet in air within minutes to monitor the aircraft, collect any markings or tail-numbers and check if it's carrying any missiles. That information is fed back into a database to match any previous records.

Such encounters occur every other day on average and haven't seen a significant uptick since the start of Russia's war with Ukraine, NATO officials said. Monitoring the alliance's airspace has become all the more important since the invasion as NATO looks to beef up its presence in the east to deter any potential aggression from Moscow, but also looks to ensure no incidents spiral out of control and unintentionally drag NATO allies into the conflict. "We don't want to be provocative but it's to determine what this airplane is doing and report that back," said Steve Carocci, director of the air operations center at Uedem, adding that so far officials haven't seen any NATO airspace violations from the Russian side. An incident earlier in March, when a drone flew from Ukraine through several NATO countries before crashing outside Zagreb, has highlighted the sensitivity of the work. An investigation is ongoing into the incident. Russian intelligence-gathering planes also frequently cruise near Norway, in light of Moscow's interests in the Arctic Circle. Moscow is making the so-called Northern Sea Route, which runs along its Arctic coastline, a key part of its strategy to boost natural gas exports to Asia.

The NATO alliance, which includes the U.S. and 29 other countries as members, employs as many as 8,000 people for air policing. In addition to Uedem, a center in Torrejon, Spain monitors traffic in the southern part of the alliance. Around 30 surveillance and fighter jets are in the air at any one time monitoring NATO airspace. That includes also peering into Ukrainian territory, to some degree. While no allied planes will enter into Ukrainian airspace, some planes and ground radar sites can pick up information about what's in Ukrainian airspace or on land. NATO's airborne warning and control system aircraft, for instance, can see up to 250 kilometers (155 miles) on ground and 400 kilometers in the air, depending on weather conditions. "You always need some early warnings," Harold Van Pcc, commander of the Uedem center, said. "The farther you can look into the other side, the more time you have to prepare for what's coming up."

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#### 15. Ukraine War: Putin's Daughters Targeted by US Sanctions (BBC, 6 Apr 22)...

The US has imposed sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle, including his daughters. The list also includes the family of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and major banks. The measures follow new revelations of atrocities by Russian troops in Ukraine, including images of bodies of civilians scattered on the streets of Bucha, near the capital Kyiv. Russia says, without evidence, the images are staged by Kyiv officials. Even though satellite images have shown the civilians were killed when Russians were in control of Bucha, Mr Putin on Wednesday described the event as a "crude and cynical provocation by the Kyiv regime". Referring to the Bucha murders, US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday: "There's nothing less happening than major war crimes." "Responsible nations have to come together to hold these perpetrators accountable," Mr Biden added. The US said that Mr Putin's daughters, Katerina Vladimirovna Tikhonova and Maria Vladimirovna Vorontsova, were being put under sanctions "for being the adult children of Putin, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked". The announcement described Ms Tikhonova as "a tech executive whose work supports the GoR [Russian government] and defense industry". Her sister, Ms Vorontsova, it went on, "leads state-funded programs that have received billions of dollars from the Kremlin toward genetics research and are personally overseen by Putin". Asked why the US was targeting Mr Putin's daughters, a senior Biden administration official said the US thought they could be in control of some of their father's assets. "We have reason to believe that Putin, and many of his cronies, and the oligarchs, hide their wealth, hide their assets, with family members that place their assets and their wealth in the US financial system, and also many other parts of the world," the official said. "We believe that many of Putin's assets are hidden with family members, and that's why we're targeting them."

The US sanctions announced by the White House include: economic measures to ban new investment in Russia, severe financial sanctions on Russia's largest private bank, Alfa Bank, and its largest financial institution, Sberbank, sanctions on critical major state-owned enterprises, sanctions on Russian government officials and their family members. Meanwhile the UK has announced further sanctions against eight oligarchs and Russian banks, including the country's largest, Sberbank, and Credit Bank of Moscow. The European Union is also debating cutting off Russian coal imports as concern over alleged war crimes increases. Before the new raft of sanctions was announced in Washington, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he could not "tolerate any indecisiveness". Speaking to the Irish parliament on Wednesday, he said there was still a need to convince some in Europe who believe "war and war crimes are not as horrific as financial losses" to back tougher sanctions. He added that "Russian oil cannot feed the Russian military machine", with Ukraine's foreign minister arguing on Twitter that an embargo on gas and oil was needed to truly impact Russia's ability to finance the war.

Josep Borrell, the EU's chief diplomat, separately acknowledged on Wednesday that the one billion euros (\$1.09bn; €833m) Europe spent on Russian energy every day put into sharp perspective the billion euros given to Ukraine in military assistance since the start of the invasion. Some European member states, including Germany, are heavily reliant on Russian energy and had been reluctant to directly target the sector. However, in a first, the European Commission proposed a potential ban on imports of Russian coal on Tuesday, which must be agreed by all 27 members. Europe buys around €4bn (\$4.4bn; £3.3bn) worth of coal from Moscow every year. Sentiment appeared to change after evidence of Russian war crimes emerged, with French President Emmanuel Macron joining calls for a ban on coal earlier this week. The ban was suggested ahead of a range of sanctions set to be announced in coordination with the US and other G7 nations. European member states are also expected to impose a "full transaction ban" on four Russian banks and ban a range of other Russian and Belarusian imports, including wood, cement, seafood and liquor, worth €5.5 billion (\$6bn; £4.59bn). And Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said she intends to close EU ports to Russian vessels and ban Russian and Belarusian road transport operators from the region. Ms Von der Leyen accused Russia of "waging a cruel and ruthless war" against Ukrainian civilians and said the EU must "sustain utmost pressure on Putin and the Russian government at this critical point". But Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis on Tuesday evening criticized the EU's proposed sanctions package, calling it a "feeble response" which is "an invitation for more atrocities." "Coal, four banks... a ban on ports and borders (with exceptions) is not really an adequate sanctions package to the massacres that are being uncovered," Mr Landsbergis wrote on Twitter.

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## 16. Russia Says It Wants to Keep Diplomatic Ties With West Despite Expulsions (Reuters, 5 Apr 22)...

Russia wants to maintain diplomatic relations with Western countries despite a series of expulsions of its diplomats, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said on Wednesday. Several European countries including France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy have expelled large numbers of Russian diplomats in recent days. The moves coincide with outrage across Europe over reports of the discovery of mass graves and of civilian killings in the Ukrainian town of Bucha following the retreat of Russian forces conducting what Moscow calls its "special operation" in Ukraine. Grushko told Interfax that Russia, which has pledged to respond to the expulsions, was assessing the decisions by European countries. "Nevertheless our position remains absolutely the same: we advocate for diplomatic channels to remain open."

Grushko said European countries disrupting the work of Russian diplomats were damaging their own interests and warned against any potential action against the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, wedged between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic seaboard. "I really hope that common sense in Europe will not allow any games to be started around Kaliningrad," TASS quoted him as saying. "I think many understand that this would be playing with fire." Grushko said Russia had "no contact with NATO". "There is nothing to discuss with NATO," TASS quoted him as saying. Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it called a special operation to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities and root out people it called dangerous nationalists. Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance and the West has imposed sweeping sanctions in an effort to force Russia to withdraw its forces.

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## PREPARE

## 17. NATO Unveils Tech Accelerator Footprint, With Plans for Over 60 Sites (DefenseNews, Vivienne Machi, 6 Apr 22)...

NATO is set to establish a new trans-Atlantic initiative meant to speed up the development of critical technologies, with one Euro-centric headquarters stationed in London and more than 60 partner sites around its alliance. Last summer at the 31st annual NATO Summit in Brussels, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced plans to establish the Defence Innovation Accelerator of the North Atlantic, or DIANA, based on the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Nearly a year later, NATO's foreign ministers are ready to approve a formal charter for DIANA and commit to providing an initial €1 billion (U.S. \$1.1 billion) innovation fund. The ministers will approve DIANA's charter during their April 6-7 meeting in Brussels. Stoltenberg said April 5 during a pre-ministerial press briefing. The initiative comes with more than 60 innovation sites. That includes a headquarters in Europe and another in North America, about 10 "accelerator sites" that provide financing, mentorship and exposure to business opportunities to participating startups, and more than 50 dedicated test centers hosting labs and equipment. "Altogether, the initial footprint will cover 20 NATO nations, representing a true trans-Atlantic endeavor, and we expect it will continue to expand in the future," Stoltenberg said.

The technology accelerator will be a new NATO body, tasked to bring innovative civilian and military organizations closer together to develop cutting-edge solutions in the realms of emerging and disruptive technologies, said David van Weel, NATO assistant secretary general for emerging security challenges. The plan is for allies to agree upon a new strategic direction every two years, which will then dictate critical defense and security problems as well as the desired solutions. "This provides strong signals of market demand and opportunity for innovators," van Weel said at a Tuesday press briefing. From there, startups, academic institutions and nontraditional industry members can participate in so-called challenge programs that work to solve real-world problems — such as operating in a GPS-denied environment — and submit proposals to participate in DIANA's accelerator effort.

Member nations submitted proposals for more than 90 institutions to be part of the DIANA footprint; after evaluations, NATO pared it down to more than 10 accelerator sites and over 50 test centers, with many already in existence, van Weel said. Among those selected sites are the Niels Bohr Institute at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, which will focus on quantum technologies, and a new site in Turin, Italy, which will be dedicated to the space domain. Imperial College London will host the European headquarters along with a DIANA accelerator, in a space currently housing the U.K.'s Defence and Security Accelerator, according to the British government. The U.K.'s program will be "twinning" with a new accelerator based in Tallinn, Estonia, to help share expertise, test cyber innovations and explore the viability of "virtual sites" to trial new tech such as autonomous vehicles. "The UK and Estonia are two of the most innovative countries in NATO, and our hosting of DIANA will harness that innovation for the benefit of all allies tackling future military threats," British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said in a news release.

While the centers on the European side have all been selected, the North American footprint will be announced at the NATO Summit in June in Madrid, Spain. The goal is to have DIANA reach its full operational capability by 2025, said van Weel. Alongside the tech accelerator is a nascent venture capital fund, dubbed the NATO Innovation Fund. "Ultimately, reimagining NATO's engagement with civilian innovators is only credible if we also provide the right funding mechanisms," van Weel noted. Twenty-one members worked together to establish the underlying framework of the fund — outlining the investment strategy, the pool of capital, and determining the fund's structure and governance. They also provided initial financial support. The Innovation Fund will invest €1 billion into "deep-tech startups" over 15 years. These are public funds that participating nations can allocate, either from their existing defense budgets or established innovation funds, a senior NATO official said Tuesday.

The participating nations in DIANA's innovation fund currently include Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Other member nations can decide to contribute to the Innovation Fund at a later date, but they would have no say over its framework, the NATO official said. A key aspect of DIANA will be to support NATO's work in harnessing critical technology areas known as emerging and disruptive technologies, or EDT. The alliance recently identified propulsion and new materials as two new EDTs that deserve attention, joining artificial intelligence, autonomy, big-data processing, quantum-enabled technologies, biotechnology, hypersonic technology and space-related systems. NATO has released public strategies for several of these EDTs — for space, AI and big-data processing. The alliance's strategy on autonomy is expected to be released this year, and one on quantum-enabled technologies will come the following year, the official said.

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Colleagues,

See below for your April 11, 2022 news.

COMPETE

I. Finland Gears up for Historic NATO Decision  
(AFP, 10 Apr 22)...

The Nordic nation of 5.5 million has traditionally been militarily non-aligned, in part to avoid provoking its eastern neighbour, with which it shares a 1,300 kilometre (830 mile) border. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 saw public support for joining NATO double from 30 to 60 percent, according to a series of polls. "Never underestimate the capacity of Finns to take rapid decisions when the world changes," former Finnish prime minister Alexander Stubb told AFP. Himself a long-time NATO advocate, Stubb now believes Finland making a membership application is "a foregone conclusion" as Finns re-evaluate their relationship with their neighbour. Next week a government-commissioned national security review will be delivered to parliament, the Eduskunta, to help Finnish MPs make up their own minds, before it is put to a vote. "We will have very careful discussions but not taking any more time than we have to," Prime Minister Sanna Marin told a news conference on Friday. "I think we will end the discussion before midsummer," she added. "My guess is that the application will be filed sometime during the month of May" in time for the June NATO summit in Madrid, Stubb said.

Finland declared independence in 1917 after 150 years of Russian rule, only for its vastly outnumbered army to fight off an attempted Soviet invasion during the Second World War inflicting heavy losses on the Red Army. Hostilities ended in a peace deal that saw Finland ceding several border areas to the Soviet Union. Finnish leaders agreed to remain neutral during the Cold War in exchange for guarantees from Moscow that it would not invade. The country's forced neutrality to appease its stronger neighbour coined the term "Finlandization". Finland has remained outside the transatlantic military alliance, and despite some cuts after the Cold War it has focused on maintaining well-funded defence and preparedness capabilities. "We're able to mobilise 280,000 to 300,000 men and women within a matter of days," Stubb said, adding that 900,000 reserves could also be called up. Last week Finland's government agreed a 40-percent hike in defence spending by 2026, to further strengthen the country's position. "We have walked a long way when it comes to our security policies, and they have worked so far," said Centre Party MP Joonas Kontta. Like the majority of his parliamentary colleagues, the 32-year-old used to think that NATO membership was "something that we don't need at the moment". But Russia's invasion "changed something in Europe in a way that can't be changed back", he told AFP, and Kontta recently announced that he now believes it is time to seek to join the alliance. A number of MPs have also recently announced similar changes of heart regarding

Finland's "NATO question" -- although many more are keeping their positions to themselves awaiting more detailed discussions.

Only six of Finland's 200 MPs in a recent poll by public broadcaster Yle openly voiced anti-NATO views, including Markus Mustajarvi from the Left Alliance party Finland and Sweden's non-alignment "has brought stability to the whole of Northern Europe", the Lapland MP told AFP. Mustajarvi questions whether NATO's Article 5 commitment to mutual defence would provide genuine protection in case of an attack. Instead he cites Finland's own defence capabilities which are "so strong that they would force Russia to think what price it would pay for attacking". Despite receiving "all sorts of feedback" from the public and his fellow MPs over his stance, Mustajarvi insists he has "thought this through to the end and so far I don't see a reason to change my position".

Since Russia's attack, Finland's leadership has undertaken an intensive series of talks to canvass opinion from other NATO states about a possible membership bid. Along with neighbouring Sweden, Finland has received public assurances from secretary general Jens Stoltenberg that the alliance's door remains open, as well as expressions of support from numerous members including the US, UK, Germany, France and Turkey. But attempting to join NATO would likely be seen as a provocation by the Kremlin, for whom the expansion of the US-led alliance on its borders has been a prime security grievance. Finland's president Sauli Niinisto has warned that Russia's response could be "on the brash side", including airspace, territorial violations and hybrid attacks. The Kremlin has pledged to "rebalance the situation" in the event of Finland joining NATO. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has acknowledged that Russia could seek to destabilise a membership bid during the "grey zone" between an application and its ratification by all 30 NATO states, which could take four months to a year. "Finland has always tried to stay away from the grey zone," Stubb said, but he believes that Finland has the resilience to withstand potential Russian aggression or hybrid attacks.

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## 2. Swedes, Finns Worry About Security Risk on the Path to NATO (Bloomberg, Kati Pohjanpalo and Natalia Drozdiak, 9 Apr 22)...

As Sweden and Finland deliberate joining NATO, the two countries are seeking more clarity on how to bridge the gap between filing their applications and when the military alliance's security guarantees would kick in with full membership. While there is little sign that the two Nordic nations would struggle to secure acceptance, Russia has repeatedly warned both against joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and so they are concerned about potential aggression from Moscow if they formally signal their alignment with the western bloc. Public backing for joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization underwent a historic shift in both nations after Russia invaded Ukraine, and in Finland, almost half of all lawmakers now openly support an application. As policymakers have gone on a diplomatic overdrive to remove any doubts about being welcomed by all members, they seek more certainty about near-term guarantees that they wouldn't be left alone against Russia. NATO's Article 5 mutual defense clause only applies to members. "Finland's concern over the gray zone between the membership application and full membership" is "quite well understood among NATO countries," Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said on Thursday. It could take between four months and a year for the 30 NATO members to ratify their applications, Haavisto said, signaling he'd been given indication countries would be willing to hurry the process.

Asked about their possible memberships, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said earlier this week that he expected all 30 allies would welcome them if they decided to apply. He said NATO "will find ways to also address the concerns" about the interim period. Finland and Sweden already have some degree of collective security commitments through their membership of the European Union. Article 42.7 of the EU treaty states that if a member is the victim of armed aggression, other members have the obligation to aid them, but this doesn't bind the U.S. in the way that their membership in NATO would. NATO officials say they would welcome Finnish and Swedish membership and point to long and deep partnerships with the countries, including through regular joint military

exercises with their armed forces. Any membership bid from Sweden hinges on the ruling Social Democrats changing their stance, while Finns appear to have made up their minds to join and are putting together a parliamentary process designed to engage lawmakers from across the political spectrum.

A security-policy white paper due in Helsinki next week won't contain a proposal for joining, but the government and president are prepared to submit an addendum on that "when the time is right" after they are satisfied lawmakers back the bid, Ilaavisto said. "I think we will end the discussion before midsummer," Prime Minister Sanna Marin told reporters on Friday, referring to a holiday that falls on June 25 this year. "We will have very careful discussions, but we will also not take any more time than we have to in this process, because the situation is of course very severe," she said. Sweden and Finland have for years worked closely with allies on military interoperability, on exercises, training and also meet NATO standards when it comes to political, democratic, civilian, control over the security institutions and the armed forces, Stoltenberg said. "There are no other countries that are closer to NATO," Stoltenberg said on Wednesday.

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### 3. Poland-Ukraine Ties Seen as Target of Russian Disinformation (AP, Vanessa Gera, 10 Apr 22)...

Days before Poland's Independence Day in November, vandals painted the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag on monuments in Krakow. The vandalism, which took place as Russia massed troops near Ukraine's border, looked as if Ukrainians were defacing memorials to Polish national heroes. Yet some clues suggested otherwise. The flag's colors were reversed, with the yellow on top of the blue and one offensive message was in an unnatural mix of Russian and Ukrainian. Though prosecutors are still investigating, Polish and Ukrainian authorities believe it was most likely a Russian-inspired attempt to trigger ethnic hostility between Ukrainians and Poles. Polish and Ukrainian authorities have for years accused Russia of trying to provoke hostility between their neighboring nations as part of a broader effort to divide and destabilize the West — and the concerns have gained greater urgency since Russia invaded Ukraine. Poland and Ukraine are neighbors and allies but they share a difficult history of oppression and bloodshed, and those historical traumas sometimes rise to the surface. Poland has also accepted large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, creating fears that could become another wedge issue that Russia could exploit. "The Russian efforts to sow divisions between the Poles and Ukrainians, particularly by means of exploiting historical issues, are as old as time," said Stanislaw Zaryn, the spokesman for Poland's security services. "Russia has redoubled them since the war began," he said. "And they are more dangerous now because the war is going on and it can affect more people than before." Reacting to the November incident, the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw immediately denounced it as "shameful" and "a provocation aimed at harming the good neighborly relations between Ukraine and Poland."

More than 2.5 million Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Poland since the war began, and while some move on to other countries more than half have remained. Poles have reacted with an outpouring of help and goodwill and the government has extended to the Ukrainians the same rights to education and health care that Poles have. Never Again, an anti-racism association in Poland, has documented several attempts to stoke aversion to the Ukrainian refugees and even to openly justify Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion. In some cases those behind the messages are far-right Polish activists or politicians with pro-Kremlin views, according to a report the organization published Thursday. "These groups do not enjoy widespread public support, but they do their best to make Poles and Ukrainians quarrel, spread hateful content, conspiracy theories and false information, primarily in the internet space," it said. Larysa Lacko, an expert on countering disinformation at NATO, said Russia is known to exploit refugees as a wedge issue because it touches on the economy, race and other sensitive issues, and that she has also observed Russian "disinformation talking about historical grievances." Western Ukraine was once under Polish rule, with Ukrainians largely subservient to a Polish landowning class. Resentments erupted in ethnic bloodshed during World War II, when the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a nationalist military formation, slaughtered tens of thousands of Poles in the Nazi-occupied Polish regions of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia.

Poland also has a difficult history with Moscow. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union carved up Poland at the start of World War II in 1939, invading and occupying the country based on a secret clause in the notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Poles suffered atrocities inflicted by both occupying states. The Nazis set up death camps and concentration camps where they murdered Jews and they killed many other Polish citizens as well. Meanwhile, the Soviets sent some Poles to Siberia and murdered 22,000 Polish officers in the Katyn massacres of 1940. Even after the war, Poland was forced to live under Moscow's oppressive control for the decades of the Cold War. It still stings Poles to remember the Soviet Union denied the truth of the Katyn killings for decades, forbidding Poles from publicly commemorating the victims. When the Polish wartime government-in-exile asked the International Red Cross to investigate the Nazi disclosures of the Soviet crimes, Moscow smeared the Polish leaders as "Fascist collaborators" — much as they have falsely accused Ukraine today of being a Nazi state. Some Poles, especially those who lived through the war, remember those times and carry a lingering hostility to both Russians and Ukrainians. One false claim Polish authorities say Russians are spreading is that Poland seeks to reclaim Lviv and other territory in western Ukraine that once was Polish. "Those claims are untrue," the Polish Foreign Ministry said in a series of tweets seeking to debunk false claims. "Poland will never accept the annexation of any territory belonging to an independent state." Another is that Poland, a NATO ally hosting thousands of U.S. troops, is working to set the West against Russia. That claim was made recently by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, the current deputy chairman of the Russian security council. "Now the interests of the citizens of Poland have been sacrificed due to the Russophobia of mediocre politicians and their puppeteers from across the ocean with clear signs of senile insanity," Medvedev wrote recently on Telegram, a social media app popular in Russia and Ukraine.

Zaryn, the Polish security services spokesman, also pointed to a Polish Facebook page called "A Ukrainian is NOT my brother," whose posts call on followers not to forget the Ukrainian massacres of Poles in the 1940s. The page was created less than a month after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and has nearly 55,000 followers. In recent weeks posts have criticized Polish authorities for their strong support for Ukraine. Zaryn said evidence points to it being run by a woman with ties to a pro-Kremlin party, Zmiana, in Poland. The former leader of the party, Mateusz Piskorski, has worked for Russian news outlets RT and Sputnik and has been charged with espionage for Russia and China. Poland's government has been taking steps to protect itself, with public warnings about the disinformation attempts and expulsions of dozens of suspected Russian agents and one arrest. Days after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Polish authorities arrested a man they accused of being an agent of the Russian military intelligence agency, GRU, in Przemysl, a key entry points for Ukrainian refugees, as he sought to cross into Ukraine. In late March, Poland ordered the expulsion of 45 suspected Russian intelligence officers they accused of using diplomatic status as a cover to operate in the country. "The illegal activities of these diplomats can also pose a threat to those people who left their country to flee the war and found protection in our country," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lukasz Jasina said. At a moment of huge solidarity in Poland and elsewhere with Ukrainians, disinformation is limited in its impact, argued Lacko, the NATO expert working to counter disinformation. "Given the atrocities on the ground, it's harder to fall into these sorts of traps," she said. But officials in Poland say they have to remain on guard, especially if the number of refugees grows, creating the potential for more social anxieties that can be exploited.

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#### 4. Lithuania to Resume Training Ukrainian Military in Operating Western Weaponry (Ukrinform, 10 Apr 22)...

Lithuania plans to organize training for Ukrainian servicemen in the near future to help them prepare for operating Western military equipment. This was reported by Delfi with reference to the commander of the Lithuanian Army, General Valdemaras Rupsis, according to Ukrinform. "In order to achieve the maximum result, we will soon organize training for the Ukrainian military here in Lithuania... We are ready to train their instructors to prepare them to work with equipment that we control, with military equipment, machinery or weapons that are out there, necessary for carrying out operations in Ukraine," Rupsis said. The top military official discussed the issue separately with U.S. Army Chief of Staff James Charles McConville, who is currently in Lithuania. Rupsis also reminded that "for almost two months now Ukraine has been fighting not only for its own security, but also for the

security and democracy of the whole of Europe." Earlier, on the eve of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NATO military instructors were withdrawn from Ukraine and Ukrainian military training in NATO member states has also been canceled. As Ukrinform reported earlier, from February 24 to April 9, Russian troops lost in Ukraine approximately 19,300 personnel, 722 tanks, 1,911 armored combat vehicles, 342 artillery systems, 108 MLR systems, 55 air defense units, 152 aircraft, and 137 helicopters.

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5. What Weapons to Send to Ukraine? How Debate Shifted From Helmets to Tanks.  
(Washington Post, William Booth, Emily Rauhala, and Michael Birnbaum, 9 Apr 22)...

Ukrainian officials are clear on what they want from the United States and Europe: weapons. Big, heavy weapons. Not helmets. Tanks. They say they need these weapons now, not later. And a lot of them. The message has been broadly the same from the start of Russia's invasion, when Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reportedly said "I need ammunition, not a ride," to this past week, when Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told NATO leaders in Brussels that he had a threefold agenda: "weapons, weapons and weapons." But in the United States and Europe, the discussions over what types of weapons to send are far different from what they were just six weeks ago. This is a pivotal moment of the war, and as the battlefield shifts, the sorts of weapons Ukrainian forces need are changing, too. There is no longer a fear that the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, could fall within days. Russian forces are repositioning for a fight over eastern Ukraine — what many predict will be full-scale confrontation on flat, open, rural terrain, between infantry, armor and artillery, in the kind of engagements not seen in generations. On Saturday, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a surprise visit to Kyiv to meet with Zelensky. His main message was about weapons: that Britain would supply 120 more armored vehicles, in addition to anti-ship missile systems to support Ukraine in the Black Sea. This next phase of war in Ukraine could be "protracted" — "measured in months or longer," national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned at a White House briefing. It could look like something from World War II, with two large armies facing off, Kuleba told NATO foreign ministers earlier this week. "To win such a war, we need different help than what we have been receiving before," said Ukraine's defense minister, Oleksii Reznikov, in a video appeal released Thursday. "We want to liberate the enemy-occupied territories as soon as possible. To do this, we need other weapons." In the early days of fighting, NATO countries worried that the weaponry they gave to Ukraine might be quickly captured by superior Russian forces, or that Ukrainian troops did not have the time to train to use new equipment effectively, or that sending offensive weapons would escalate the conflict and enrage Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was rattling his nuclear sword. Weapons are easier to give than to take back. But as the war has gone on, those concerns have begun to recede. Now, some NATO countries are preparing to supply Ukraine with more lethal, sophisticated, long-range and heavily armored weapons. The question is whether those will come as fast as Ukrainian officials want to stop Russia's advance and push out Russian troops.

Since the Feb. 24 invasion, Western governments have supplied Ukraine with billions of dollars worth of weapons, including thousands of easy-to-use, shoulder-fired missile systems, which proved especially deadly, in the hands of small Ukrainian commando groups, in slowing, stopping and then reversing the Russian assault on Kyiv. These "shoot-and-scoot" launchers were decisive, according to military analysts. "We know that military assistance is having a critical impact on this conflict," Sullivan said Monday, highlighting the U.S.-produced, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft Stingers and antitank Javelins that have been shipped to Ukraine. Now, as the war pivots to the east, the numbers and types of weapons supplied by the United States and Europe will again prove critical for Ukraine. Its forces need to quickly rebuild, to replace equipment lost in six weeks of fighting and to supply the reserve units that the Ukrainian military is now trying to put into the field. They also need to prepare for a new sort of war, with the ultimate aim of not only defending cities but also turning out Russian forces. "So antitank missiles alone are not going to cut it," said Michael Kofman, research program director in the Russia Studies Program at CNA, a think tank based in Arlington, Va. Kofman estimated that Ukraine needs "hundreds" of armored combat vehicles, including tanks, and a tremendous amount of ammunition. Reznikov ticked off a longer list: air defense systems and combat aircraft to protect citizens and Ukrainian troops from missiles and airstrikes; long-range artillery to keep Russian forces at a distance; tanks and armored vehicles to break through Russian defenses and liberate the occupied territories; and anti-ship missiles to beat back the Russian naval siege and unblock ports on the Black Sea. Western governments have been reluctant to send such heavy weaponry. But the Czech Republic has become the first NATO

country to contribute tanks, a senior Czech official confirmed to The Washington Post on Saturday, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a transfer that hasn't been announced officially. "Hopefully, that will start a race to who can supply more," said William Alberque, director of strategy, technology and arms control at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "It's hard to be the first one" to send tanks, "but when someone breaks the ice, it's much easier," said Margiris Abukevicius, a Lithuanian vice minister of defense who was in Washington this past week to discuss military cooperation with the United States.

In the opening weeks of the war, Ukraine's backers were mostly focused on providing weapons that Ukrainian forces already knew how to use or that could be deployed with minimal training. A soldier could learn how to fire a Javelin, for instance, by watching a short video. And formerly communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe could share their stockpiles of Soviet- and Russian-made equipment that integrates easily with Ukraine's existing stock. But European defense officials told The Post that their thinking about the number and types of weapons they are willing to send has evolved, as Ukrainian forces have shown the ability to fight — and have bought themselves time to train on more complicated Western-made equipment. At the outset, "we were supplying weapons only if we knew the Ukrainians were able to operate them from the first moment. Now we are seeing more advanced weapons and a willingness to invest some time to help them use it," Abukevicius said. At NATO meetings in Brussels this past week, the focus was on getting Ukrainian forces more advanced weapons systems as quickly as possible. "Countries indicated they are willing to go further, because we recognize that this is a new offensive, that the Russian forces are more concentrated and that more advanced weapons will be required," said a Western official at the NATO sessions who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss the talks. The British prime minister on Saturday said his country will be providing Ukraine with 120 heavily armored troop carriers called Mastiffs — and that British troops will help train the Ukrainians in their operation. Britain will also supply anti-ship weapons for the first time. Ukraine's president welcomed Britain's "decisive and significant support" and urged other allies to keep the pressure on Russia. The latest package from the United States, Sullivan said, includes laser-guided rocket systems, Puma drones and armored high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles. More arms shipments from the United States are coming soon, Sullivan said, promising that the types of advanced weapons headed to Ukraine will be "extraordinary" and "unprecedented," though he declined to offer specifics. For tanks and air defense, the focus remains on older systems. Central Europe holds warehouses of old Soviet and post-Soviet tanks — the T-72s and even earlier T-64s — and Alberque said Ukrainian forces know how to drive and repair those tanks. In some cases, the White House has agreed to send new equipment to Central European countries if those countries give their old equipment to Ukraine. So a steady stream of their defense officials have passed through Washington in recent weeks, seeking assurances that the United States would backfill them with more modern equipment in short order. President Biden said in a statement Friday that the United States would reposition a Patriot missile system to Slovakia, after that country sent an S-300 air defense system to Ukraine.

The debate about weaponry has evolved along with the conflict, although there remain divisions about the risks of NATO involving itself too deeply in the fight. The Ukrainians say it no longer makes sense for Western governments to debate whether arms sent to Ukraine are "defensive" or "offensive" — or might somehow "escalate" the war, which has seen dense urban centers indiscriminately shelled by Russia, alongside charges that Russian forces have committed war crimes by deliberately targeting civilians. At the NATO meeting in Brussels this past week, the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons appeared to be falling away. "This is about defending Ukrainian territory, therefore they need all the types of equipment that we are able to supply," a NATO official told The Post, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss defense decisions. "I have urged allies to provide further support of many different types of systems, both the light weapons but also heavier weapons," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said. But there is still wariness among Western allies. Russia has warned that it will treat arms shipments to Ukraine from NATO countries as "legitimate targets" for military action, potentially setting up more-direct confrontations between Russia and NATO. At the same time, supplying Ukraine with long-range artillery, for example, includes the risk of the conflict spilling over borders. Germany, which was chided for offering to send 5,000 protective helmets in January, has embraced the need for lethal aid, though it has been reluctant to see larger, more offensive weapons sent to Ukraine. NATO countries, too, have so far agreed that they will not send warplanes to the Ukrainian air force. But backers of arming Ukraine more vigorously say that if Kyiv doesn't win now, the next battle will be with NATO anyway. "In the beginning, we were supplying weapons

to sustain their fight. Now we are supplying weapons to advance and win," Abukevicius said.

Ben Hodges, who served as commander of U.S. Army Europe during the Obama and Trump administrations, said there is a narrow window to arm Ukrainian forces as the war enters a new phase. "The next three weeks are critical," he said, and "will determine if Ukraine can break the back of the Russian forces, or if this goes for months, maybe years." Ukraine has expressed frustration with the speed of weapons delivery. Reznikov warned this past week that "procrastination with the provision of weapons leads to the death of our children, to the depletion of our country."

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#### 6. Ukraine: Inside the Spies' Attempts to Stop the War (BBC, Gordon Corera, 10 Apr 22)...

For nearly a dozen days in February, a small group of intelligence officers had been going to bed early. They had seen the intelligence predicting a war and knew that if Russia was really going to invade Ukraine, it would begin in the early hours of the morning. But when the news finally came on 24 February, it still felt unreal, one recalls: "It was hard to believe it was actually happening until I woke up early that morning and put the radio on." For months they had been sounding the alarm. "That day people went from 'Why are you being so hysterical?' to 'Why weren't you more hysterical?'" says the official. There was no satisfaction in being proved right, another intelligence official adds. But at least they felt they had tried to stop a war whose scale they had been warning of for months. The run-up to war and the weeks after it started saw American and British intelligence make public some of their most closely held secrets as part of an unprecedented campaign.

For decades, intelligence had normally been something to share with as few individuals as possible. No longer. The decision had been taken to make the whole world know about it. This not only marked a dramatic shift in the way Western intelligence had been operating - it also meant confronting the painful legacy of the invasion of Iraq. The first signs of Russia's intentions arrived a year ago. Intelligence from satellite imagery pointed to a Russian troop build-up near Ukraine. But analysts had little understanding of Moscow's true intentions. That changed in mid-2021. "From summer we saw a small group of senior people planning for a full military invasion of the whole country," explains one Western intelligence official. The intelligence-gathering and analysis was a joint US-UK affair, those involved say - one calling it a "family" operation. There was no single moment of understanding but rather a picture that became increasingly clear as time passed. The exact provenance of the intelligence remains classified - officials suggest it came from multiple sources. But it provided a picture which continued to build as London and Washington saw invasion plans being finalised.

Vladimir Putin seemed to believe he had to act quickly to fulfil his ambition of bringing Ukraine back into Russia's sphere of influence. And he believed the only way to do so was by using force. "He felt like he had a closing window of opportunity," says one person who was directly involved. By autumn, Washington had decided it needed to do something with what it was being told by its spies. That decision, those involved say, was taken at the very highest level of the White House by President Biden. A crucial moment came in early November when CIA Director William Burns travelled to Moscow - to warn that Washington knew what was being planned. The trip was not kept secret. The first time some Russian officials were told that their country might be seriously intending to act against Ukraine was when they heard it from the director of the CIA, one official says. The next stage was to make some of the intelligence public. One individual involved in the discussions, who like others spoke on condition of anonymity, recalls times where it was asked: "What is the point of knowing all of this, if we can't do something with it?"

In Washington, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines - who briefed allies at Nato in November - and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan are credited with pushing for the release of material. Experts on

declassification, trained to understand the risks, began to work round the clock to establish what could be shared. "The Intelligence Community surged personnel and resources to support classification reviews for increased intelligence sharing with allies and partners and declassification reviews for potential release to the public (and) leveraged its established declassification process, which is designed to protect sources and methods," Nicole de Haay, a spokeswoman for the US intelligence community, told the BBC. One advantage was being able to use commercially available satellite imagery to support the case. By early December, details of Russia's plans for a 175,000-strong invasion had appeared in the Washington Post. In London, the intelligence - coming in from GCHQ and MI6 - was met with near-disbelief in some quarters. A common problem inside and outside government was that people simply could not believe a major land war could break out in Europe in the 21st Century. It was only late in the year - after the material went through a formal assessment process and the Joint Intelligence Committee issued its considered view that an invasion was now "highly likely" - that everyone began to realise this was for real.

The rigour of that process was a direct result of lessons learned nearly two decades ago when intelligence had been used to make the public case for war in Iraq in a haphazard, improvised way. In 2003, amid accusations of politicisation, the reputation of US and UK spies was damaged - especially after the intelligence proved to be wrong. The ghosts of Iraq have since haunted discussions about using intelligence in public - but Ukraine offered an opportunity to try to put that legacy to bed. New procedures had been put in place to ensure secret information went through a strict assessment process to govern how it could be used. Other allies were also briefed. But many remained sceptical. Because the source of the intelligence could not be shared it was sometimes hard to overcome this incredulity, one official says.

Some European partners did not buy the analysis that Russia's build-up was anything more than bluff. A scepticism about Anglo-American intelligence was also another legacy of Iraq's missing weapons of mass destruction. France has recently sacked its head of military intelligence for failing to appreciate what was being planned. The fear for spies in publicising material is that this tips off the other side that they have a leak and potentially closes off that source. This was why, in World War Two, the UK kept the secret of Bletchley Park so tightly. There have been other occasions since Iraq when intelligence has been made public, for instance over the use of chemical weapons in Syria, but never on the scale seen over Ukraine. The release included the UK sharing details of Russian plans to install specific individuals as part of a puppet government in Kyiv - and Washington revealing plans by Moscow to stage pretexts for war, so-called false flags, involving dead bodies whom they would falsely claim had been killed by Ukrainians.

American and British spies both believe that publicising this material robbed Moscow of the ability to justify the invasion to its own people and other countries as a defensive move. One spy says of those days before the invasion that he had never seen anything like it - highly classified material would be on his desk one day and then emerge in the public domain the next. But the unprecedented outpouring of intelligence was not enough to stop the invasion. The public release had not deterred Moscow. That may never have been possible but officials believe it did disrupt Russia's plans. And it meant the reaction across the West was swifter and more unified than it might otherwise have been, they argue. They say they made it much easier for other countries to rally round tougher measures than if there had been a confused and disputed picture of who was the real aggressor. The release has continued after the invasion in speeches, statements and briefings - the head of GCHQ claimed just over a week ago that Putin was still not getting the full picture from his own officials and there have been warnings of possible "false flag" use of chemical weapons.

There is also a recognition of a new world in which so-called open-source intelligence - things like commercial satellite imagery and data - has made it more possible to verify or support assertions and that fighting an information war - including through intelligence - is now vital, partly to counter Russian assertions. On one level, much of the intelligence was spot-on. There was, as forecast, a full invasion from multiple directions with the purpose of

toppling and replacing the Zelensky government. Western spies also correctly predicted that Moscow had misplaced confidence about the reception it would encounter. "They genuinely believed there would be flags out to welcome them," says a Western intelligence officer. But one assumption did prove wrong - that Moscow's military would prevail in a matter of weeks. Instead, the war would not turn out as many expected, with Ukraine outperforming militarily while Russia underperformed. That is a reminder that intelligence has its limits - particularly in predicting some of the complexities of war and the uncertainties of people's morale and reaction. And for all its success before the war, Western spies concede that intelligence cannot tell them for sure what will happen next.

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7. U.S. Will Supply Ukraine With 'the Weapons It Needs' Against Russia  
(Reuters, Joel Schectman and Brendan O'Brien, 10 Apr 22)...

The United States is committed to providing Ukraine with "the weapons it needs" to defend itself against Russia, U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Sunday as Ukraine seeks more military aid from the West. Sullivan said the Biden administration will send more weapons to Ukraine to prevent Russia from seizing more territory and targeting civilians, attacks that Washington has labeled war crimes. "We're going to get Ukraine the weapons it needs to beat back the Russians to stop them from taking more cities and towns where they commit these crimes," Sullivan said on ABC News' "This Week". Moscow has rejected accusations of war crimes by Ukraine and Western countries. Speaking later on NBC News' "Meet the Press", Sullivan said the United States was "working around the clock to deliver our own weapons . . . and organizing and coordinating the delivery of weapons from many other countries." "Weapons are arriving every day," Sullivan said, "including today." The United States has sent \$1.7 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion on Feb. 24, the White House said last week.

Weapons shipments have included defensive anti-aircraft Stinger and anti-tank Javelin missiles, as well as ammunition and body armor. But U.S. and European leaders are being pressed by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to provide heavier arms and equipment to engage Russia in the eastern region of the country, where Russia is expected to intensify its military efforts. In excerpts of an interview with CBS News' "60 Minutes" that will air later on Sunday, Zelenskiy expressed skepticism that the United States would deliver the weapons he said are needed. Whether Ukraine can beat back the Russian incursion "depends on how fast we will be helped by the United States. To be honest, whether we will be able to survive depends on this," Zelenskiy said. "I have 100% confidence in our people and in our armed forces, but unfortunately I don't have the confidence that we will be receiving everything we need."

On Friday, Ukrainian officials said more than 50 people were killed in a missile strike on a train station in city of Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region, where thousands of people had gathered to evacuate. Russia's invasion has forced around a quarter of the population of 44 million to leave their homes, turned cities into rubble and killed or injured thousands. Moscow has repeatedly denied targeting civilians in what it calls a "special operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" its southern neighbour. Ukraine and Western nations have dismissed this as a baseless pretext for war. Russia on Saturday appointed a new general to lead its forces in Ukraine, Aleksandr Dvornikov, who had significant military experience in Syria. With that background, Sullivan said he expects Dvornikov to authorize more brutality against the Ukrainian civilian population.

Republican U.S. Representative Liz Cheney, speaking on CNN's "State of the Nation", urged the Biden administration to provide Ukraine with both offensive weapons such as tanks and planes and defensive systems like anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. "I think we need to do everything that Zelenskiy says he needs at this point, given the just unbelievable battle that they have put up," she said. A CBS News poll released on Sunday showed

widespread support among Americans for sending more weapons to Ukraine. According to the poll, which was conducted last week as news of Russian attacks on civilians unfolded, 72% of those surveyed favor sending more weapons, while 78% support economic sanctions on Russia.

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#### 8. US Doubts New Russian War Chief Can End Moscow's Floundering (AP, Robert Burns and Hope Yen, 10 Apr 22)...

Russia has tapped a new Ukraine war commander to take centralized control of the next phase of battle after its costly failures in the opening campaign and carnage for Ukrainian civilians. U.S. officials don't see one man making a difference in Moscow's prospects. Russia turned to Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, 60, one of Russia's most experienced military officers and according to U.S. officials a general with a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and other war theaters. Up to now, Russia had no central war commander on the ground. The general's appointment was confirmed by a senior U.S. official who not authorized to be identified and spoke on condition of anonymity. But the White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said "no appointment of any general can erase the fact that Russia has already faced a strategic failure in Ukraine." "This general will just be another author of crimes and brutality against Ukrainian civilians," Sullivan said. "And the United States, as I said before, is determined to do all that we can to support Ukrainians as they resist him and they resist the forces that he commands."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki echoed that thought. "The reports we're seeing of a change in military leadership and putting a general in charge who was responsible for the brutality and the atrocities we saw in Syria shows that there's going to be a continuation of what we've already seen on the ground in Ukraine and that's what we are expecting," she said. The decision to establish new battlefield leadership comes as Russia gears up for what is expected to be a large and more focused push to expand Russian control in Ukraine's east and south, including the Donbas, and follows a failed opening bid in the north to conquer Kyiv, the capital. Dvornikov gained prominence while leading the Russian group of forces in Syria, where Moscow has waged a military campaign to shore up President Bashar Assad's regime during a devastating civil war. Dvornikov is a career military officer and has steadily risen through the ranks after starting as a platoon commander in 1982. He fought during the second war in Chechnya and took several top positions before being placed in charge of the Russian troops in Syria in 2015. Under Dvornikov's command, Russian forces in Syria were known for crushing dissent in part by destroying cities, lobbing artillery and dropping what were often crudely made barrel bombs in sustained attacks that have displaced millions of Syrian civilians. The United Nations says the more than decade-long war has killed more than 350,000 people.

In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded Dvornikov the Hero of Russia medal, one of the country's highest awards. Dvornikov has served as the commander of the Southern Military District since 2016. Lt. Col. Fares al-Bayoush, a Syrian army defector, said Sunday that while the situation in Syria is different than in Ukraine because the Russian military was fighting insurgent groups and not Ukraine's professional army, he expects a similar "scorched-earth" strategy. Al-Bayoush said he believes the aim of naming Dvornikov as Ukraine war commander is to turn the war into "rapid battles" in several places at the same time. "I expected him to use the scorched earth policy that was used in Syria," al-Bayoush said, referring to Russian-backed attacks in Syria in which cities and towns were put under long sieges while being subjected to intense bombardment that left many people dead and caused wide destruction to infrastructure and residential areas. "He has very good experience in this policy." "This commander is a war criminal," al-Bayoush said by telephone from Turkey.

Since Russia joined the war in Syria in September 2015, Assad's forces have taken control of most of the country after being on the verge of collapse. The Russian air force carried out thousands of airstrikes since, helping Russian-backed Syrian troops take areas after fighters were forced to choose between an amnesty in return for dropping their arms or being taken by buses into rebel-held areas. The last major Russian-backed offensive in Syria lasted several

months, until March 2020, when a truce was reached between Russia and Turkey, which supported rival sides. Sullivan on Sunday said the Russian general has a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and “we can expect more of the same” in Ukraine. But he stressed that the U.S. strategy remains the same in supporting Ukraine and its president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. “Our policy is unequivocal — that we will do whatever we can to help Ukraine succeed,” Sullivan said. “Which means that we need to keep giving them weapons so that they can make progress on the battlefield. And we need to keep giving them military support and strong economic sanctions to improve their position, their posture at the negotiating table.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, meanwhile, spoke by video conference Sunday to a small number of Ukrainian troops in the U.S. who are now returning to their country. The group has been in the U.S. since last fall for military schooling and were given training on new drones the U.S. sent to Ukraine last week for the war with Russia. Austin thanked the Ukrainian troop members for their courage and service and pledged continued U.S. support and security aid, according to Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. Kirby said the small group was given some advanced tactical training, including on the Switchblade armed “kamakazi” drones, as well as instruction on patrol craft operations, communications and maintenance. In an interview Saturday with The Associated Press, Zelenskyy acknowledged that despite his hopes for peace, he must be “realistic” about the prospects for a swift resolution given that negotiations have so far been limited to low-level talks that do not include Putin. Zelenskyy renewed his plea for more weapons before an expected surge in fighting in the country’s east. He said, with frustration in regards to supplies of weapons from the U.S. and other Western nations, “of course it’s not enough.” Sullivan spoke on CNN’s “State of the Union” and NBC’s “Meet the Press. Psaki spoke on “Fox News Sunday.”

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9. War Crimes Were Part of Russia's Master Plan, National Security Adviser Says (Politico, David Cohen, 10 Apr 22)...

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Sunday that the war crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine were part of President Vladimir Putin’s master plan for the invasion. “We, in fact, before the war began declassified intelligence and presented it,” Sullivan said on ABC’s “This Week,” “indicating that there was a plan from the highest levels of the Russian government to target civilians who oppose the invasion, to cause violence against them, to organize efforts to brutalize them in order to try to terrorize the population and subjugate it. So this is something that was planned.” Russia’s recent retreat from areas near Kyiv left behind massive evidence of atrocities, particularly in Bucha, where civilians who had been executed, many with their hands tied behind their backs, were found through the area. On top of that, Russia has targeted civilian sites throughout the war, with airstrikes on hospitals and places where refugees have congregated. “The images that we’ve seen out of Bucha and other cities have been tragic, they’ve been horrifying,” Sullivan told host Jonathan Karl. “They’ve been downright shocking, but they have not been surprising.”

Sullivan did say that it was possible that some acts of brutality were spontaneous, suggesting that Russian soldiers who were frustrated by how poorly the invasion was going turned on Ukraine’s civilians. “They had been told they were going to have a glorious victory,” Sullivan said of the Russian troops, “and just ride into Kyiv without any opposition with Ukrainians welcoming them and when that didn’t happen, I do think some of these units engaged in these acts of brutality, these atrocities, these war crimes even without direction from above.” “But make no mistake, the larger issue of broad-scale war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine lies at the feet of the Kremlin and lies at the feet of the Russian president,” he added.

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10. Stoltenberg: NATO Planning Large, Permanent Military Presence on Eastern Border (Politico, Johanna Trecek, 10 Apr 22)...

NATO military commanders are working on plans to transform the alliance’s presence on its eastern borders to a

force capable of taking on an invading army, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told the Telegraph in an interview. Stoltenberg described the alliance's presence on its eastern borders thus far as a relatively small "tripwire" force intended to symbolize the alliance's commitment to defend itself from any Russian attack. Russia's war against Ukraine will change that. "Regardless of when, how, the war in Ukraine ends, the war has already had long-term consequences for our security. NATO needs to adapt to that new reality. And that's exactly what we are doing," Stoltenberg said. "NATO is the most successful alliance in history for two reasons. One is that we have been able to unite Europe and North America. The other is that we have been able to change when the world is changing. Now the world is changing, and NATO is changing." Stoltenberg backed Ukraine's calls on Western allies such as Germany to drop the distinction between defensive and offensive weapons with some members. Berlin has ruled out the provision of offensive weaponry to Kyiv. "Ukraine is now defending itself against an invasion. So everything Ukraine does is defensive," Stoltenberg said.

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#### 11. Missile Kills at Least 52 at Crowded Ukrainian Train Station (AP, Adam Schreck and Cara Anna, 9 Apr 22)...

A missile hit a train station in eastern Ukraine where thousands had gathered Friday, killing at least 52 and wounding dozens more in an attack on a crowd of mostly women and children trying to flee a new, looming Russian offensive, Ukrainian authorities said. The attack, denounced by some as yet another war crime in the 6-week-old conflict, came as workers unearthed bodies from a mass grave in Bucha, a town near Ukraine's capital where dozens of killings have been documented after a Russian pullout. Photos from the station in Kramatorsk showed the dead covered with tarps, and the remnants of a rocket painted with the words "For the children," which in Russian implied that children were being avenged by the strike, though the exact reason remained unclear. About 4,000 civilians had been in and around the station, heeding calls to leave before fighting intensifies in the Donbas region, the office of Ukraine's prosecutor-general said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who says he expects a tough global response, and other leaders accused Russia's military of deliberately attacking the station. Russia, in turn, blamed Ukraine, saying it doesn't use the kind of missile that hit the station — a contention experts dismissed. Zelenskyy told Ukrainians in his nightly video address Friday that efforts would be taken "to establish every minute of who did what, who gave what orders, where the missile came from, who transported it, who gave the command and how this strike was agreed to." Pavlo Kyrylenko, the regional governor of Donetsk, in the Donbas, said 52 people were killed, including five children, and dozens more were wounded. "There are many people in a serious condition, without arms or legs," Kramatorsk Mayor Oleksandr Goncharenko said, adding that the local hospital was struggling to treat everyone.

British Defense Minister Ben Wallace denounced the attack as a war crime, and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called it "completely unacceptable." "There are almost no words for it," European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in Ukraine, told reporters. "The cynical behavior (by Russia) has almost no benchmark anymore." Ukrainian authorities and Western officials have repeatedly accused Russian forces of atrocities in the war that began with a Feb. 24 invasion. More than 4 million Ukrainians have fled the country, and millions more have been displaced. Some of the grisliest evidence has been found in towns around Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, from which Russian President Vladimir Putin's troops pulled back in recent days. In Bucha, Mayor Anatoliy Fedoruk has said investigators found at least three sites of mass shootings of civilians and were still finding bodies in yards, parks and city squares — 90% of whom were shot. Russia has falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged.

On Friday, workers pulled corpses from a mass grave near a church under spitting rain, lining up black body bags in rows in the mud. About 67 people were buried in the grave, according to a statement from Prosecutor-General Iryna Venediktova's office. "Like the massacres in Bucha, like many other Russian war crimes, the missile attack on Kramatorsk should be one of the charges at the tribunal that must be held," Zelenskyy said, his voice rising in anger late Friday. He expounded on that theme in an excerpted interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that aired Friday, citing communications intercepted by the Ukrainian security service. "There are (Russian) soldiers talking with their

parents about what they stole and who they abducted. There are recordings of (Russian) prisoners of war who admitted to killing people," he said. "There are pilots in prison who had maps with civilian targets to bomb. There are also investigations being conducted based on the remains of the dead."

Zelenskyy's comments echo reporting from Der Spiegel saying Germany's foreign intelligence agency had intercepted Russian military radio traffic in which soldiers may have discussed civilian killings in Bucha. The weekly also reported that the recordings indicated the Russian mercenary Wagner Group was involved in atrocities there. German government officials would not confirm or deny the report, but two former German ministers filed a war crimes complaint Thursday. Russia has denied that its military was involved in war crimes. After failing to take Kyiv in the face of stiff resistance, Russian forces have now set their sights on the Donbas, the mostly Russian-speaking, industrial region where Moscow-backed rebels have been fighting Ukrainian forces for eight years and control some areas. A senior U.S. defense official said Friday that the Pentagon believes some of the retreating units were so badly damaged they are "for all intents and purposes eradicated." The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal military assessments. The official said the U.S. believes Russia has lost between 15% and 20% of its combat power overall since the war began. While some combat units are withdrawing to be resupplied in Russia, Moscow has added thousands of troops around Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, he said.

The train station hit is in Ukrainian government-controlled territory in the Donbas, but Russia's Defense Ministry accused Ukraine of carrying out the attack. So did the region's Moscow-backed separatists, who work closely with Russian regular troops. Western experts refuted Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov's assertion that Russian forces "do not use" that type of missile, saying Russia has used it during the war. One analyst added that only Russia would have reason to target railway infrastructure in the Donbas. "The Ukrainian military is desperately trying to reinforce units in the area ... and the railway stations in that area in Ukrainian-held territory are critical for movement of equipment and people," said Justin Bronk, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London. Bronk pointed to other occasions when Russian authorities have tried to deflect blame by claiming their forces no longer use an older weapon "to kind of muddy the waters and try and create doubt." He suggested Russia specifically chose the missile type because Ukraine also has it.

A Western official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence, also said Russia's forces have used the missile — and that given the strike's location and impact, it was "likely" Russia's. Ukrainian officials have almost daily pleaded with Western powers to send more arms, and to further punish Russia with sanctions and exclusion of Russian banks from the global financial system. NATO nations agreed Thursday to increase their supply of weapons, and Slovakian Prime Minister Eduard Heger announced on a trip to Ukraine on Friday that his country has donated its Soviet-era S-300 air defense system to Ukraine. Zelenskyy had appealed for S-300s to help the country "close the skies" to Russian warplanes and missiles. American and Slovak officials said the U.S. will then deploy a Patriot missile system to Slovakia.

After meeting with Zelenskyy on Friday, during which he urged the EU to impose a full embargo on Russian oil and gas, von der Leyen gave him a questionnaire that is a first step for applying for EU membership. She said the process for completing the questionnaire could take just weeks — an unusually fast turnaround; Zelenskyy quipped in English that they'd have the answers in a week. Elsewhere, in anticipation of intensified attacks by Russian forces, hundreds of Ukrainians fled villages that were either under fire or occupied in the southern regions of Mykolaiv and Kherson. In the northeast's Kharkiv, Lidiya Mezheritska stood in the wreckage of her home after overnight missile strikes turned it to rubble. "The 'Russian world,' they say," she said, wryly invoking Putin's nationalist justification for invading Ukraine. "People, children, old people, women are dying. I don't have a machine gun. I would definitely go (fight), regardless of age."

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## 12. Ukraine Digs in to Fight Russia's Looming Eastern Offensive (AP, Adam Schreck and Cara Anna, 10 Apr 22)...

Ukrainian forces dug in while Russia lined up more firepower Sunday and tapped a decorated general as war commander ahead of a potentially decisive showdown in eastern Ukraine that experts said could start within days with a full-scale offensive. The outcome of that confrontation could determine the course of the war, which has flattened cities, killed untold thousands and isolated Moscow economically and politically. Questions remain about the ability of Russia's depleted and demoralized forces to conquer much ground after their advance on the capital, Kyiv, was repelled by determined Ukrainian defenders. Britain's Defense Ministry reported Sunday that the Russian armed forces were trying to compensate for mounting casualties by recalling veterans discharged in the past decade. Meanwhile, a senior U.S. official said Russia appointed Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, one of its most seasoned military chiefs, to oversee the invasion that Moscow refers to as a "special military operation." The official was not authorized to be identified and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The new battlefield leadership comes as the Russian military prepares for what is expected to be a large, focused push to expand control in the country's east. Russia-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the eastern Donbas region since 2014 and declared some territory there as independent republics. Dvornikov, 60, gained prominence as head of the Russian forces that were deployed to Syria in 2015 to shore up President Bashar Assad's regime amid the country's devastating civil war. Russian authorities do not generally confirm such appointments and have said nothing about a new role for Dvornikov, who received the Hero of Russia medal, one of the country's highest awards, from President Vladimir Putin in 2016. U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan, speaking Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union," played down the significance of the appointment. "What we have learned in the first several weeks of this war is that Ukraine will never be subjected to Russia," Sullivan said. "It doesn't matter which general President Putin tries to appoint."

Western military analysts say Russia's assault was increasingly focusing on a sickle-shaped arc of eastern Ukraine from Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, in the north to Kherson in the south. Newly released Maxar Technologies satellite imagery showed an 8-mile (13-kilometer) convoy of military vehicles headed south to the Donbas, recalling images of a convoy that got stalled on roads to Kyiv for weeks before Russia gave up on trying to take the capital. On Sunday, Russian forces shelled government-controlled Kharkiv and sent reinforcements toward Izyum to the southeast in a bid to break Ukraine's defenses, the Ukrainian military command said. The Russians also kept up their siege of Mariupol, a key southern port that has been under attack and surrounded for nearly 1 ½ months. A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, said Russia's military used air-launched missiles to hit Ukraine's S-300 air-defense missile systems in the southern Mykolaiv region and at an air base in Chuhuiv, a city not far from Kharkiv. Sea-launched Russian cruise missiles destroyed the headquarters of a Ukrainian military unit stationed farther west in the Dnipro region, Konashenkov said. Neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian military claims could be independently verified. The airport in Dnipro, Ukraine's fourth-largest city, was also hit by missiles twice on Sunday, according to the regional governor.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed for stronger military and political support from the West, including NATO members that have funneled weapons and military equipment to Ukraine but denied some requests for fear of getting drawn into the war. In a late-night video message, Zelenskyy argued that Russia's aggression "was not intended to be limited to Ukraine alone." The "entire European project is a target," he said. "That is why it is not just the moral duty of all democracies, all the forces of Europe, to support Ukraine's desire for peace," Zelenskyy said. "This is, in fact, a strategy of defense for every civilized state." The Ukrainian leader also thanked British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Saturday. Zelenskyy said they discussed "what help the United Kingdom will provide to the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine," especially to rebuild the Kyiv region. Ukrainian authorities have accused Russian forces of committing war crimes against civilians, including airstrikes on hospitals, a missile attack that killed 52 people at a train station and other violence that came

to light as Russian soldiers withdrew from the outskirts of Kyiv. Zelenskyy said that when he and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke by phone Sunday, "we emphasized that all perpetrators of war crimes must be identified and punished."

A day after meeting with Zelenskyy in Kyiv, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer announced that he will meet Monday in Moscow with Putin. Nehammer aims to encourage dialogue between Ukraine and Russia and to address "war crimes" during the meeting, the Austria Press Agency reported. Austria, a member of the European Union, is militarily neutral and not a member of NATO. Ukraine has blamed Russia for killing civilians in Bucha and other towns outside the capital where hundreds of bodies, many with their hands bound and signs of torture, were found after Russian troops retreated. Russia has denied the allegations and falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged. Maria Vaselenko, 77, a resident of Borodyanka, said her daughter and son-in-law were killed, leaving her grandchildren orphaned. "The Russians were shooting. And some people wanted to come and help, but they were shooting them. They were putting explosives under dead people," Vaselenko said. "That's why my children have been under the rubble for 36 days. It was not allowed" to remove bodies.

In Mariupol, Russia was deploying Chechen fighters, reputed to be particularly fierce. Capturing the city on the Sea of Azov would give Russia a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine eight years ago. Residents have lacked food, water and electricity since Russian forces surrounded the city and frustrated evacuation missions. Ukrainian authorities think an airstrike on a theater that was being used as a bomb shelter killed hundreds of civilians, and Zelenskyy has said he expects more evidence of atrocities to be found once Mariupol no longer is blockaded. The Institute for the Study of War, an American think tank, predicted that Russian forces will "renew offensive operations in the coming days" from Izyum, a town southeast of Kharkiv, in the campaign to conquer the Donbas, which comprises Ukraine's industrial heartland. But in the view of the think tank's analysts, "The outcome of forthcoming Russian operations in eastern Ukraine remains very much in question." Elsewhere, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Ukraine was able to rotate staff at the decommissioned Chernobyl nuclear plant for only the second time since Russian forces seized the facility early in the war. The nuclear agency said the situation around Chernobyl, site of a 1986 nuclear disaster, "remained far from normal" after Russians departed at the end of March. Ukrainian officials told the agency Sunday that laboratories for radiation monitoring at the site were destroyed and instruments damaged or stolen.

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13. Putin's Target Is 'Entire European Project', Says Zelenskiy, as Ukraine Braces for Eastern Assault (Guardian, 10 Apr 22)...

Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said Russia is targeting all of Europe with its aggression and that stopping the invasion of Ukraine is essential for the security of all democracies. Officials have said a grave with dozens of Ukrainians civilians was found in Buzova village near Kyiv, the latest such discovery as Russian forces retreat from their offensive on the capital and shift their assault to the east. In his late-night address to Ukrainians on Saturday, the Ukrainian president said Russian aggression "was not intended to be limited to Ukraine alone" and the "entire European project is a target for Russia". "That is why it is not just the moral duty of all democracies, all the forces of Europe, to support Ukraine's desire for peace," he said. "This is, in fact, a strategy of defence for every civilised state. "This will be a hard battle, we believe in this fight and our victory. We are ready to simultaneously fight and look for diplomatic ways to put an end to this war."

His address came as civilians continued to flee eastern parts of the country before an expected onslaught and firefighters searched for survivors in a northern town no longer occupied by Russian forces. Zelenskiy thanked the leaders of Britain and Austria for their visits on Saturday to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, and pledges of further support. He also thanked the European Commission president and Canada's prime minister for a global fundraising event that brought in more than €10bn for Ukrainians who have fled their homes. Zelenskiy repeated his call for a

complete embargo on Russian oil and gas, which he called the sources of Russia's "self-confidence and impunity". "Freedom does not have time to wait," Zelenskiy said. "When tyranny begins its aggression against everything that keeps the peace in Europe, action must be taken immediately." More than six weeks after the invasion began, Russia has pulled its troops from the northern part of the country, around Kyiv, and refocused on the Donbas region in the east. Maxar satellite imagery showed an eight-mile (13km) convoy of military vehicles headed south to the Donbas region through the Ukrainian town of Velykyi Burluk.

Western military analysts said an arc of territory in eastern Ukraine was under Russian control, from Kharkiv Ukraine's second-largest city in the north to Kherson in the south. But counterattacks are threatening Russian control of Kherson, according to the western assessments, and Ukrainian forces are repelling Russian assaults elsewhere in the Donbas, a largely Russian-speaking and industrial region. Civilians were evacuating eastern Ukraine following a missile strike on Friday that killed at least 52 people and wounded more than 100 at the Kramatorsk train station, where thousands clamoured to leave. With trains not running out of Kramatorsk on Saturday, residents boarded buses or looked for other ways to leave, fearing the kind of unrelenting assaults and occupations by Russian invaders that brought food shortages, demolished buildings and death to other cities. "It was terrifying. The horror, the horror," one resident told Sky news, recalling Friday's attack on the train station. "Heaven forbid, to live through this again. No, I don't want to." Zelenskiy called the train station attack the latest example of war crimes by Russian forces. Russia denied responsibility.

The Kramatorsk mayor, Oleksander Honcharenko, said he expected just 50,000 to 60,000 of the city's population of 220,000 to remain as people flee. Residents of the besieged region of Luhansk would have nine trains on Sunday on which to get out, the region's governor, Serhiy Gaidai, wrote on the Telegram message service. Ukrainian authorities have worked to identify victims and document possible war crimes in the north. The mayor of Bucha, a town near Kyiv where graphic evidence of civilian slayings emerged after Russian forces withdrew, said search teams were still finding bodies of people shot at close range in yards, parks and city squares. Workers unearched 67 corpses on Friday from a mass grave near a church, according to Ukraine's prosecutor general. Russia has falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged. Ukrainian authorities have said they expect to find more mass killings once they reach the southern port city of Mariupol, which is also in the Donbas and has been subjected to a month-long blockade and intense fighting. The city's location on the Sea of Azov is critical to establishing a land bridge from the Crimean peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine eight years ago.

As journalists who had been largely absent from the city began to trickle back in, new images emerged of the devastation from an airstrike on a theatre last month that reportedly killed hundreds of civilians seeking shelter. Ukrainian officials have pleaded with western powers almost daily to send more arms and further punish Moscow with sanctions, including the exclusion of Russian banks from the global financial system and a total EU embargo on Russian gas and oil. During his visit on Saturday, the Austrian chancellor, Karl Nehammer, said he expected more EU sanctions against Russia but defended his country's opposition so far to cutting off deliveries of Russian gas, while acknowledging that "as long as people are dying, every sanction is still insufficient". Austria is militarily neutral and not a member of Nato. The visit by Boris Johnson, the British PM, came a day after the UK pledged an additional £100m in high-grade armaments. Johnson also confirmed further economic support, guaranteeing an additional \$500m in World Bank lending to Ukraine, taking Britain's total loan guarantee to up to \$1bn. The visits are a sign that Kyiv is returning to some degree of normality. Some residents are coming back and cafes and restaurants are reopening. Italy said it planned to reopen its embassy this month. The European Union on Friday adopted new sanctions against Russia, including bans on the import of coal, wood, chemicals and other products. Oil and gas imports from Russia remain untouched. Ukraine has banned all imports from Russia, a key trading partners before the war with annual imports valued at about \$6bn. In the interview with AP, Zelenskiy noted increased support for the Ukrainian war effort, but when asked if it was sufficient to shift the war's outcome, he replied: "Not yet," switching to English for emphasis. "Of course it's not enough."

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14. Russia Stages War Games in Kaliningrad Enclave, Ifax Says  
(Reuters, 10 Apr 22)...

Russia staged war games on Saturday in Kaliningrad – an enclave on the Baltic Sea sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania – Interfax news agency cited the Baltic Fleet Command as saying, days after a senior official warned European countries against any potential action against Kaliningrad. “Up to 1,000 military personnel... and more than 60 military equipment units were involved in the control checks,” Interfax news quoted the Russian Baltic Fleet Command’s press service as saying. Separately, 20 Su-27 fighters and Su-24 front-line naval aviation bombers conducted planned combat training overnight, simulating attacks on low-speed air and ground targets, command posts and military equipment in Kaliningrad, Interfax said. It did not give a reason for the exercises or say when they had been planned. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko warned European countries on Wednesday against any potential action against the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, saying “this would be playing with fire.” Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it called a special operation to degrade its southern neighbour’s military capabilities and root out people it called dangerous nationalists. The West has imposed sweeping sanctions in an effort to force Russia to withdraw its forces, and NATO has beefed up its defences on its eastern flank.

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Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Apr 12, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your April 12, 2022 news.

COMPETE

1. Sweden and Finland Make Moves to Join Nato  
(Guardian, Jon Henley, 11 Apr 22)...

Sweden's ruling party has begun debating whether the country should join Nato, and neighbouring Finland expects to reach a decision within weeks, as Moscow warned that the Nordic nations' accession would "not bring stability" to Europe. Both countries are officially non-aligned militarily, but public support for Nato membership has almost doubled since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to about 50% in Sweden and 60% in Finland, multiple opinion polls suggest. Sweden's centre-left Social Democrats, led by prime minister Magdalena Andersson, said their "security review" was about more than just joining the 30-nation alliance, adding that the party could decide to apply even without the backing of members. Having stressed at the outbreak of the war that non-alignment had "served Sweden's interests well", Andersson said she was "ready to discuss" the policy in light of Moscow's aggression, and in late March said she "did not rule out" joining Nato. "When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden's security position changed fundamentally," the party said in a statement on Monday. The Social Democrat general secretary, Tobias Baudin, said the security review would be complete "before the summer".

The question is expected to be a key issue in parliamentary elections due on 11 September, with centre-right opposition parties already saying they would back a Nato application and the far-right Sweden Democrats also open to the idea. Finland, which shares a 1,340km (830-mile) border with Russia and, like Sweden, is a Nato partner after abandoning its position of strict neutrality at the end of the cold war, is expected to outline its decision regarding the alliance before midsummer. Alexander Stubb, a former prime minister of Finland, told AFP it was "a foregone conclusion" that Helsinki would apply to join Nato, probably in time for a June Nato summit in Madrid. A government-commissioned national security review is due to be delivered to parliament next week to help Finnish MPs decide on the question before they vote, with one recent poll suggesting only six of the country's 200 MPs were opposed. "We will have very careful discussions, but not taking any more time than we have to," the country's prime minister, Sanna Marin, said last week. "I think we will end the discussion before midsummer," she said.

Both countries have received public assurances from the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, that their

applications would be welcome, as well as expressions of support from several members including the US, UK, Germany, France and Turkey. But the move would almost certainly be seen as a provocation by the Kremlin, whose spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said on Monday that the alliance was “a tool geared towards confrontation” and that their possible accession “will not bring stability to the European continent”.

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## 2. Ukraine War: Russia Warns Sweden and Finland Against Nato Membership (BBC, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia has warned Finland and Sweden against joining Nato, arguing the move would not bring stability to Europe. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that “the alliance remains a tool geared towards confrontation”. It comes as US defence officials said Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has been a “massive strategic blunder” which is likely to bring Nato enlargement. US officials expect the Nordic neighbours to bid for membership of the alliance, potentially as early as June. Washington is believed to support the move which would see the Western alliance grow to 32 members. US State Department officials said last week that discussions had taken place between Nato leaders and foreign ministers from Helsinki and Stockholm. Before it launched its invasion, Russia demanded that the alliance agree to halt any future enlargement, but the war has led to the deployment of more Nato troops on its eastern flank and a rise in public support for Swedish and Finnish membership.

Finnish MPs are expected to receive a security report from intelligence officials this week, and Prime Minister Sanna Marin said she expects her government “will end the discussion before midsummer” on whether to make a membership application. Finland shares a 1,340km (830 miles) long border with Russia and has been rattled by the invasion of Ukraine. And Sweden’s ruling Social Democratic party, which has traditionally opposed Nato membership, said it is rethinking this position in light of Russia’s attack on its western neighbour. Party secretary Tobias Baudin told local media that the Nato review should be complete within the next few months. “When Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden’s security position changed fundamentally,” the party said in a statement on Monday. But Moscow has been clear that it opposes any potential enlargement of the alliance. Mr Peskov warned the bloc “is not that kind of alliance which ensures peace and stability, and its further expansion will not bring additional security to the European continent”.

Last week Mr Peskov said that Russia would have to “rebalance the situation” with its own measures were Sweden and Finland to join Nato. And in February Maria Zakharova, Russia’s foreign ministry spokeswoman, warned of “military and political consequences” if the countries joined the bloc. Nato was formed in 1949 to counter the threat of Soviet expansion, though since the fall of the Berlin wall a number of formerly communist eastern European countries have joined. Member states agree to come to one another’s aid in the event of an armed attack against any individual member state. Despite the threats, both countries have pushed ahead with their bids and stepped up defence spending. On Monday, army leaders in Helsinki announced a new plan to allocate €14m (£10.88m) to purchase drones for Finland’s military. And last month Swedish officials said they would boost defence spending by three billion kronas (\$317m; £243m) in 2022.

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## 3. US Sanctions Western Balkan Figures, Citing ‘Threat to Regional Security’ (Politico, Nektaria Stamouli, 11 Apr 22)...

The United States sanctioned seven people in the Western Balkans on Monday, including former leaders of North Macedonia and the short-lived State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, calling them a “serious threat to regional stability.” Those targeted — from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia — were added to the list of specially designated nationals, maintained by the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC. This means their assets are blocked, U.S. citizens are generally prohibited from dealing with them, and they are also banned from entering the U.S. “The people designated today constitute a serious threat

to regional stability, institutional trust, and the aspirations of those seeking democratic and judicious governance in the Western Balkans," said Brian Nelson, the Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, in a statement. Those listed include Svetozar Marović, the last president of the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, which dissolved in 2006. Marović also served as deputy president of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro until 2015, when he was arrested over his involvement in corruption scandals related to construction projects. He admitted to the charges and signed two plea deals, but before serving his sentence he fled to Serbia, where he now resides. Montenegro's government has been seeking his extradition from Belgrade since 2019.

North Macedonia's former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski is also named. Gruevski was convicted by a court in his country on corruption-related charges, but fled and received asylum in Hungary, which the U.S. Treasury said "represents a serious setback for accountability for corruption and corruption-related activities in North Macedonia." OFAC also designated Gruevski's former chief of counterintelligence, Sašo Mijalkov, who the Treasury says was accused of being involved in a vote-rigging scheme and an illegal wiretapping operation targeting opposition politicians, judges and journalists "that provided political and economic gain, and which precipitated a two-year political crisis in the country." From Albania, the list includes former MP Aqif Rakipi and media mogul Ylli Ndroqi, accusing him of using his outlets to "extort and blackmail Albanian citizens." It also includes Asim Sarajlic, a member of the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the country's former chief prosecutor, Gordana Tadic.

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#### 4. How Meta Fumbled Propaganda Moderation During Russia's Invasion of Ukraine (Reuters, Katie Paul and Munsif Vengattil, 11 Apr 22)...

Days after the March 9 bombing of a maternity and children's hospital in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, comments claiming the attack never happened began flooding the queues of workers moderating Facebook and Instagram content on behalf of the apps' owner, Meta Platforms (FB.O). The bombardment killed at least three people, including a child, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said publicly. Images of bloodied, heavily pregnant women fleeing through the rubble, their hands cradling their bellies, sparked immediate outrage worldwide. Among the most-recognized women was Mariana Vishegirska, a Ukrainian fashion and beauty influencer. Photos of her navigating down a hospital stairwell in polka-dot pajamas circulated widely after the attack, captured by an Associated Press photographer. Online expressions of support for the mother-to-be quickly turned to attacks on her Instagram account, according to two contractors directly moderating content from the conflict on Facebook and Instagram. They spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, citing non-disclosure agreements that barred them from discussing their work publicly. The case involving the beauty influencer is just one example of how Meta's content policies and enforcement mechanisms have enabled pro-Russian propaganda during the Ukraine invasion, the moderators told Reuters. Russian officialdom seized on the images, setting them side-by-side against her glossy Instagram photos in an effort to persuade viewers that the attack had been faked. On state television and social media, and in the chamber of the U.N. Security Council, Moscow alleged - falsely - that Vishegirska had donned make-up and multiple outfits in an elaborately staged hoax orchestrated by Ukrainian forces. Swarms of comments accusing the influencer of duplicity and being an actress appeared underneath old Instagram posts of her posed with tubes of makeup, the moderators said. At the height of the onslaught, comments containing false allegations about the woman accounted for most of the material in one moderator's content queue, which normally would have contained a mix of posts suspected of violating Meta's myriad policies, the person recalled. "The posts were vile," and appeared to be orchestrated, the moderator told Reuters. But many were within the company's rules, the person said, because they did not directly mention the attack. "I couldn't do anything about them," the moderator said. Reuters was unable to contact Vishegirska. Meta declined to comment on its handling of the activity involving Vishegirska, but said in a statement to Reuters that multiple teams are addressing the issue. "We have separate, expert teams and outside partners that review misinformation and inauthentic behavior and we have been applying our policies to counter that activity forcefully throughout the war," the statement said. Meta policy chief Nick Clegg separately told reporters on Wednesday that the company was considering new steps to address misinformation and hoaxes from Russian government pages, without elaborating. read more Russia's Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media and the Kremlin did not respond to requests for comment. Representatives of Ukraine did not respond to a request for comment.

Based at a moderation hub of several hundred people reviewing content from Eastern Europe, the two contractors are foot soldiers in Meta's battle to police content from the conflict. They are among tens of thousands of low-paid workers at outsourcing firms around the world that Meta contracts to enforce its rules. The tech giant has sought to position itself as a responsible steward of online speech during the invasion, which Russia calls a "special operation" to disarm and "denazify" its neighbor. Just a few days into the war, Meta imposed restrictions on Russian state media and took down a small network of coordinated fake accounts that it said were trying to undermine trust in the Ukrainian government. It later said it had pulled down another Russia-based network that was falsely reporting people for violations like hate speech or bullying, while beating back attempts by previously disabled networks to return to the platform. Meanwhile, the company attempted to carve out space for users in the region to express their anger over Russia's invasion and to issue calls to arms in ways Meta normally would not permit. In Ukraine and 11 other countries across Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, it created a series of temporary "spirit of the policy" exemptions to its rules barring hate speech, violent threats and more; the changes were intended to honor the general principles of those policies rather than their literal wording, according to Meta instructions to moderators seen by Reuters. For example, it permitted "dehumanizing speech against Russian soldiers" and calls for death to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his ally Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, unless those calls were considered credible or contained additional targets, according to the instructions viewed by Reuters.

The changes became a flashpoint for Meta as it navigated pressures both inside the company and from Moscow, which opened a criminal case into the firm after a March 10 Reuters report made the carve-outs public. Russia also banned Facebook and Instagram inside its borders, with a court accusing Meta of "extremist activity." read more Meta walked back elements of the exceptions after the Reuters report. It first limited them to Ukraine alone and then canceled one altogether, according to documents reviewed by Reuters, Meta's public statements, and interviews with two Meta staffers, the two moderators in Europe and a third moderator who handles English-language content in another region who had seen the advisories. The documents offer a rare lens into how Meta interprets its policies, called community standards. The company says its system is neutral and rule-based. Critics say it is often reactive, driven as much by business considerations and news cycles as by principle. It's a complaint that has dogged Meta in other global conflicts including Myanmar, Syria and Ethiopia. Social media researchers say the approach allows the company to escape accountability for how its policies affect the 3.6 billion users of its services. The shifting guidance over Ukraine has generated confusion and frustration for moderators, who say they have 90 seconds on average to decide whether a given post violates policy, as first reported by the New York Times. Reuters independently confirmed such frustrations with three moderators. After Reuters reported the exemptions on March 10, Meta policy chief Nick Clegg said in a statement the next day that Meta would allow such speech only in Ukraine. Two days later, Clegg told employees the company was reversing altogether the exemption that had allowed users to call for the deaths of Putin and Lukashenko, according to a March 13 internal company post seen by Reuters. At the end of March, the company extended the remaining Ukraine-only exemptions through April 30, the documents show. Reuters is the first to report this extension, which allows Ukrainians to continue engaging in certain types of violent and dehumanizing speech that normally would be off-limits. Inside the company, writing on an internal social platform, some Meta employees expressed frustration that Facebook was allowing Ukrainians to make statements that would have been deemed out of bounds for users posting about previous conflicts in the Middle East and other parts of the world, according to copies of the messages viewed by Reuters. "Seems this policy is saying hate speech and violence is ok if it is targeting the 'right' people," one employee wrote, one of 900 comments on a post about the changes. Meanwhile, Meta gave moderators no guidance to enhance their ability to disable posts promoting false narratives about Russia's invasion, like denials that civilian deaths have occurred, the people told Reuters. The company declined to comment on its guidance to moderators.

In theory, Meta did have a rule that should have enabled moderators to address the mobs of commenters directing baseless vitriol at Vishegirskaya, the pregnant beauty influencer. She survived the Mariupol hospital bombing and delivered her baby, the Associated Press reported. Meta's harassment policy prohibits users from "posting content about a violent tragedy, or victims of violent tragedies that include claims that a violent tragedy did not occur," according to the Community Standards published on its website. It cited that rule when it removed posts by the

Russian Embassy in London that had pushed false claims about the Mariupol bombing following the March 9 attack. But because the rule is narrowly defined, two of the moderators said, it could be used only sparingly to battle the online hate campaign against the beauty influencer that followed. Posts that explicitly alleged that the bombing was staged were eligible for removal, but comments such as "you're such a good actress" were considered too vague and had to stay up, even when the subtext was clear, they said. Guidance from Meta enabling commenters to consider context and enforce the spirit of that policy could have helped, they added. Meta declined to comment on whether the rule applied to the comments on Vishegirskaia's account. At the same time, even explicit posts proved elusive to Meta's enforcement systems. A week after the bombing, versions of the Russian Embassy posts were still circulating on at least eight official Russian accounts on Facebook, including its embassies in Denmark, Mexico and Japan, according to an Israeli watchdog organization, FakeReporter. read more One showed a red "fake" label laid over the Associated Press photos of Mariupol, with text claiming the attack on Vishegirskaia was a hoax, and pointing readers to "more than 500 comments from real users" on her Instagram account condemning her for participating in the alleged ruse. Meta removed those posts on March 16, hours after Reuters asked the company about them, a spokesperson confirmed. Meta declined to comment on why the posts had evaded its own detection systems. The following day, on March 17, Meta designated Vishegirskaia an "involuntary public person," which meant moderators could finally start deleting the comments under the company's bullying and harassment policy, they told Reuters. But the change, they said, came too late. The flow of posts related to the woman had already slowed to a trickle.

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5. Putin's Mysterious Facebook 'Superfans' on a Mission  
(BBC, Jack Goodman & Olga Robinson, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been widely condemned in many parts of the world, but a network of Facebook groups run by people with obscure motivations would like to change perceptions of the country's leader. Millions of people have viewed posts committed to portraying President Vladimir Putin as smiling, benevolent and peace-loving. These are Putin's superfans - and we've been tracking what they do and where they come from.

The BBC has been investigating these huge pro-Putin groups with the help of researchers from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). ISD experts identified 10 pro-Putin public groups, boasting names such as Vladimir Putin - Leader of the Free World. The groups have more than 650,000 members between them. Content includes photos and messages praising the Russian leader, written in a number of languages, including English, Russian, Farsi, Arabic and Khmer. Not only are they popular, but they are very active. Over the past month, researchers counted 16,500 posts, receiving more than 3.6 million interactions. The overall aim of the groups seems to be to promote Mr Putin as a hero standing up to the West, with overwhelming international support. The images often show the Russian leader "walking confidently, holding puppies, staring longingly into the camera, saluting troops, and riding an array of wild animals, including bears and lions". These groups have gained more than 100,000 new members since the start of the invasion on 24 February. Digging into the details of the people driving most of the content, it emerged that many of the fans listed as administrators of the groups have duplicate accounts under the same name. The researchers found at least 100 such accounts in the network. These accounts generally follow each other and sometimes post heart-warming messages or send heart emojis to each other. And they administer these pro-Putin accounts alongside others pretending to be the Russian Federation or the Russian security services, which are clearly fake. Running duplicate accounts is a potential violation of Facebook's rules on inauthentic behaviour, the ISD says. Lead researcher Moustafa Ayad calls the practice an example of "astroturfing" - an online operation involving multiple accounts that falsely gives something the impression of wider grassroots support. The campaign "creates the appearance of widespread support for Putin and the Kremlin in the shadow of the invasion and relies on... inauthentic accounts to accomplish its goal", according to the ISD report.

A closer examination of some of the group admins shows some unusual activity. One, named Marine, who says her location is Syria, uses three separate accounts to generate support for the president. Her three accounts, in Arabic, post at the same time every day. Another moderator, Victoria, from Cambodia, has been pushing content in a Khmer

language group. Since 4 February, her posts have generated more than 34,000 reactions and have been shared more than 4,000 times. And Marine and Victoria jointly run a Khmer-language Facebook page, part of a wider pattern of co-ordination between some of the accounts. Posts are widely shared across different groups. For instance, another account listed as located in Bulgaria posted the same Putin image 12 times in the space of a couple of minutes. We tried to contact the people behind all of these accounts for comment, but didn't have much luck. But a man in Kenya, called Raj, who's in several of these groups and includes "Putin" at the end of his name on Facebook, did answer the phone when we rang. In a brief conversation, he called the president a "great leader" but said he didn't want to discuss the war. We emailed him further questions about his interest in Russia, but he didn't respond. Hasmik, from Armenia, says she's a journalist and now helps to run six pro-Putin groups. We asked who invited her to do it. She told us it was the people already running the groups and said that she wasn't paid for her efforts.

It's difficult to glean the motivations of the people behind the accounts. There is no obvious link to the Russian government and unlike other well-known Russian disinformation campaigns, the network isn't subtle; nor do the people involved hide their intentions. But we can't rule out the possibility that the network has some links to the Russian authorities or pro-Putin elements inside Russia. Many people around the world are drawn to Mr Putin and his anti-West view of the world. We contacted Facebook, which says it has policies against fake accounts and has suspended a number of accounts based on information from the report and their own investigations. "We're continuing to take strong action to prevent the spread of misinformation relating to the crisis in Ukraine," says a spokesman for parent company Meta.

In the course of our research, we came across another interesting phenomenon - Vladimir Putin impersonation accounts. Mr Putin is one of the few world leaders who doesn't use social media, and there's no official Facebook account in his name. He reputedly doesn't even have a smartphone. According to his spokesman, Mr Putin simply "does not need" social media as it "doesn't give him anything he doesn't have already". But some have filled the gap left by his online absence. The page on Facebook displayed above had more than three million followers until it was taken down for impersonation shortly after the invasion at the end of February. A significant number of its subscribers - more than 700,000 - joined during the pandemic, when the page was talking up Russian-made Covid vaccines. More recently, the page was posting messages amplifying the Kremlin's view of the war, and many commenting on it appeared to believe it contained the genuine words of the Russian president. Shortly after the invasion, a post on the page declared the goal of the "operation" was "peacekeeping... aimed only at the demilitarisation of a neighbouring country". This message was shared and liked more than 200,000 times. And the page also had a habit of tagging people in its messages about Mr Putin, including users identified by researchers as having duplicate accounts. In other words, it was interacting with the Putin superfans. We don't know who's behind this account. The people managing it are based in Russia and Latvia, according to the page's transparency section. Fan pages are fertile ground to drum up support for the Kremlin internationally, says Nika Aleksejeva, a researcher at the Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), part of the Atlantic Council think tank. "They may help to build public support in foreign countries for Russia's so-called 'military operation in Ukraine' unless taken down by mainstream social media platforms," she says. DFRLab documented how one Putin-impersonator account posting in Arabic had paid for adverts targeting users in several countries, including Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Lebanon, and Tunisia. The page had more than one million followers, but has since been deleted. Another prominent Putin page, posted in Arabic, used to be managed by a man who is also a big fan of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. It attracted almost a million followers before recently disappearing.

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6. China's Echoes of Russia's Alternate Reality Intensify Around the World  
(New York Times, Paul Mozur, Steven Lee Myers, and John Liu, 11 Apr 22)...

When Twitter put up a warning message atop a Russian government post denying civilian killings in Bucha, Ukraine, last week, China's state media rushed to its defense. "On Twitter @mfa\_russia's statement on #Bucha got censored," wrote Frontline, a Twitter account associated with China's official English-language broadcaster, CGTN. In a Chinese Communist Party newspaper, an article declared that Russians had offered definitive evidence to prove

that the lurid photos of bodies in the streets of Bucha, a suburb of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, were a hoax. A party television station in Shanghai said Ukraine's government had created the grisly tableaux to win sympathy in the West. "Obviously, such evidence would not be admissible in court," the report said. Only a month ago, the White House warned China not to amplify Russia's campaign to sow disinformation about the war in Ukraine. The Chinese efforts have intensified anyway, contradicting and disputing the policies of NATO capitals, even as Russia faced renewed condemnation for the killings in Bucha and other atrocities in recent days. The result has been to create an alternate reality of the war — not just for the consumption of China's citizens but also for a global audience. The propaganda has challenged the Western efforts to isolate Russia diplomatically, particularly in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, which have been fertile ground for conspiracy theories and distrust of the United States. "Russia and China have long shared distrust and animosity toward the West," said Bret Schafer, an analyst who tracks disinformation for the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a nonprofit group in Washington. "On Ukraine, it's a level above that — just the extent to which they have parroted some pretty specific and in some cases pretty far-fetched claims from Russia."

The campaign by China has further undercut the country's effort to present itself as a neutral actor in the war, eager to promote a peaceful resolution. In fact, its diplomats and official journalists have become combatants in the informational war to legitimize Russia's claims and discredit international concerns about what appear to be war crimes. Since the war began, they have parroted the Kremlin's justifications for it, including President Vladimir V. Putin's claim that he was fighting a neo-Nazi government in Kyiv. On Twitter alone, they have used the word "Nazi" — which Russia uses as a rallying cry — more times in the six weeks of the war so far than they did in the six months before, according to a database created by the Alliance for Securing Democracy. In an example on Wednesday, an official with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted a doctored photo appearing to show Nazis holding a flag with a swastika next to flags of Ukraine and the United States. "Surprisingly, the US stands with the neo-Nazis!" the official, Li Yang, wrote of the image, which originally featured a neo-Nazi flag in place of the American flag. The timing and subjects of many of the themes prominent in the countries' coverage suggest coordination or at least a shared view of the world and the United States' pre-eminent role in it. China's attacks on the United States and the NATO alliance, for example, now closely hew to those in Russian state media blaming the West for the war. At times, even the wording — in English for global audiences — is almost identical.

After YouTube banned RT and Sputnik, two Russian television channels, for content "minimizing or trivializing well-documented violent events," both RT and Frontline accused the platform of hypocrisy. They did so using the same videos of former American officials, including President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton, joking about weapons, drones and the killing of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the former Libyan leader. In another instance, the same accounts used a video of Joseph R. Biden Jr. warning in 1997, when he was a senator, that NATO's eastward expansion could provoke a "vigorous and hostile" reaction from Russia to suggest that Mr. Putin's decision to go to war was justified. China's efforts have made it clear that the White House's warning did little to influence Beijing. China's propagandists have instead intensified their efforts, amplifying not only the Kremlin's broad views about the war but also some of the most blatant lies about its conduct. "If you're just looking at the outputs, then that message didn't get through," Mr. Schafer said. "If anything, we've seen them sort of double down." The White House did not respond to a request for comment about China's support of Russian disinformation.

While the extent of any direct collusion between Russian and Chinese on war propaganda remains uncertain, the roots of cooperation in international media outreach stretch back nearly a decade. China's leader, Xi Jinping, pledged to deepen ties between Russian and Chinese state media on his first foreign trip in 2013 — to Moscow. Since then, the two countries' myriad state media organs have signed dozens of pledges to share content. Sputnik alone has reached 17 agreements with major Chinese media, which shared its articles over 2,500 times in 2021, according to Vasily V. Pushkov, the international cooperation director for Rossiya Segodnya, the state company that owns and operates Sputnik. The two have taken other cues from each other as well. In mid-March, after Russia Today began to use clips of the Fox News host Tucker Carlson to support the idea that the United States was

developing bioweapons in Ukraine, Chinese state media also began to pick up Mr. Carlson's broadcasts. On March 26, Mr. Carlson was quoted on China's flagship nightly news broadcast, averring that "it turns out our government has for some time funded biolabs in Ukraine." The next day, the English-language channel, CGTN, repeated a Russian claim tying the labs to the laptops of Hunter Biden, the American president's son. Russian and Chinese state media have also increasingly drawn on the opinions of the same group of internet celebrities, pundits and influencers, featuring them on their shows as well as in YouTube videos. One of them, Benjamin Norton, is a journalist who claimed that a coup sponsored by the United States government took place in Ukraine in 2014 and that U.S. officials had installed the leaders of the current Ukrainian government. He first explained the conspiracy theory on RT, although it was later picked up by Chinese state media and tweeted by accounts like Frontline. In a March interview, which China's state broadcaster, CCTV, trumpeted as an exclusive, Mr. Norton said the United States, not Russia, was to blame for Russia's invasion. "Regarding the current situation in Ukraine, Benjamin said that this is not a war caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but a war planned and provoked by the United States as early as 2014," an unnamed CCTV narrator said.

At times, China's information campaigns have seemed to contradict the country's official diplomatic statements, undercutting China's efforts to play down the links between its relationship with Russia and the brutal invasion. On Wednesday, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called the images from Bucha "disturbing" and asked for all parties to "exercise restraint and avoid groundless accusations." Only the day before, Chen Weihua, a vocal and prolific editor at China Daily, which is owned by the Chinese government, seemed to do just that. He retweeted a widely shared post that said there was not "one iota" of proof of massacre in Bucha and accused the West of "staging atrocities to jack up emotions, demonize adversaries and extend wars." Mr. Chen is one strand of a sprawling network of diplomats, government-controlled media, and state-backed pundits and influencers who have extended China's domestic narrative about the conflict to overseas platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Central to their message is that the United States and NATO, not Mr. Putin, are responsible for the war. One political cartoon, shared by state media and Chinese diplomats, portrayed the European Union as kidnapped by Uncle Sam and chained to a tank with a NATO flag. Another, from a Chinese diplomat in St. Petersburg, Russia, showed an arm with a stars-and-stripes sleeve stuffed up the back of a European Union puppet brandishing a spear. Other images portraying the European Union as a lackey of the United States came out of a number of official Chinese accounts in the run-up to a tense meeting between Mr. Xi and the European Union, in which Europe called on China not to subvert Western sanctions or support Russia's war. Maria Repnikova, a professor of global communication at Georgia State University who studies China and Russia information campaigns, said the two countries had "a shared vision of resenting the West" that drove nationalistic sentiment at home. At the same time, the shared messages have resonated globally, especially outside the United States and Europe. "It's not coordination but echoes of the similar sort of concerns or stance when it comes to this war," she said of views in Africa and other parts of the world. "China is also trying to showcase that it's not isolated."

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7. US Army Chief of Staff on Hand as Ally Lithuania Announces Training for Ukrainians (Stars & Stripes, John Vandiver, 11 Apr 22)...

Lithuania will host a mission to train Ukrainian soldiers to use new weaponry that the Baltic country's fellow NATO allies are sending Kyiv to assist in its war against invading Russian forces. Lithuanian defense officials announced the plan Sunday, the same day U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. James McConville was in the country for security talks. Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Sunday that it had concluded a separate training effort with Ukrainian forces in the U.S. The troops were being trained on operating maritime patrol craft and use of weapons systems, such as the Switchblade drone, that the U.S. is now providing to Ukraine. "To achieve maximum effect, we will soon organize military training for Ukrainian troops here in Lithuania," Lt. Gen. Valdemaras Rupsys, the Lithuanian defense chief, told local reporters. The effort will center on training Ukrainian military instructors, who can in turn pass on their weapons knowledge to rank-and-file troops in Ukraine, Rupsys told the Delfi news agency. Rupsys also held talks with McConville, who told reporters that the Pentagon continues to assess what the future American force structure will look like in countries such as Lithuania, which have been eager for a larger American military presence. "We

have rotational forces here, and our policymakers have said that they will defend every inch of NATO,” Delfi quoted McConville as saying. “And they are working through what that will look like as far as rotational or permanent troops as we speak.”

For now, there are no immediate plans for U.S. soldiers to join the Lithuanian initiative, which is expected to begin in the coming weeks. “We can’t speculate on whether or not that could change in the future,” U.S. Army Europe and Africa said in a statement Monday. The U.S. has long been involved in the training of the Ukrainian military. For years, the Army operated out of a site in western Ukraine that was focused on preparing troops to fight Russian-backed separatists in the eastern region known as the Donbas. However, because of security concerns, the American training was put on hold less than two weeks before Feb. 24, the date Russia launched its full-fledged invasion. The Russia-Ukraine war was preceded by a buildup of about 200,000 Russian service members and materiel near Ukraine’s borders on three sides. At the time of the halt in the U.S. training, about 160 National Guard soldiers were relocated from Ukraine to Germany, where they continue to take part in other Army instruction in Europe.

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#### 8. Western Nations Adapt Their Ukraine Help as War Enters New Phase (DefenseNews, Joe Gould, 11 Apr 22)...

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to send heavier weapons to Ukraine in anticipation of Russia focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the country. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid a surprise visit to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Saturday, where he pledged 120 armored vehicles and new anti-ship missile systems. This came a day after he promised to send an additional £100 million (U.S. \$130 million) of high-grade military equipment to Ukraine, saying Britain wants to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression. In the United States, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley forecast the war’s new phase will play out in flat, open terrain and will increasingly involve armor and artillery. On Monday, a senior defense official said the Pentagon will send arms to Ukraine for that fight, including more Javelin anti-tank weapons as well as counter-artillery radars. “I don’t think they’re in Ukraine yet, but they’re on the move,” the Pentagon official said of the Javelins. “That’s a very specific example of how we’re trying to help the Ukrainians in this particular new phase of the conflict.”

Thwarted in its early plan for a quick takeover of the capital Kyiv, Russia is resupplying and reinforcing its invasion force in eastern Ukraine with an 8-mile convoy of vehicles. The group, which includes command-and-control support and possibly helicopters for air support, is apparently headed toward Izium in the Kharkiv region of eastern Ukraine ? all while Russia is reinforcing its positions southwest of Donetsk with artillery units. The action comes as Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called for more weapons for his country, and stronger sanctions against Moscow, during meetings with NATO foreign ministers in Brussels last week. Ahead of the talks, Kuleba said his agenda was “very simple ? it has only three items on it: It’s weapons, weapons and weapons.” A \$100 million package of U.S. security assistance announced last week included Javelins, four counter-artillery and counter-UAV tracking radars, four counter-mortar radar systems, armored Humvees, and laser-guided rocket systems.

The Czech Republic became the first NATO member to send tanks to Ukraine, which included T-72 and BVP-1 infantry fighting vehicles, Reuters reported last week. The package of military aid Britain announced last week includes more Starstreak anti-aircraft missiles, another 800 anti-tank missiles and precision munitions capable of lingering in the sky until directed to their target. “Ukraine has defied the odds and pushed back Russian forces from the gates of Kyiv, achieving the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century,” Johnson said in a statement. “It is because of President Zelenskyy’s resolute leadership and the invincible heroism and courage of the Ukrainian people that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin’s monstrous aims are being thwarted.” It’s a trickier political question in Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz is reportedly delaying a final decision on whether to send German tanks to Ukraine. While the Defence Ministry argues it needs them for its own use, German Foreign Minister Annalena

Baerbock said Monday that Ukraine needs “heavy weapons.” “Now is not the time for excuses; now is the time for creativity and pragmatism,” Baerbock said at a meeting of European Union foreign affairs ministers in Luxembourg. Russia warned Thursday that supplying weapons to Ukraine would thwart ongoing peace negotiations between the two countries. “Pumping weapons into Ukraine will not contribute to the success of Russian-Ukrainian talks,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

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#### 9. Germany’s Baerbock Calls for ‘Heavy Weapons’ for Ukraine (Politico, Hans von der Burchard, 11 Apr 22)...

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Monday urged Western countries to supply Ukraine with “heavy weapons,” while issuing thinly veiled criticism of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who has delayed deliveries of tanks to Kyiv. “What’s clear: Ukraine needs more military material, especially heavy weapons,” Baerbock said at a meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers in Luxembourg, adding that “the terrible horror that we see every day” in Russia’s war against Ukraine made the need for such supplies “more than clear.” Germany has already delivered defensive weapons such as anti-tank missiles to Ukraine, while “heavy weapons” implies sending tanks, artillery or advanced air defense systems. POLITICO reported last week that Scholz is delaying a final decision on whether to send German tanks to Ukraine, despite pressure from his coalition partners the Greens, led by Baerbock and Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck. The foreign minister also issued indirect but harsh criticism of Scholz’s position: “Now is not the time for excuses; now is the time for creativity and pragmatism,” she said.

Scholz argued last week that Germany should reach a common position with allies on delivering tanks before sending them to Ukraine, while the German defense ministry, which is led by Scholz’s Social Democratic Party colleague Christine Lambrecht, argued that Germany could not immediately deliver tanks to Ukraine from its own army stock because it needs them for its own defense as well as for NATO tasks. A defense ministry spokesperson argued on Monday that supplying Ukraine with offensive weapons was complicated and would require additional training as well as logistical support for maintenance and spare parts. Yet Baerbock pushed back against that argument, calling for “creativity and pragmatism” to solve “issues such as replacement materials and joint training” in order “to support Ukraine as soon as possible.” Western officials have said that Russia is preparing for a major offensive in Eastern Ukraine in the coming weeks. The Ukrainian government has appealed to Germany and other EU governments to supply tanks and air defense systems to stop that offensive and also to be able to take back Ukrainian territories that are currently occupied by Russian forces.

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#### 10. Russia Could Triple Troop Numbers in Bid to Take Donbas, Say Western Officials (Independent, Patrick Daly, 11 Apr 22)...

Vladimir Putin is expected to double or even possibly triple the number of Russian troops in the Donbas as the Russian president resorts to a “diminished” invasion strategy, according to Western officials. The amassing of troops, however, will not necessarily give Moscow an advantage over Ukraine, with Kyiv’s forces having had success in pushing back insurgents in the east of the country, they said. The Russian leader has been forced to “diminish considerably” the plan in Ukraine, one official said, amid suggestions Mr Putin wants to take the Donbas region before May 9 – when Russia traditionally marks the Soviet Union’s World War Two victory against Nazi Germany with military parades in Moscow – in an attempt to claim victory for his so-called “special operation”. Another official said: “I would imagine that, at outside estimates, what you’re looking at is a force which is probably the Russians looking to double or even treble the amount of force that they bring into that Donbas area. “But I would note that that is going to take some considerable time to bring them up to that sort of number. “And even when they bring themselves to that number, there is a question over how effectively they can bring those forces into the battle. “The Russians have shown themselves to be not very effective in this invasion as to being able to use their numerical advantage effectively to actually bring about a decisive engagement.”

It comes after Downing Street confirmed further details of the Prime Minister's trip to the Ukrainian capital to meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky. Boris Johnson held talks with his counterpart over a dinner of roast beef after touring Independence Square on Saturday. The British leader was in Kyiv for around five hours, and travelled by car, helicopter, military plane and train, according to a No 10 spokeswoman. Western officials said they hoped that, with Russia's military regrouping and moving east, more European leaders could travel to Kyiv to show solidarity "on the ground" with Ukraine. While Russian troops are poorly-led and ill-disciplined, they are also becoming desensitised by the war, an official said, leading to "revolting" behaviour, such as the "targeting of civilians". The Foreign Office said it was "shocked" by reports of mass graves being found in the village of Buzova outside Kyiv. Local officials said bodies showing "evidence of execution" had been discovered following the Russian withdrawal. Buzova is near Bucha, another town where atrocities were discovered although Russia has claimed the scenes from the aftermath of its occupation were staged.

The UK will work with allies to "investigate war crimes and ensure justice is done", a Foreign Office spokesman said. The next phase of the conflict is expected to see focus shift to the south east of Ukraine, although it is not known when a fresh assault will commence. Western officials said that 37 to 38 Russian battalion tactical groups are "non-combat effective" – up by almost 10 on last week's estimate. The total force available is about 90 battalion tactical groups, with between 700 and 1,000 troops said to be contained in each one. One official said: "It is clear there is an intent to reinforce the Russian presence in and around those forces, both in and surrounding the Donbas. "We're already starting to see some Russian forces continue their attacks into the Donbas, and we are also seeing Ukrainian forces being effective in causing them problems. "I think the losses that we've seen and the scale of losses, regardless of the reinforcing of their forces into the Donbas, it is still unclear how they (Russia) are going to overcome some of the morale issues they will have with their troops. "And we've seen numbers of troops being unwilling to fight and refusing to engage in operations. "When they do start, with the scale of operations we anticipate in the Donbas, they will also have large logistic lines open up which will be vulnerable potentially to attack by Ukrainian forces."

Britain is increasingly worried that Russia could use white phosphorus munitions in the bombardment of the besieged Ukrainian port Mariupol. White phosphorus is used for illumination at night or to create a smokescreen, but when it is deployed as a weapon it causes horrific burns. Western officials think that, for Russia, bringing about the fall of Mariupol is seen as crucial for both freeing up troops for the fight in the Donbas but also for creating a route north for the Kremlin's forces as they look to form a pincer movement on Ukrainian defenders in the east. Meanwhile, the Russian military said it had destroyed a shipment of air defence missile systems provided to Ukraine by the West. The claim has not been verified. Russian defence ministry spokesman Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov said the military used sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles to destroy four S-300 air defence missile launchers on the southern outskirts of the city of Dnipro, which lies in the east of Ukraine. He said about 25 Ukrainian troops were also hit by the strike on Sunday.

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11. Russians Ready for New Offensive in Eastern Ukraine, U.S. Official Warns (Politico, Quint Forgey, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia has begun an effort to "resupply and reinforce" its forces in eastern Ukraine before mounting a new offensive in the Donbas region, a senior Defense Department official said on Monday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, pointed to open-source images showing a line of Russian military vehicles heading toward the Ukrainian city of Izyum — just outside the Donbas, to its northwest. Although Russian forces still remain north of Izyum, the official said, the United States assesses that the line of vehicles includes a command and control element and a support group battalion, as well as perhaps rotary wing aviation support and other infantry support. "We do believe that this is an early effort by the Russians to bolster their presence and their capabilities in the Donbas," the official said, adding that the developments are "clear evidence of what we've been saying for a while now: that the Russians are going to want to pour more of their assets into the Donbas." Russia's planned assault on the Donbas comes after

its forces retreated from around the capital of Kyiv in recent days after encountering stiff Ukrainian resistance. Their hasty withdrawal exposed scenes of apparent war crimes and other atrocities in Bucha and other suburbs of Kyiv. Now, the official said on Monday, “the locus of everything we’re seeing is on the Donbas region,” from which Russia launched its latest invasion of Ukraine in February, 47 days ago.

Before proceeding with a full-scale invasion on the country, Russia first moved troops across its western border into the Donbas, which is home to two breakaway areas largely held by Moscow-backed separatists: the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic. The United States does not yet “assess that a new offensive has started” in the Donbas, the official said on Monday. But the official noted that a “hot war” has already been underway in the region since 2014 – when fighting began between Ukrainians and the pro-Russian separatists backed by Moscow. The official also said the United States assessed that Russia had indeed appointed Gen. Alexander Dvornikov to lead its war effort in Ukraine, as was reported over the weekend. Dvornikov previously oversaw Russian forces in Syria, and his brutal tactics there have prompted fears in the United States that the invasion of Ukraine could become even more violent as the fight shifts eastward. But the official said on Monday that “it remains to be seen what sort of an effect” Dvornikov will be able to have on Russian forces, who have faced significant logistical and morale problems amid the protracted conflict. “They have high challenges to surmount, and the choice of a general doesn’t mean that they’re poised for greater success here,” the official said. “We’ll just have to wait and see.”

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## 12. Russian Forces Ramp up Efforts to Gain Control of Mariupol (Irish Times, 11 Apr 22)...

Russian forces are pushing hard to establish control over the southern port city of Mariupol, the linchpin between Russian-held areas to the west and east and already devastated by weeks of siege and bombardment. Thousands of Russian troops were massing for a fresh offensive in the east, according to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy on Monday. He added that Moscow said it would not halt its military operation in Ukraine for any further peace talks. British intelligence indicated that Ukrainian forces had already repulsed several Russian assaults in eastern regions. Britain’s defence ministry said Russian shelling continued in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. But Ukrainian forces had beaten back several assaults and destroyed tanks, vehicles and artillery equipment, it said. For now at least, the invading forces have abandoned their attempt to capture the capital Kyiv but they are redoubling efforts in the east. The invasion – which Russia calls a “special military operation” – has left a trail of death and destruction. Moreover, the attack has drawn condemnation from western countries and triggered concern about President Putin’s broader ambitions.

Russia’s defence ministry said sea-launched missiles had on Sunday destroyed S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems which had been supplied to Ukraine by a European country. The batteries were concealed in a hangar on the outskirts of Dnipro in central Ukraine, it said. The United States did not have evidence that any S-300 missile defence system had been destroyed by Russia, said a senior defence official. Washington believes Russia has started reinforcing and resupplying its troops in Donbas in eastern Ukraine, the official added, but that the US does not believe this is the start of a new offensive in the region. President Zelenskiy appealed to South Korea’s parliament by videolink to provide his country with military aid to assist Ukraine’s struggle against the Russian onslaught. About one-quarter of Ukraine’s 44 million population have been forced from their homes, cities turned into rubble and thousands have been killed or injured, many of them civilians. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed that the Kremlin would not halt its operation for any new round of peace talks. And he accused Kyiv of failing to reciprocate in previous sessions. Mr Lavrov told state television he saw no reason not to continue with talks. But although President Putin had ordered a suspension of military action during a first round in February, Moscow’s position had changed, he said. “A decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause [in military action] so long as a final agreement is not reached,” said Mr Lavrov. Austrian leader Karl Nehammer met President Putin in Moscow on Monday and was expected to call for an end to the conflict. It was Mr Putin’s first face-to-face meeting with a European Union leader since the invasion started. “This is not a friendly

meeting.” Mr Nehammer was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office, reiterating that he had hoped to help bring an end to the war or improve conditions for civilians. “The conversation with President Putin was very direct, open and tough.”

Mounting civilian casualties have triggered widespread international condemnation and new sanctions. Luhansk governor Serhiy Gaidai said shelling in the region was increasing day by day. “The most difficult situation is in [the cities of] Rubizhne and Popasna. They are being shelled constantly, round the clock,” said Mr Gaidai. He urged all civilians to evacuate. “Those that wanted to leave have already left, while now many are left in bomb shelters who are perhaps frightened to come out . . . or scared to lose their possessions.” Moscow has rejected accusations of war crimes by Ukraine and western countries. It has repeatedly denied targeting civilians and says its aim is to demilitarise and root out dangerous nationalists in its southern neighbour. Ukraine and western nations have dismissed this as a baseless pretext for war. German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock, speaking before a meeting of European ministers in Luxembourg, said Berlin saw “massive indications” of war crimes in Ukraine. Meanwhile, French bank Société Générale became the latest company to retreat from Russia. It agreed to sell its stake in Rosbank and the Russian lender’s insurance subsidiaries to Interros Capital, a firm linked to billionaire Vladimir Potanin. The invasion has triggered a wave of financial sanctions from the United States, Europe and Britain, prompting western companies to sell their Russian assets. Several European Union ministers said on Monday the bloc’s executive was drafting proposals for an oil embargo on Russia, although there was still no agreement to ban Russian crude. The World Bank forecast the war would cause Ukraine’s economic output to collapse by 45 per cent this year, with half of its businesses shuttered, grain exports mostly cut off by Russia’s naval blockade and destruction rendering economic activity impossible in many areas. The bank forecast Russia’s gross domestic product would contract by 11.2 per cent this year due to sanctions.

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### 13. Russia Says West Helping Ukraine Prepare Fake Allegations of War Crimes (Reuters, 11 Apr 22)...

Moscow said on Monday that the United States and Britain were helping Ukraine prepare fake claims about the alleged persecution of civilians in Ukraine to feed to international media in an attempt to smear Russia. Since Russian troops withdrew from towns and villages around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have been showing journalists corpses of what they say are civilians killed by Russian forces, destroyed houses and burnt-out cars. The West says the dead civilians are evidence of war crimes. Reuters reporters saw dead bodies in the town of Bucha but could not independently verify who was responsible for the killings. Russia’s defence ministry said Ukraine’s government was being directed by the United States to sow false evidence of Russian violence against civilians despite what it cast as Moscow’s “unprecedented measures to save civilians.” “The United States, which has many years of experience in organizing provocations with human victims, continues its campaign to create and promote false ‘evidence.’” the ministry said.

Ukraine says Russia is guilty of genocide and has called on the West and the NATO military alliance to give it more support. Russia said British intelligence was helping Ukraine to prepare new fake claims about alleged abuses in northeastern Ukraine. The defence ministry did not provide evidence for its claims of British and U.S. involvement. “New false staged provocations accusing the armed forces of the Russian Federation of allegedly cruel treatment of the population of Ukraine are being prepared by the Kiev regime under the leadership of British special services on the territory of the Sumy region,” the ministry said. Russia said Western journalists had been invited to the Sumy region in northeastern Ukraine to “conduct the filming of staged plots”. The ministry said Western media would publish such fake news shortly. It did not say which media.

It said that Russian troops had left the alleged scene of some of the abuses, the Ukrainian village of Nyzhnya Syrovatka, on March 20. “The goal is to further stoke Russophobia against the backdrop of the rapidly developing

economic crisis in Europe," the ministry said. Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands of people, displaced millions and raised fears of a wider confrontation between Russia and the United States. Putin says the "special military operation" in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia and Moscow had to act to defend Russian-speaking people in Ukraine against persecution. Ukraine says it is fighting against an imperial-style land grab and dismisses Putin's claims of genocide as nonsense.

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#### 14. Russia Claims It Destroyed Ukrainian Air Defense Systems (VOA, Ken Bredemeier and Jeff Seldin, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia said Monday that it destroyed several air defense systems in Ukraine over the weekend, ahead of what Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is warning could be the start of a renewed Russian offensive into the country's eastern region. The Russian claims could not be verified, but Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said the military launched cruise missiles to destroy four launchers Sunday on the southern outskirts of the central city of Dnipro and also hit systems in the Mykolaiv and Kharkiv regions. Zelenskyy pleaded Monday for more military aid from the U.S. and its allies, specifically requesting South Korean lawmakers in a video address to send more equipment that can shoot down Russian missiles. Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Monday it is seeing early signs of efforts by Russia to reinforce its troops in eastern Ukraine. The U.S. spotted a convoy north of Izyum with command-and-control elements, enablers, artillery, and rotary blade air support, according to a senior U.S. defense official. The official said there also are indications that Russian forces sent from northern Ukraine to Belarus and the Russian town of Valuyki are now moving toward eastern Ukraine. The official said, "We do not assess a new offensive has started" in eastern Ukraine but added, "What is clear is that the Russians continue to sink to new lows of depravity and brutality as we saw with the missile strike on a train station last week and their continued assault on Mariupol ... . "We're certainly bracing ourselves here for some potentially really, really horrible outcomes," the official said.

The U.S. official said Russia has launched 1,500 missile attacks on Ukraine during 47 days of war, destroying apartment buildings and hospitals throughout the country and killing thousands of Ukrainian civilians. Russia has acknowledged sustaining "significant" troop losses of its own. Russia said one of its latest missile attacks hit four S-300 launchers provided by a European country it didn't name. Slovakia gave Ukraine just such a system last week but denied it had been destroyed. Military analysts say that Russia's failure to capture the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and the bulk of territory throughout the country has in part been the result of its failure to control the skies over Ukraine to provide cover for ground troops. Nonetheless, its missile bombardment has virtually flattened some cities and one missile attack on a train station killed more than 50 people last Friday. Russia has not been able to stop the flow of more military aid to Ukraine, with eight to 10 flights arriving daily. Zelenskyy told the CBS News show "60 Minutes" on Sunday that Ukraine's fate depends on further Western military assistance. "To be honest, whether we will be able to (survive) depends on this," Zelenskyy said. "Unfortunately, I don't have the confidence that we will be receiving everything we need."

European Union foreign ministers are meeting Monday to discuss another round of sanctions against Russia. Meanwhile, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, the first such visit by a European leader since Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24. In a statement after the meeting, Nehammer said the discussion with Putin was "very direct, open and tough." Nehammer said his most important message to the Russian leader was that the war in Ukraine must end because "in a war there are only losers on both sides." There was no immediate comment from the Kremlin.

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#### 15. Russia Will Not Pause Military Operation in Ukraine for Peace Talks (Reuters, 11 Apr 22)...

Russia will not pause its military operation in Ukraine for subsequent rounds of peace talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday. Russian officials say peace talks with Ukraine are not progressing as rapidly as they would like, and have accused the West of trying to derail negotiations by raising war crimes allegations against Russian troops in Ukraine, which Moscow denies. Speaking in an interview with Russian state television, Lavrov said he saw no reason not to continue talks with Ukraine but insisted Moscow would not halt its military operation when the sides convene again. Lavrov said that President Vladimir Putin had ordered to suspend military action during the first round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in late February but that Moscow's position had changed since. "After we became convinced that the Ukrainians were not planning to reciprocate, a decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause (in military action) so long as a final agreement is not reached," Lavrov said.

Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it called a special operation to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities and root out people it called dangerous nationalists. Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance and the West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia in an effort to force it to withdraw its forces. Lavrov last week accused Kyiv of presenting Moscow with an "unacceptable" draft peace deal that deviated from agreements the sides had previously reached. Kyiv dismissed Lavrov's comments at the time as a tactic to undermine Ukraine or divert attention from war crime accusations against Russian troops. In the interview aired on Monday, Lavrov also said that calls by Josep Borrell, the European Union's top diplomat, for the bloc to continue arming Kyiv marked a "very serious U-turn" in European policy.

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PREPARE

16. Army Generals to Be Nominated to Lead European Command, Special Operations Command: Report (MilitaryTimes, Meghann Meyers, 11 Apr 22)...

The current heads of U.S. Army Europe and Africa and Joint Special Operations Command have been chosen for new posts, according to a Wall Street Journal report. Gen. Christopher Cavoli will be nominated to lead U.S. European Command, U.S. officials told WSJ, and Lt. Gen. Bryan Fenton will be tapped for U.S. Special Operations Command. The White House and Pentagon declined to comment on the nominations Monday. Neither has been officially sent to the Senate to prepare for confirmation hearings. Fenton, a career Special Forces officer, took command of JSOC in July, after serving in the defense secretary's office as an adviser. Prior to that, he was the deputy commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. Fenton would be the first Green Beret in nearly 20 years to lead SOCOM. The current head of the command, Gen. Richard Clarke, cut his teeth in the 75th Ranger Regiment, as did Gen. Tony Thomas before him.

Cavoli has led U.S. Army Europe since 2018. He became the head of the Army's combined Europe and Africa command when they consolidated in October 2020. An infantryman-turned-foreign area officer, Cavoli previously lead the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division. If confirmed, he would take over for Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, who has been at the center of the U.S. and NATO responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. EUCOM commanders automatically take on a second role as NATO's supreme allied commander. As the war in Ukraine has ramped up, the U.S. has mobilized more than 12,000 troops to Germany and eastern Europe. At the same time, there's ongoing discussion at the Pentagon and within NATO on what the U.S. force posture should look like on the continent going forward.

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17. Nato's 'Achilles Heel': Alliance Conducts War Games in Nervous Lithuania (Guardian, Philip Oltermann, 11 Apr 22)...

About 30km west of the Belarusian border, the enemy's tanks were rolling through the pine forests of Lithuania at

speed until a makeshift obstacle made of barbed wire blocked their path. Soldiers carrying bolt cutters jumped out of the armoured vehicle at the front to clear the road. Then, a deafening bang. In its rush to victory, the advancing party had neglected to check the sandy terrain underneath the roadblock for mines. Luckily, for them, this was merely a dress rehearsal for a showdown between Russia and the North Atlantic alliance. No live explosives were used in Nato's "Rising Griffin" manoeuvre at the Pabradė military base in eastern Lithuania. Instead, referees politely informed the tank commanders that their vehicles would have been ripped to shreds. The Russian enemy was being impersonated by American and Norwegian troops. The western defenders may have notched up a tactical victory against an eastern aggressor on this sunny April morning, yet Nato's security architecture has never looked more fragile than in the spring of 2022, especially when viewed from Lithuania, a country long considered the alliance's achilles heel.

An independent republic since 1990, the southernmost of the three Baltic states borders both Russia-allied Belarus on its eastern side and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on its western flank. On Russian television, pundits have openly urged the Kremlin to escalate the war in Ukraine by enforcing a military corridor along the "Suwalki gap" – Lithuania's short border with Poland – thus cutting off the Baltics from other Nato-allied lands. "Until last November, we had the Russian army quite far away from Nato's borders," said Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania's foreign minister. "Now the military activity is very close. To add to that, Lithuania lies between the territory of Belarus and the territory of Kaliningrad. Which puts us in a strategic situation that is, let's say, interesting." Since 2016, after Russia's annexation of Crimea, "enhanced forward presence" battlegroups have been stationed in four member states on Nato's eastern flank: Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The war in Ukraine has led the alliance to further bolster its presence in the region, with multinational battalions to be dispatched to Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. The military presence in Lithuania has been increased from approximately 1,200 to roughly 1,600 soldiers and equipped with new hardware, such as the German army's light and mobile Ozelot anti-aircraft system, which can be used to protect airports from aerial assaults. But the function of these military units remains that of a "tripwire": a reminder to hardliners in the Kremlin that invading what they may see as renegade breakaway nations of a former Russian empire would automatically trigger a military conflict with other western European states. But in their current state, there is little doubt the enhanced forward presence units would sooner or later be overrun. The scenario being rehearsed in the Rising Griffin exercise was a David v Goliath one, with the attacking force taking the role of the giant. The priority of Nato's troops in the manoeuvre, said one officer, was to "delay the enemy", not to hold the line.

As Nato members prepare to meet in Madrid in June, Lithuania, along with its Baltic neighbour Estonia, is calling on Nato to urgently adjust its posture in the region from deterrence to what it calls "forward defence". "What we're seeing in Russia and Belarus is now a dangerous country with the intention to attack other sovereign states," Landsbergis told the Guardian. "It's a double-edged sword: on the one hand Russia has proven in Ukraine that it is a declining regional power. On the other hand, it can still do a lot of damage on its way down, as it seems to have no regard for its own losses. We have to defend the Baltic states, especially those that are geographically interesting to Russia." In keeping with the "founding act", a political agreement signed by Nato and Russia in 1997, there are restrictions on how many western allied troops are allowed to be deployed to the Baltics, and how close they can be stationed to the border.

The enhanced forward presence in Lithuania, which is made up of seven European nations and led by Germany's Bundeswehr, has to be rotated every six months at considerable cost and effort, with hundreds of vehicles having to be transported by road, rail or air before each changeover. While countries such as Germany and the UK remain committed to the founding act, Lithuania and other states in the region say the document is no longer viable as a treaty. "We consider it null and void after what Russia has done," Landsbergis said. "The new reality we have to accept is that the treaties that built the old security environment with Russia are no more. We have to look at this

with new eyes. There has to be a permanent military presence with everything needed to defend the skies, defend the seas and defend the land of the Baltic states." Estonia's prime minister last week called for the three Baltic states to be handed "war-fighting capabilities", with divisions of up to 25,000 soldiers per country. "The question we have to ask ourselves is: what will be the new global security architecture of the world after this war?" said Landsbergis. "At the moment, we are merely reacting to what is happening in Ukraine. But that has to change. We have to start thinking in strategic terms."

v/r,

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Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Apr 13, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your April 13, 2022 news.

COMPETE

1. Putin's Bullying Backfires as Finland and Sweden Edge Closer to Joining NATO  
(CNN, Luke McGee, 12 Apr 22)...

When Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, his goals were clear. He wanted to bring his neighbor to heel, assert Russian authority in Eastern Europe and make the West think twice about expanding militarily and politically toward Russia's borders. But in one important respect, Putin's plan appears to have failed: The war has united the West against Moscow in ways that seemed unimaginable in January. Now, Finland and Sweden -- nations that are officially non-aligned -- are edging ever closer toward joining NATO, the US-led military alliance. Finland is expected to produce a report on the country's security policy this week, a key step on the road to the nation potentially applying for NATO. That report is expected to start discussions in Finland's parliament about whether to pursue membership in the alliance -- discussions which Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said she hoped would wrap up "before mid-summer." Finland's foreign minister Pekka Haavisto said Monday that it was "important" that neighboring Sweden was following a "similar process" which he expects to take time. "But of course we exchange information all the time and, hopefully, if we make similar kinds of decisions, we could do them around the same time."

Sweden holds an election later this year, in which NATO is likely to be a key campaigning issue, with mainstream parties potentially not objecting to joining the alliance. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson did not rule out the possibility of membership in an interview with SVT at the end of March. Sweden is undertaking an analysis of security policy that's due to be completed by the end of May, and the government is expected to announce its position following that report, a Swedish official told CNN. They said their nation could make its position public sooner, depending on when neighboring Finland does. Public opinion in both countries has shifted significantly since the invasion, and NATO allies and officials are on the whole supportive of the two countries joining. The only serious objection could come from Hungary, whose leader is close with Putin, but NATO officials think it would be able to twist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's arm. Given that Putin started his war demanding that NATO roll its borders back to where they were in the 1990s, the fact this is even being considered represents a diplomatic disaster for Moscow. And if Finland in particular were to join, Putin would find Russia suddenly sharing an additional 830-mile border with NATO.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned on Monday that expanding NATO wouldn't bring any more stability to Europe. "We have repeatedly said that the alliance itself is more of a tool for confrontation. This is not an alliance that provides peace and stability, and further expansion of the alliance, of course, will not lead to more stability on the European continent," he said. Rob Bauer, the head of NATO's military committee, told reporters on Tuesday that the alliance has not ruled out new members, but said it was ultimately up to Finland and Sweden to decide whether they want to join, Reuters reported. "It is a sovereign decision of any nation that wants to join NATO to apply for membership, which they so far have not done ... We are forcing no one into NATO," Bauer said. Nor has Putin's invasion motivated Ukraine to pull back from its desire for closer integration with the West. While the country is unlikely to join NATO, its efforts to join the European Union have accelerated since the start of the war. This would take a very long time and could also face stiff opposition from Hungary, which is already in a nasty battle with Brussels over its violations of the rule of law, causing the EU to propose suspending central funding to Budapest.

However, once again, the fact it's being talked about and the level of support among EU leaders and officials is another indication of just how united the West has become against Russia. It's worth noting that since the start of the war, the West has remained largely united in its response to Russia, be it through economic sanctions or military support for Ukraine. However, there are a few challenges coming up that will test how united this alliance against Russia really is. First, if it emerges that Russia has used chemical weapons in Ukraine, there will be enormous pressure for the West, particularly NATO, to take an even more active role in the war -- something the alliance has been reluctant to do so far. NATO members have already discussed red lines and what action should be taken in the event of chemical weapons, but those details are still private to prevent Russia from taking pre-emptive protective action. However, any NATO intervention would almost certainly lead to a less stable security situation in Europe, as the West would risk a military confrontation with Russia -- a nuclear power, which would likely respond by intensifying its attacks on Ukraine and possibly in other areas of traditional Russian influence. Second, the cost of living crisis in many European countries could soon test the unity of future Western sanctions on Russia and embargoes on Russian energy. If, ultimately, the economy of Western Europe is deemed more important than holding Russia to account for waging war on its peaceful neighbor, then Putin could to some extent get away with invading an innocent country. But for now, as that unity largely holds, it is clear that Putin's desire to belittle the Western alliance has backfired -- and that the strongman has secured pariah status for his nation, possibly for years to come.

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## 2. Finland Finishes White Paper Set to Kick off NATO Debates (Bloomberg, Leo Laikola, 12 Apr 22)...

Finland is set to kick off a process that is likely to culminate in an application by Russia's Nordic neighbor to join the defense alliance NATO. The government, together with President Sauli Niinisto, on Tuesday finalized a white paper on changes to the nation's security environment following its former imperial master's attack on Ukraine. The report will be sent to parliament and made public when officially signed off by the government in a session due to take place on Wednesday. While no proposal to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is set to be included, the government is prepared to later file an addendum on such a proposal should the required backing for it emerge in parliament, Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has said. More than half of voting lawmakers now support joining the alliance, according to an unofficial tally by Finland's biggest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

Finland has seen a tectonic shift in attitudes toward the membership in NATO following the invasion of Ukraine, with the latest polls showing a majority of Finns now backing it. With the white paper set to be used as a vehicle for the parliament to debate the issue, a potential entry application could be filed before the 30-member bloc is set to meet for a summit in Madrid June 29-30. The Nordic nation of 5.5-million people, which has the European Union's longest border with Russia, has been warned by its eastern neighbor against joining NATO, raising concerns about

potential aggression from Moscow. On Friday, Finland reported an attack on government websites and a suspected airspace violation by Russian aircraft. The changing security landscape and public opinion is also seeing governing parties move toward supporting a membership in NATO. During the weekend, Finland's Center Party, that's part of a five-party cabinet run by Social Democrat Prime Minister Sanna Marin, opened the door to a potential membership bid. In yet another sign of the change in opinions on security issues, Finns have also given a somber assessment of their eastern neighbor with 84% now seeing Russia a significant military threat.

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### 3. In Ukraine, Facebook Fact-Checkers Fight a War on Two Fronts (Washington Post, Naomi Nix, 11 Apr 22)...

First came a one-minute video taken on the streets of Bucha, a Kyiv suburb abandoned by retreating Russian forces. The footage showed numerous bodies, civilians in winter coats, scattered along the muddy roads like leaves on a fall day. Then came the deluge of misinformation: On social media, some argued the images were fake, that the bodies were actors pretending to be dead. Others falsely claimed the Ukrainian military had slain their own countrymen. It fell to Valeriia Stepaniuk, 22, to set things straight. Stepaniuk fact-checks content for Facebook as part of her job at a think tank called VoxUkraine. After scouring credible news sources — such as a BBC article that said satellite imagery disproved Russian claims that the Bucha footage was staged — she and a handful of colleagues are compiling a report to debunk the misinformation flooding social media. “It was hard to write about this, to see everything the first several times,” Stepaniuk said from her home in the Western city of Lutsk. “But now I understand I can’t ignore this. Everyone should see the photos and understand the scale of tragedy.” Stepaniuk is part of a small group of independent fact-checkers in Ukraine who have long worked with Facebook to identify falsehoods on their social networks. When such outside groups determine a post is false, Facebook decreases its visibility in users’ news feeds and attaches a warning label pointing them to an explanation from the fact-checker. The role of these fact-checkers has become more critical since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. VoxUkraine started as a blog by economists in 2014, when Ukraine’s president decided not to sign a trade agreement with the European Union, prompting a wave of protests. Now, the think tank is part of a nascent coalition determined to slow the spread of misinformation about the war. These groups bolster Facebook’s own algorithms and thousands of content moderators who police content that breaks its rules.

Before the war, there were no groups assigned to fact-check posts in Russia, according to a Washington Post review, and only two examining content in Ukraine: VoxUkraine and StopFake. Now, there are eight additional groups policing misinformation in the region. The stakes are high, as social media is increasingly becoming a tool of modern warfare. Ukrainians and Russians have both been turning to social media to win hearts and minds around the world as the bloody conflict destroys Ukrainian infrastructure, claims thousands of lives and sends refugees flooding into neighboring countries. Both VoxUkraine and StopFake have lost workers to the front lines. Those who stayed behind have had to fit fact-checking into days filled with planning for escape to Western cities or taking cover during particularly violent moments. “It was very frustrating moment because you need to come to terms with the reality of war,” said StopFake editor in chief Yevhen Fedchenko. “The challenge was how are we going to operate a business in the fog of war.” Meta spokesperson Ayobami Olugbemiga said in a statement that during the invasion the company has “been providing significant resources to fact-checkers covering Eastern Europe to increase their capacity to help slow the spread of misinformation about the war in Ukraine and help ensure their safety.” Facebook, which was recently renamed Meta, has long faced criticism of its role in spreading misinformation globally, particularly in the midst of elections and global conflicts.

Last month, the tech giant announced it had taken down a network of accounts that were operating from Russia and Ukraine to target people there with claims that Western nations were betraying their country. A pair of whistleblower complaints filed to the Justice and Treasury departments in December and February allege that the company has allowed sanctioned entities and individuals to spread Russian propaganda on Facebook and Instagram. The company has hired thousands of content moderators and has trained its algorithms to catch misinformation that breaks the site’s rules on hate speech and other issues. But it also started adding organizations like VoxUkraine and

StopFake following the 2016 election, paying independent news outlets and small media organizations to debunk misinformation. Those organizations are members of the International Fact-Checking Network, which sets editorial standards for fact-checking organizations and is run by the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit research organization. Facebook is also frequently their member organizations' largest source of revenue. VoxUkraine, StopFake and others get access to a special dashboard, where they see a list of potential posts and links in a specific region that could be debunked, according to representatives of several fact checking organizations. Then fact-checkers like Stepaniuk can pick what they want to focus on, relying on government records, press reports and software to help identify false statements, misleading news and doctored imagery. For example, Stepaniuk recently focused her attention on an article with anonymous sources posted on Facebook claiming the United States planned to send the Afghanistan military to fight in Ukraine. She and her colleagues began scouring the Internet for evidence that could support a written explanation about why it wasn't true. They found a news report about a news conference held before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in which President Biden said he would not send troops to Ukraine. They also noticed that Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, reiterated that argument in March. And they pointed out that the Afghan National Army had collapsed when the Taliban took over the country last August. They posted an article publishing the results of their findings.

Months before Russia invaded, the Ukrainian-based StopFake was already developing contingency plans in case war broke out. They acted on warnings from foreign intelligence officials about Russia's increasing aggressiveness, Fedchenko said. He took those reports seriously in part because they kept seeing Russian propaganda that offered new twists on old claims such as Ukraine is a failed, fascist state and the Ukrainian military plans to take back control of Crimea with force. "We have been looking at disinformation for eight years and for us it was obvious that it's not the end, it's just the beginning," Fedchenko said. "That gives you a very kind of special attitude because we have a very small team of people who are fighting against a huge machinery of lies." StopFake started working on an editorial plan to cover the war. The group also mulled potential measures to shore up the security of their technological systems. And they thought about how to ensure their employees could get to safety in the event that Kyiv, where the group is based, was surrounded quickly by Russian forces, Fedchenko said. Just a couple of days before Russia's invasion, traffic was unusually high at Russian state-backed propaganda channels on Facebook and YouTube, which were promoting false claims about the war such as that Ukrainians had attacked Russians, according to a Post data analysis. The day Russia invaded, VoxUkraine staffers spent their morning Zoom call developing new products to fight misinformation about the war on the Internet, said Svitlana Slipchenko, the head of VoxUkraine's fact-checking arm. The group decided to further expand their fact checking program beyond Facebook to emerging platforms such as Telegram, where it seemed Russia propaganda was migrating. It also decided to launch a podcast to tell Ukrainians positive news about the war.

After their meeting, VoxUkraine managers began calling on their staff members to check in. Many of them talked about their plans to flee to cities in Western Ukraine such as Sumy and Kryvyi Rih. Some privately told their bosses they wanted to take a mental health break for a few days before returning to work. For others, debunking viral falsehoods was a welcome respite from the chaos of the invasion, said Slipchenko. "In some days, I just wanted to sit at the floor and cry about all that's happening in Ukraine now," Slipchenko said about the early days of the invasion from her Kyiv apartment, where she has heard explosions and seen smoke billowing from the city streets. "The work was the main factor that helped me deal with this situation. I know that I'm on the informational front of this war." That day Maksym Skubenko sat in his apartment mulling his next move to fight the Russian invaders. As chief executive of VoxUkraine, Skubenko had already mapped out contingency plans to swap intelligence with the government, and knew his 25-person team could function without him. So Skubenko, 30, chugged a couple small glasses of whiskey and took a taxi to enlist. Instead of using a computer to patrol the digital front lines of Russia's war in Ukraine, he chose to fight with a gun. "We need to fight," Skubenko said in a Zoom interview. "We need to become stronger and stronger — even stronger than we are right now — and to fight them because they will never stop." Three employees of StopFake's 15-member team also temporarily left their posts to go fight in the war but Fedchenko replaced them by recruiting among alumni of the journalism school where he works.

After the conflict began, Facebook barred Russian state-controlled media outlets from advertising and said it demoted its content on its social networks. The company also started reaching out to a handful of organizations in nearby countries to ask them if they could also fact-check content appearing in Ukraine and Russia. And it added additional groups. Georgia-based Myth Detector is one organization that expanded its capacity to catch viral propaganda about the war. After the invasion, Meta expanded its agreement with the fact-checking site so the group could also debunk falsehoods appearing in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, according to Tamar Kintsurashvili, executive director of the Media Development Foundation, which started the site. To cope with the influx of Russian disinformation, the organization hired one additional Russian speaker and reallocated two others who speak the language to focus on fact checking, Kintsurashvili said. Latvia-based fact-checking group Re:Check was asked by Facebook to start checking content in Russia and Ukraine. Re:Check editor Evita Puriņa said their three-person team is still primarily focused on checking posts targeted at Latvian audiences, not the posts appearing in the other countries. Puriņa added that the group's resources are "quite limited" but they decided to add another fact-checker. "We realized soon enough we don't have resources enough to cover the war," said Puriņa. "Comparing to January, for example, I would say we have tripled our amount of work." Lead Stories, a global debunking website, has also started fact-checking Russian and Ukrainian language content. The group, which also has a partnership with TikTok, said last month it was onboarding at least half a dozen native speakers to handle posts about the war. "We're building the runway as the airplane is taking off," said co-founder Alan Duke.

More than a hundred fact-checking groups around the world have also joined in to help debunk viral rumors about the conflict in their respective countries. The groups are coordinating so they don't duplicate efforts trying to fact-check the same myths — a strategy they developed while policing misinformation about the covid-19 pandemic. Now, the groups are pooling their debunked posts into a database and posting them on the website, #UkraineFacts. So far, there are more than 1,000 debunked posts on the site. "The key lesson was like immediate collaboration," said Enock Nyariki, community and impact manager for the International Fact-Checking Network. "During covid, it was quite slow but I think this collaboration has benefited greatly from our initial working together." Facebook's fact-checking model — one of its primary methods of policing potential falsehoods on its sites — has some critics. Some have alleged that the outside groups can be too ideologically aligned to fairly determine what's true. Others question whether fact checking is a function Facebook should be taking on in-house. The issue has caught the attention of at least one member of Facebook's Oversight Board, an independent group of journalists, human rights experts and academics funded by the company and tasked with overseeing the company's content moderation decisions. "These organizations do not have any oversight," Oversight Board member Michael McConnell said about Facebook's fact-checking model.

On the front lines of the war, many are doing their best. Kyrlo Perevoshchikov, 23, spends his nights on a mattress on the floor in the underground shelter at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, where he is getting a degree in international relations. During the days, he goes back up to his dorm room where he reads the news, catches up with friends and fact-checks posts on Facebook. Sometimes, a loud siren warns him that it may be dangerous to be above ground so he heads back down to the shelter or to his windowless bathroom to take cover. Then it's back up to his dorm to fact-check. Last month, Perevoshchikov began looking into an online report that alleged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky fled Ukraine after Russia's invasion in February. Perevoshchikov debunked it by checking news reports showing interviews and news conferences held by Zelensky in his office during the first four weeks of the war. He also saw videos published by Zelensky's administration in which he mentions the popular viral piece of misinformation himself, Perevoshchikov said. Perevoshchikov, who may have to join the armed services when he graduates this spring, said informational warfare is just as important as combat on the front lines, he said. "It will be success for us that we prevent someone from falling into Russian lies and manipulation," he said. "But there is also a feeling that you are not doing enough — that you could not only write fact checking, but you could also volunteer or maybe help your soldiers."

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4. Romania Hasn't Always Seen Itself as a Safe Haven. War in Ukraine Has Changed That (NPR, Michel Martin, Liz Baker, Emma Bowman, Eliza Dennis, 12 Apr 22)...

Sasha and Eugenia had just crossed into Romania from Ukraine, carrying their 2-year old son and heavy duffle bags as they walked through a ferry checkpoint. Sasha, the father, says they decided to leave their home country a week earlier. It had been more than a month since the start of the Russian invasion, and the family had reached a breaking point. "Our child, he needs special care," he says through an interpreter. "And then, all of a sudden, we realized we don't have the medicine; it is not available anymore. And that is the moment we got triggered. We decided we had to leave." More than 4.5 million refugees have fled Ukraine since the war erupted in late February. The vast majority, some 2.6 million, have traveled to Poland. Romania has seen the second-largest influx. For many of the more than 690,000 Ukrainians who have passed through Romania, the port city of Isaccea is the final stop on a difficult journey. For others, like Sasha, Eugenia and their young son, it's a way station, one stop among many on a long, unpredictable search for safety. The couple, who declined to give their last names, came from a village near the ferry departure point in the southern Ukrainian village of Orlivka. Eventually, they hope to reach California, where they have family. They arrived in Romania alongside hundreds of others after a 20-minute ferry ride across the Danube River. The throng of new arrivals entered the country wheeling large suitcases, pushing strollers and carrying pets across a bumpy metal ramp. They were greeted by aid workers, who helped them navigate a maze of relief tents and trucks filled with supplies. Daniel Petrov, a local first responder, is in charge of the extensive operation in Isaccea — one that includes border officials, volunteers and medics from three different agencies that all teamed up to respond to the flood of arriving Ukrainians. In the first weeks of the war, the boat ferried some 800 people on a single trip some days, Petrov says. During those early days, he says, "It was, I must say, traumatizing for both Ukrainians and us — the authorities — on this side." The reason, he explained, "I would use only one word: empathy."

Radu Umbres, a professor of anthropology at the National School for Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, says he was taken aback by his country's warm response to the refugees from Ukraine. "The image that we have of ourselves is that in general, we're not especially generous towards foreigners in particular," he says. "We have this idea that developed, rich countries are the ones that help. But in this case, even a rather small and not so affluent country as Romania has offered quite a lot of support for this, for these neighboring people." Romania's embrace of refugees from Ukraine, Umbres concedes, stands in stark contrast to how the nation responded during Europe's last major humanitarian crisis, when millions of migrants and refugees from across the Middle East and Africa sought safety on the continent, including in Romania. "We had refugees from Iraq, from Afghanistan, from Syria, and the general experience was that they were not welcomed," he says. "To be honest about the matter, it's clear that the empathy that Romanians felt for Ukrainian refugees comes from a certain amount of shared cultural heritage," he says. "Ukrainians are very similar to Romanians in many ways. Of course, we have also some shared post-communist history, [which] makes them in a way very familiar." Umbres says the crisis has also brought back echoes of Romania's own troubled history with Russia — memories that remain deeply personal and deeply painful for many. "So many people have personal histories in which their ancestors have been, in one way or another, hurt by the Russian power, by this kind of authoritarian state. So this, again, helps empathizing with them." Of more than 600,000 refugees who have traveled to Romania, roughly 80,000 have chosen to stay. What's unclear is how large that number may ultimately grow the longer the war drags on. "It's quite possible that many Ukrainians might end up staying in Romania for a long time, given the fact that the Romanian economy is doing rather well in the past few years," Umbres says. "I think that if I look towards the future, I think there's a good chance that we'll have a Ukrainian diaspora living in Romania for some time to come."

About 200 miles southwest of Isaccea, Romania's biggest train station, located in the capital of Bucharest, has transformed into another central hub for Ukrainians fleeing the war. Almost every corner of the Gara de Nord station is being used to assist refugees. There are separate waiting areas for women and children, men and families, where refugees can rest, eat and breastfeed. Yellow-vested volunteers stand ready to field questions. An abandoned storefront now houses refrigerators of food prepared by World Central Kitchen — one of the American-based NGO's 42 distribution sites in Romania providing hot meals to refugees. At a medical tent set up by the local fire department, an EMT named Faisal Hawat has been treating somewhere between 60 and 70 patients a day. Many of these people, he says, are struggling with insomnia and anxiety. In the area sheltering women and children, 5-year-old Dana, who's traveling with her parents, happened to be in Sri Lanka when Russia invaded Ukraine. But her teenage sister is stuck in Kharkiv, one of Ukraine's hardest-hit cities. Dmytro Ishchuk, Dana's father, says they can't

find a way to get her out of the city. "They're just hiding in undergrounds, just waiting for a proper moment," he says, speaking through an interpreter. But he doesn't see such a moment in the near future. Sofia Kotlyarova, an 11-year-old singer and actor from Kyiv, is at the station with her mother and grandmother after her family spent more than a month volunteering in the Ukrainian capital. But after their neighborhood was bombed, says Sofia's mother, Ira, they decided it was time to evacuate. That meant separating from Ira's father, brother and husband, who are still in Ukraine. Under Ukraine's martial law, men between the ages of 18 and 60 aren't allowed to leave the country in case they are needed to fight. Kotlyarova's family has friends in Israel who are willing to take them in if they can get there. They aren't Jewish and don't have family in Israel, so they're hoping Sofia's fame can help their chances of getting in. But they've been disappointed before. The 11-year-old reflected on how quickly her family's lives have changed. Since the invasion, she says, her once-close friends in Russia are now ignoring her calls. "We always thought that Russia was our friend," Sofia says. "We will never forgive them."

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5. 480th Fighter Squadron Rapidly Deploys to Deter Russia on the Black Sea (Air Force Magazine, Abraham Mahshie, 11 Apr 22)...

As Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened Ukraine in early February, amassing some 150,000 troops along its border, worrying NATO allies, the U.S. Air Force needed to reassure eastern flank Allies, and fast. The 480th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, answered the call. They had one week to deploy to Romania with eight F-16Cs, 150 service members, and a million pounds of equipment. Seven days later, they were flying. "Usually these things takes months to plan," said 1st Lt. Jayce Webster, project manager for the mission support group "We had to plan airlift, plan ground movements, we had to plan the layout of everything within a week," he said. "So, when you talk about that agile combat, we were able to do that before the jets landed, and we started running." The 86th Air Base, as Fetesti is also known, also received a rotation of two F-35s as part of the air policing mission in mid-February. Romania is rapidly building up this base with new construction, but it's not yet ready for new tenants. There are only hangers to accommodate the Romanian F-16s, so scheduling maintenance is hard.

Still, the Black Sea ally was eager to welcome the added air power. Romania cleared out a building, initially provided all the aircraft fuel, and shared the few spare parts that coincided with their own earlier model F-16 Block 15s. The 30-year-old U.S. aircraft require regular maintenance on wiring and computer systems to stay fully operational. To limit downtime during the five-day wait for spare parts, an aircraft is designated to be "cannibalized" for parts. "It's just the avionics side, it breaks more often," said Master Sgt. Christopher Paden, maintenance production superintendent. "The targeting systems, the digital flight control computer is a common part we change." Now, close to 200 U.S. service members are helping to fly four daily NATO enhanced Air Policing sorties with Allies, protecting NATO's skies alongside Romanian F-16s and MiG-21s, and British and Italian Eurofighters at nearby Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base. "It's a daily integration with a partner nation," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. William Parks, 480th Fighter Squadron detachment commander, who uses a building where Romanian Airmen live and work.

The Romanian Air Force is looking to build its fleet of approximately two dozen MiG-21 Lancers with 49 second-hand F-16s in coming years. It's already taken possession of 17 F-16s. NATO began enhanced Air Policing over the skies and Black Sea coast of Romania and Bulgaria in 2014 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The mission differs from Baltic Air Policing, which began in 2004, and protects the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which do not have their own combat jets. "We're here just on the enhanced part of that air patrol, an extra visible and forward symbol to show U.S., Romanian, and NATO unity," Parks said. The mission includes training and exercising with Romanian pilots, what's known as "enhanced vigilance." "Because of the info exchange, the experience exchange," with USAF pilots, "... our troops get kind of like a second wind going towards progress," said Romanian Lt. Alex Nasturel.

Fetesti Air Base is just over 50 miles from the coast of the Black Sea, which is now threatened by a heavy Russian air- and sea-presence. Non-Black Sea NATO ships are forbidden from entering during wartime due to the Montreux Convention, and U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance flights over international air space on the Black Sea are believed to have ceased. Russian fighter jets in recent weeks have tested NATO air space, causing NATO aircraft to scramble in response. With Putin repositioning his troops in the east and south of Ukraine, Romania has also begun to move armored vehicles and land forces to its border with Ukraine. Small villages dot the expansive green fields near the Romanian 86th Air Base. Its symbol, the prickly-leaved pink thistle flower, protrudes through the grass in and around the base in the chilly spring. Despite living at a hotel an hour away in Constanta, along a strip of beach crowded with bars and clubs, the Spangdahlem Airmen avoid the nightlife. Their focus is on mission. Early the morning of April 9, before the 480th even began making its trademark jalapeno popcorn, Maj. Jared "Roam" Aschenbrenner and Capt. Sean "Sega" Sheldon were in a dark room watching slides and getting their "step brief" from Parks, who identified the Combat Air Patrol (CAP) zone in eastern Romania butting up against the border of Ukraine for the pilots to patrol. They would keep an undisclosed buffer distance from the border in accordance with NATO standards. Just across the Ukrainian border is the region of Odesa, thought to be a prime target in Putin's quest to cut Ukraine off from the sea and grab a prized port.

The total time for the CAP was four hours, meaning the pilots would make a 10-minute commute to the center of the country to hit a tanker over the Carpathian Mountains before finishing their sortie and high fiving their replacement enhanced Air Policing pair before returning to Fetesti. On their F-16C Block 50s were AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles, should they be needed. While air encounters have occurred between Russians and other NATO partners, Parks assured the Americans are trained to de-escalate. So far, the Russians have diverted after each intercept without incident. "We're here, we're present, we're showing that NATO's borders are secure," said Parks, who also flies patrols. "If an intercept has to occur, our primary job is to be de-escalatory. Let's go out, let's identify this person. Let's make sure he gets turned around and back to whatever nation or host country that aircraft is out of." With the sun just over the horizon as the hour neared the 0815 departure, 17 maintainers stood back from the two aircraft. Their job was done. The aircraft's GE engine had been roaring for some 40 minutes as all the checks were run. The chocks were pulled, and the two jets began to taxi, one behind the other. In minutes, they were airborne, launching in quick succession, then banking slightly left and rising almost vertically into the orange-hued clouds.

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## 6. Biden Appears to Label Russian Atrocities in Ukraine 'Genocide' (Politico, Myah Ward, 12 Apr 22)...

President Joe Biden on Tuesday appeared for the first time to label Russia's atrocities in Ukraine genocide. Speaking in Menlo, Iowa, about his Build a Better America agenda and efforts to lower energy prices, the president said a family's financial situation in the U.S. should not be dependent on another leader's attacks "half a world away," in remarks likely aimed at Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Your family budget, your ability to fill up your tank, none of it should hinge on whether a dictator declares war and commits genocide a half a world away," Biden said. Biden's notable shift in rhetoric comes as other administration officials have so far avoided using the genocide designation. From national security adviser Jake Sullivan to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, officials have said they're monitoring the situation and have yet to reach consensus on whether the atrocities in Ukraine "rise to the level of genocide." "Based on what we have seen so far, we have seen atrocities," Sullivan said last week. "We have seen war crimes. We have not seen a level of systematic deprivation of life of the Ukrainian people to rise to the level of genocide."

The U.S. has long been reluctant to designate genocides. Just three weeks ago, the Biden administration formally labeled the Myanmar military's actions against the country's minority Rohingya population in 2016 and 2017

genocide and crimes against humanity. A flood of horrid imagery poured out of Ukraine last week, with the scenes out of Bucha prompting Biden to say Putin should be put on trial for war crimes. The Justice Department also announced last week that it was contributing to international investigations into alleged war crimes, further escalating U.S. involvement in holding Moscow legally accountable. Tuesday's rhetoric from Biden, whether a slip up or intentional, isn't the first time he's led the administration in a shift toward stronger language. Biden was one of the first U.S. officials to call Putin a war criminal, language other administration officials began to use freely in the following days and weeks.

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#### 7. Ukraine War: US 'Deeply Concerned' at Report of Mariupol Chemical Attack (BBC, 12 Apr 22)...

The US and Britain say they are looking into reports that chemical weapons have been used by Russian forces attacking the Ukrainian port of Mariupol. Ukraine's Azov regiment said three soldiers were injured by "a poisonous substance" in an attack on Monday. However, no evidence has been presented to confirm the use of chemical weapons. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said officials were working to "urgently" investigate what she called "a callous escalation" of the war. The Pentagon called the potential use of the weapons "deeply concerning". Western nations have warned that the use of chemical weapons would mark a dangerous escalation of the conflict and have pledged to take firm action if Russia carries out such attacks. Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said the government was investigating the allegations, adding that early assumptions suggested phosphorous ammunition had been used. Phosphorus is not classed as a chemical weapon under the Chemical Weapons Convention, but using it as an incendiary weapon near civilians would be illegal. On Tuesday, pro-Russian separatist forces in Donetsk denied carrying out the attack.

The Azov battalion, which has been heavily involved in fighting in Mariupol and has strong ties to the far-right, wrote in a Telegram post that Russian forces had dropped "a poisonous substance of unknown origin" during a drone attack at the city's large Azovstal metals plant. It said that its fighters had suffered minor injuries, including shortness of breath. One injured man described a "sweet-tasting" white smoke covering an area of the plant after an explosion. Another said he felt immediately unable to breathe and had collapsed with "cotton legs". The reported incident - which the BBC cannot independently verify - came hours after a spokesperson for the Moscow-backed Donetsk People's Republic urged Russia to bring in "chemical forces" to the besieged south-eastern city. Eduard Basurin told Russian state TV the remaining Ukrainian forces in Mariupol were entrenched at the Azovstal plant and that Russia should encircle it and "smoke out the moles". Speaking on Monday night, President Volodymyr Zelensky said any use of chemical weapons would mark a "new stage of terror against Ukraine" and called on Western nations to arm his forces with the weapons needed to defend his country. "Unfortunately, we are not getting as much as we need to end this war sooner," Mr Zelensky said. "I am sure that we will get almost everything we need, but not only time is being lost. The lives of Ukrainians are being lost — lives that can no longer be returned." UK Defence Minister James Heappey ruled nothing out in terms of a Western response if a chemical attack was confirmed. "There are some things that are beyond the pale, and the use of chemical weapons will get a response and all options are on the table for what that response could be," he said. Last month US President Joe Biden said Nato "would respond" if Russia used chemical weapons in Ukraine. "The nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use," he said.

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#### 8. Pentagon Working With Congress on Additional Ukraine Funding (DefenseNews, Bryant Harris and Joe Gould, 12 Apr 22)...

The Defense Department's No. 2 civilian official said Tuesday the Biden administration plans to ask Congress for money to pay for U.S. troop deployments in Eastern Europe — on the same day Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., floated the possibility of additional Ukraine funding. Asked about the potential for additional funding to respond to the crisis, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said the Pentagon is working with Congress to backfill the cost of U.S. forces surged to Eastern Europe. Those forces were not included in the FY23

budget request, she said. "Congress on a bipartisan basis has been very forward leaning in terms of its interest in making sure they can help us be whole against those requirements," she said at a roundtable with reporters. "As we are able to kind of abrogate those costs, a lot of that is Army cost, in terms of Army movement. We make sure to capture those costs, and we're working with Congress." McConnell on Tuesday noted Congress may need to pass an additional funding bill to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "We may need to do another supplemental," McConnell said during remarks in his home state of Kentucky. "This is critically important that we win, that the Russians be defeated, that we do everything we can to punish them both on the economic side and military side." Congress finalized a \$1.5 trillion spending bill last month that provides \$13.6 billion in new aid for the Ukraine crisis. The money was in large part to restore military stocks of equipment already transferred to Ukrainian military units through the president's drawdown authority, while \$3.1 billion was to cover "deployment, operational, and intelligence costs" for U.S. forces deployed to Europe in response to the Russian actions.

Legislation supporting Ukraine and punishing Russia has become easy fodder in recent weeks for an otherwise bitterly partisan Congress to pass into law. President Joe Biden signed into law last week two separate bills penalizing Russia, which both the Senate and the House quickly passed before adjourning for a two-week recess. The Senate passed both pieces of legislation — one bill banning Russian energy imports and another suspending normal trade relations with Moscow — by a 100-0 vote. Separately, the Senate unanimously passed another bill last week intended to expedite military aid to Ukraine by easing statutory requirements under the president's authority to lease or loan defense articles to Kyiv. However, the House did not take action on the Ukraine bill before recessing. Hicks said the Biden administration is in a "continuing dialogue" with Ukrainian officials over the types of weapons it plans to send, and that presidential decisions on the matter are pending. "Yes, we will continue to look at the type of capabilities that the Ukrainians are asking for in terms of how to give them more range and distance," Hicks said. Washington is debating an increase to U.S. military deployments in Eastern Europe, which grew after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. That would represent another added expense. But any major changes in force posture will probably have to wait for the early July NATO summit in Madrid, Hicks said. "Given that we're in the midst of operations now, those operations may continue for some time as they are," she said. "I wouldn't anticipate drastic changes in U.S. posture, and certainly not before there's a summit where there's a general understanding of what allied posture is going to be."

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#### 9. Pentagon Does 'Not Object' to Potential Transfer of Jets From Slovakia to Ukraine (Washington Examiner, Mike Brest, 12 Apr 22)...

The Pentagon would not stand in the way of a possible transfer of Slovakian fighter jets to Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Tuesday. Slovakia, which has already provided military technology to the Ukrainian military that the United States has back-filled, could provide MiG-29 fighter aircraft, Prime Minister Eduard Heger said Monday, according to Politico, though it's unclear how many the country would provide. "We certainly would not object to it. We have no right to object to it," the defense official said, noting that the U.S., to its knowledge, was not involved in any of the discussion in facilitating the deal. Earlier during the war in Ukraine, the U.S. nixed a proposed Polish deal that would provide Ukraine with MiG-29 aircraft because the Polish wanted to transfer the planes to U.S. custody first. The Pentagon called the possible deal "high-risk" and not "tenable."

The defense official specified that the objection to the previous possible agreement was the role in getting the planes to Ukraine, not Poland's idea to provide the aircraft. "I want to stress again, from the very beginning, we said that these are sovereign decisions that nations can make, and we respect them, and if a nation wants to provide fixed-wing fighter aircraft to Ukraine, then that's up to them to decide and for them to speak to. And what our goal again, our objections to the previous proposal was that the country in question expressed the desire to transfer them into our custody for us to deliver to Ukraine," the official said. "That is what we objected to. We did not object to the idea of the provision of fixed-wing aircraft to Ukraine, and that will be a decision in this case for Slovakia to make," the official continued.

The Slovakian government is looking to move away from relying on MiGs because the upkeep on such aircraft requires a "relationship" with Russia, Heger said, noting that they're waiting two more years to receive U.S.-made F-16s. Ukrainian leaders continued to press Western governments for additional military resources as Russia has changed its operating tactics to focus on the Donbas region, the eastern and southeastern part of the country. The U.S. alone has provided \$1.7 billion in military aid since Russia invaded. Last week, Slovakia provided the Ukrainians with an S-300 air defense system, and U.S. European Command repositioned one Patriot missile system to Slovakia in return.

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10. Putin Says Peace Talks With Ukraine Are at Dead End, Goads the West  
(Reuters, Guy Faulconbridge, 12 Apr 22)...

President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday peace talks with Ukraine had hit a dead end, using his first public comments on the conflict in more than a week to vow his troops would win and to goad the West for failing to bring Moscow to heel. Addressing the war in public for the first time since Russian forces retreated from northern Ukraine after they were halted at the gates of Kyiv, Putin promised that Russia would achieve all of its "noble" aims in Ukraine. In the strongest signal to date that the war will grind on for longer, Putin said Kyiv had derailed peace talks by staging what he said were fake claims of Russian war crimes and by demanding security guarantees to cover the whole of Ukraine. "We have again returned to a dead-end situation for us," Putin, Russia's paramount leader since 1999, told a news briefing during a visit to the Vostochny Cosmodrome 3,450 miles (5,550 km) east of Moscow. Asked by Russian space agency workers if the operation in Ukraine would achieve its goals, Putin said: "Absolutely. I don't have any doubt at all." Russia will "rhythmically and calmly" continue its operation but the most important strategic conclusion was that the unipolar international order which the United States had built after the Cold War was breaking up, Putin said. Putin said Russia had no choice but to fight because it had to defend the Russian speakers of eastern Ukraine and prevent its former Soviet neighbour from becoming an anti-Russian springboard for Moscow's enemies. The West has condemned the war as a brutal imperial-style land grab targeting a sovereign country. Ukraine says it is fighting for its survival after Putin annexed Crimea in 2014 and on Feb. 21 recognised two of its rebel regions as sovereign. Putin dismissed the West's sanctions, which have tipped Russia towards its worst recession since the years following the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, as a failure. "That Blitzkrieg on which our foes were counting did not work," Putin said. "The United States is ready to fight with Russia until the last Ukrainian - that is the way it is." Putin, who had been ubiquitous on Russian television in the early days of the war, had largely retreated from public view since Russia's withdrawal from northern Ukraine two weeks ago. His only public appearance in the past week was at the funeral of a nationalist lawmaker, where he did not directly address the war. On Monday he met the visiting chancellor of Austria at a country residence outside Moscow but no images of that meeting were released.

Putin dismissed Ukrainian and Western claims that Russia had committed war crimes as fakes. Since Russian troops withdrew from towns and villages around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have been showing journalists corpses of what they say are civilians killed by Russian forces, destroyed houses and burnt-out cars. Reuters saw dead bodies in the town of Bucha but could not independently verify who was responsible for the killings. Ukraine says Russia is guilty of genocide and U.S. President Joe Biden has accused Putin of war crimes and called for a trial. Putin said he had told Western leaders to think a little about destruction by the United States of the Syrian city of Raqqa, the former de facto capital of the Islamic State caliphate, and in Afghanistan. "Have you seen how this Syrian city was turned to rubble by American aircraft? Corpses lay in the ruins for months decomposing," Putin said. "Nobody cared. No one even noticed." "There was no such silence when provocations were staged in Syria, when they portrayed the use of chemical weapons by the Assad government. Then it turned out that it was fake. It's the same kind of fake in Bucha." The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has found that poison gas was used repeatedly in Syria, including in Ghouta, an opposition-held suburb of Damascus. Russia has objected to those findings that implicated its ally Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Washington and its allies have denied targeting civilians in the 2017 air strikes on Raqqa, a Syrian city that had become the headquarters of the Islamic State militant movement the U.S.-led coalition was fighting. Putin, who says Ukraine and Russia are

essentially one people, casts the war as an inevitable confrontation with the United States, which he accuses of threatening Russia by meddling in its backyard. Sixty one years to the day since the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin blasted off into the history books by becoming the first man in space, Putin drew an analogy between Soviet space successes and Russia's defiance today. "The sanctions were total, the isolation was complete but the Soviet Union was still first in space," he said. "We don't intend to be isolated," Putin added. "It is impossible to severely isolate anyone in the modern world - especially such a vast country as Russia."

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#### 11. Putin and Lukashenko Describe Bucha Killings as 'Fake' and 'Staged by Englishmen' (Politico, Victor Jack, 12 Apr 22)...

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the mass killing of civilians in Bucha "fake" and praised Russia's "noble" war against Ukraine during a visit to eastern Russia with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday. "When it comes to Bucha ... it's the exact same fake as in Syria," Putin said, in reference to Russian claims from 2018 that the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian war was staged by foreign agents. Bucha was "a psychological operation staged by Englishmen," Lukashenko added. After Russian troops partially withdrew from Bucha, a town outside of Kyiv, earlier this month, authorities discovered roads lined with civilians apparently tied up and shot at close range, as well as mass graves of local residents. Russia has repeatedly denied it was responsible, but numerous media outlets have independently shown that it was unlikely the scenes were staged by Ukraine.

The Russian president was on a joint visit with the Belarusian premier to the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's far east to celebrate "Space Day" and discuss the two countries' space industries. "What is happening in Ukraine is a tragedy ... but they left us no choice," Putin said, adding that Russia's military "goals are absolutely clear and noble." He also slammed the U.S., alleging Washington was using Ukraine as a proxy conflict and was "ready to fight against Russia until the last Ukrainian" — while repeating claims it was "impossible" to isolate Russia with sanctions because of its size. Russia's economy — which has been hammered by sanctions, inflation and capital flight since its invasion of Ukraine — is set to contract by over 10 percent this year, the biggest drop in GDP in more than two decades. Putin also told reporters that negotiations with Ukraine had reached a "deadlock" due to an "inconsistency on fundamental issues" and suggested talks may take place in Belarus in the future.

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#### 12. A Fifth of Russia's War Dead Are 'Officers Sent to Command Putin's Troops in Ukraine' (Independent, Rory Sullivan, 12 Apr 22)...

More high-ranking Russian soldiers have been killed in the conflict, Ukraine's military has said, following reports that about 20 per cent of the Kremlin's war dead are officers. The Ukrainian army said that Colonel Alexander Bespalov, who led the 59th Guards Tank Regiment, and Lieutenant Colonel Vyacheslav Savinov, who worked in artillery reconnaissance, had died. Colonel Bespalov's funeral took place in the central Russian city of Ozersk on Friday, with his death first announced via a local messaging board post, which was later deleted. Their deaths come as the BBC Russian Service concluded that officers account for one in five Russian losses on the battlefields of Ukraine. In a sample of 1,083 dead Russian soldiers, there were 31 majors and 155 troops ranked between second lieutenant and captain, the broadcaster reported.

Experts believe the proportion of officer deaths could be slightly inflated due to the faster return of their bodies to Russia than those of rank-and-file soldiers. Speaking on Friday, Oleksiy Arstovych, a Ukrainian presidential adviser, said the Kremlin had refused to accept the corpses of 3,000 of its regular soldiers early in the war. "They said, 'We don't believe in such quantities. We don't have this number. We're not ready to accept them,'" he told The Washington Post. Moscow has been largely quiet about the number of casualties it has suffered since it invaded Ukraine on 24 February. In only its second update, Vladimir Putin's regime said 1,351 Russian troops had died as of 25 March. However, Kyiv believes almost 20,000 Russian troops have been killed so far in less than seven weeks of

fighting, more than the 15,000 Soviet soldiers who lost their lives in the Soviet-Afghan war, fought between 1979 and 1989.

Although Russia has not released a new death toll for some time, Dmitry Peskov, Mr Putin's spokesperson, said last week that his country had seen "significant losses of troops", describing it as "a huge tragedy for us". On Monday, Western officials confirmed that Russian forces had sustained "extremely high casualties", adding that they are becoming "increasingly difficult to lead". The remarks were made as the Kremlin plans to heighten its attack against the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

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## PREPARE

13. Army's Cavoli to Be Next EUCOM Chief and NATO Commander in Europe, Report Says (Stars & Stripes, John Vandiver, 12 Apr 22)...

Gen. Christopher Cavoli, a Russian speaker who has led the Army in Europe for the past four years, has been tapped to serve as the next head of U.S. European Command, according to a Wall Street Journal report. Cavoli would replace Gen. Tod Wolters, who is slated to retire, the Journal reported Monday, citing unnamed U.S. officials. The shakeup comes at a crucial time in Europe, where Russia's war on Ukraine has prompted the U.S. and its allies to send thousands more troops to NATO's eastern flank. If confirmed, Cavoli also would serve simultaneously as NATO's supreme allied commander. During his tenure at U.S. Army Europe and Africa, Cavoli has overseen a mission that was growing even before Russia's Feb. 24 full-fledged invasion of Ukraine. Additional units, such as the Army's 56th Artillery Command, have taken up new positions in Germany, marking a reversal from the decadeslong post-Cold War drawdown of U.S. troops in Europe.

In October 2020, Cavoli was promoted in connection with U.S. Army Europe and Africa's elevation to a four-star headquarters. Going forward as EUCOM chief, Cavoli is expected to play a key role in designing what the future U.S. mission in Europe will look like. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Army Gen. Mark Miley and other military leaders have said they anticipate more U.S. troops being based on NATO's eastern flank in the future in connection with concerns about further Russian aggression. That increase could involve rotational forces or a mix of revolving and permanently based troops. Cavoli, who was born to an Army family in Wuerzburg, Germany, during the Cold War, grew up at various military bases around Europe. A graduate of Princeton University, he served multiple tours in Afghanistan. He also is a foreign area officer and held a previous staff job as director for Russia on the Joint Staff. A replacement for Cavoli at Army headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany has not yet been announced.

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14. U.S. Amphibious Combat Group Deploys to the High North Amid High Tensions (Independent Barents Observer, Thomas Nilsen, 12 Apr 22)...

The North Atlantic with Iceland and northern Norway are critical communication links between North America and Europe in times of war. This winter, one NATO exercise has followed the other. The Norwegian-led Cold Response was followed by the Iceland-hosted, U.S. Sixth Fleet-led Northern Viking. Now, the largest warship that participated outside Keflavik last week sails into the waters of northern Norway with the U.S. 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, forces consisting of amphibious vessels, aircraft, helicopters, multi-role attack ships, logistics and a command unit. Training is set to kick off next week. "This is a very important allied unit from the U.S. Marine Corps," says Lt. Gen. Yngve Odlo, head of the Norwegian Operations Headquarters.

In case of war, Norway depend on reinforcement from allied forces. "Receiving and joint training with allied forces

is very important and contributes to high operational readiness. Norway, and especially parts of Nordland and Troms regions, are favorable training areas for several of our allied forces," Odlo notes. The amphibious assault ship "USS Kearsage" made port call to Tromsø on Monday. The dock landing ship "USS Gunston Hall" and the destroyer "USS Gravelly" are also taking part. With soldiers from the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit ready for fast reaction winter operations includes a tiltrotor squadron, the ground combat element, a landing team, aviation combat forces, and a logistic element. The training will last until early summer, the Armed Forces informs.

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#### 15. Albania's Former 'Stalin City' Looks West With NATO Airbase (AFP, 12 Apr 22)...

In an Albanian city once named for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, dozens of Soviet- and Chinese-made planes rust in the open air on a former communist airbase, some with flat tyres, others covered with dust. The site in the central city now called Kucova is being transformed into a modern NATO airbase, a symbol of Albania's westward shift -- and a key military buffer in Europe as Russia wages war in Ukraine. The renovation project was agreed in 2018 by the Balkan state and NATO, which has already committed \$55 million (50.4 million euros) to the project, according to Albanian sources. Construction began at the beginning of the year, ahead of Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine that has sparked fears of a spillover into NATO and EU member states. Though the timing of the Kucova base redevelopment was a coincidence, for some it is a welcome one. "The changed global security environment has now created considerable impetus for the completion of the (base) renovation plan," a NATO official in Brussels told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. The base, due to be completed in 2023, will give the "alliance an important strategic facility in the Western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Black Sea region", the NATO official said.

After decades of global isolation, Albania became a NATO member in 2009. It was shunned by much of the world under paranoid Communist dictator Enver Hoxha, who forged close ties with the Soviet Union and China before falling out with them over their apparent deviation from true Marxism. The country embraced the West after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, and today is eager to become an EU member. The defunct aircraft at the Kucova base are reminders of a chapter of Albania's history many are happy to leave behind -- and a signal to Russia which has sought to extend its influence in the region. "The construction of this base is a clear message to other players with bad intentions in the Western Balkans region," Albania's Defence Minister Niko Peleshi told AFP. The construction is certain to irk Moscow, which strongly opposes any NATO expansion into eastern and central Europe -- especially in the Balkans which has traditionally been torn between East and West. Today, Albania's neighbours Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia are all part of NATO too. For Seit Putro, who has worked in the finance department at the base for more than 30 years, it's a welcome confirmation of Albania's political allegiances. "Once in the East, we are now in our place, next to the West, which is a good step forward for all," he told AFP.

The 350-hectare (865-acre) site in the former 'Stalin City' was built in the 1950s under Hoxha with help from the Soviets, and completed later with a network of the same kind of underground tunnels that were dug across the country in case of nuclear attack. Once the NATO renovation is finished, it will function as a tactical operational base, kitted out with a refurbished runway more than two kilometres (1.2 miles) long, an updated control tower and new storage units. It will have the capacity to host state-of-the-art military aircraft and can also be used for refuelling and ammunition storage. Officials are also hoping the base, which once employed 700 people, will create new jobs in the poor region, 85 kilometres south of the capital Tirana. It will have a "very positive economic and social impact", said deputy commander of the base, Major Leandro Syka.

The aircraft now languishing on the airbase mainly consist of Chinese and Soviet MiGs, Soviet-made Antonovs and Yak-18s. At the end of the Cold War, the base had about 200 planes and 40 helicopters, which were put out of

commission as they were obsolete. About 75 remain today, and their fate remains uncertain. The authorities have to yet to decide whether they will be auctioned, put in a museum or turned into scrap metal. For some, they hold painful memories from past conflicts. Former pilot Niazi Nelaj remembers clearly his first flight aboard a Mig-15, which bore bullet marks from combat in distant Asian countries. But the 85-year-old is happy to see the airbase aligned with NATO, and he believes Albania's previous pivot toward the East was only an "accident of history". "Albania's natural alliance has always been and will be with the West," he said.

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Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

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**Subject:** EUCOM Daily News Report Mar 21, 22

Colleagues,

See below for your March 21, 2022 news.

COMPETE

1. Biden's European Trip Will Be Heavy on Displays of Western Unity but Could Be Light on Actions to Stop Putin's Ukraine War  
(CNN, Kevin Liptak, 20 Mar 22)...

President Joe Biden and his fellow world leaders hope to finalize and unveil a package of new measures to punish Russia, help Ukraine and demonstrate Western unity at a string of emergency summits in Europe this week. But aside from a dramatic wartime show of resolve, few observers believe anything the leaders can agree upon will be enough to end the bloodshed in Ukraine or dissuade Russian President Vladimir Putin from continuing his attacks that are increasingly harming civilians. Since the prospect of the NATO leaders summit was first broached roughly two weeks ago, American and European officials have been discussing potential announcements for leaders to make at the conclusion of the gathering, according to several people familiar with the plans. That could include new rounds of sanctions on Russian oligarchs, additional measures restricting the country's finances and new steps to limit import of Russian energy products. Discussions are also underway on what measures can be unveiled to provide more support for Ukraine, including new shipments of military assistance or financial aid to bolster the country's defenses. And Biden has left open the option of scaling up US troop deployments to NATO members along the alliance's eastern edge, reinforcing American commitment to European defense at a critical moment. But the stark reality that those moves are unlikely to curb Putin's war will loom over Biden's visit to Brussels for a snap meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, along with a special session of the European Council and a gathering of the G7. Biden could also add another stop in Eastern Europe, potentially Poland, officials have said. He departs Washington on Wednesday for the high-level diplomatic maneuvers.

While Biden has been successful in rallying European and Asian allies behind a punishing set of sanctions and unparalleled levels of military assistance, he and his NATO counterparts have drawn lines at where their support will end. And while all parties seem to support a diplomatic resolution to the crisis, US and European officials say the parameters of such a settlement remain murky. That leaves open how Biden's visit to Europe -- one of the inflection moments of his presidency -- can alter the course of the worst conflict in Europe since World War II. And it poses another discussion point that world leaders must begin to broach: What happens if, or when, Ukraine can no longer withstand Russia's assault? "They're going to have to look at what happens if Ukraine is lost," said retired

Army Gen. Wesley Clark, a former NATO supreme allied commander. "After they have weighed the problem of what happens if Ukraine falls, they have to consider what more can be done to sustain Ukraine in the fight. Yes, there's a risk. There's always a risk in dealing with Mr. Putin."

Biden was publicly challenged by Ukraine's leader last week to assume responsibility for bringing an end to the fighting. In an emotional address to Congress, in which he called for a no-fly zone and help procuring fighter jets, President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke directly to Biden, who was watching from his private library on the third floor of the White House.

"Being the leader of the world means being the leader of peace," Zelensky said in English.

Biden was also challenged by Ukraine's former President, Petro Poroshenko, to visit Ukraine as a "symbol of our solidarity" during his trip to Europe this week. Speaking to CNN's Jim Acosta Saturday afternoon, Poroshenko called Biden a "very good friend of mine and a very good friend of Ukraine," adding that a visit by Biden would be "an extremely right step to demonstrate that the whole world is together with us against Russia." Those personal appeals will have resonated with a man who vowed while seeking office to restore American leadership, renew US alliances and defend democracy from the creeping tide of authoritarianism.

Nowhere will that challenge be more pertinent than at this week's emergency talks, where leaders are looking to Biden for direction and purpose as the war in Ukraine grinds ahead.

"He's challenging Biden to live up to his responsibilities as a leader of the West, a leader of the democratic community of nations. And he presented the de facto challenge to NATO," said Ian Brzezinski, a deputy assistant secretary of defense for Europe and NATO in the George W. Bush administration. "He was saying if NATO is not up to this challenge, we have to think of other security arrangements," Brzezinski said. "What a powerful challenge to the relevance of NATO in this day and age. That sets the context for ... (the) summit meeting."

Yet as the summits were announced last week, some European diplomats revealed concern at what they viewed as a lack of major steps available for the leaders to take at the high-profile gathering, which both Russia and Ukraine will be watching closely. Major items that Ukraine wants, like help from NATO in establishing a no-fly zone or providing Soviet-era fighter jets, appear for now off the table as the US and its partners seek to avoid direct confrontation with Russia. That means any announcement coming out of the meetings would likely focus more on ramping up assistance that's already being provided, including military and financial aid, or applying new sanctions on Russia. European and US officials said discussions about announcements and a concluding joint statement were ongoing as countries look to settle on a decision or takeaway for the summit to produce. "The President is looking forward to seeing his counterparts face to face. I suspect they will have a number of new measures that they will be able to disclose and roll out during those conversations, but I'm not going to get ahead of them a few days in advance," US deputy national security adviser Jon Finer said last week on CNN.

Having a major announcement materialize during the summit could help underscore the current unity among the allies, which US officials say has surprised Putin as his military struggles with losses on the ground. "He miscalculated about the West. I think he thought that ... there would be some scolding, maybe a couple of sanctions, but he could withstand it, and he could continue, and he could move on," said Marie Yovanovitch, the former US ambassador to Ukraine. "Instead, he has inspired a resurgence of NATO. And the West is united in opposition and trying to provide not only sort of strengthening NATO and the flank countries on Ukraine's border, but also in providing support to Ukraine."

The upcoming summits will also present Biden an opportunity to take his counterparts' temperature on another

matter: What to do if Chinese President Xi Jinping decides to provide Russia military or economic support, as Putin has requested. On a 110-minute call with Xi last week, Biden laid out the "implications and consequences" of going ahead with that support, according to the White House. But punishing China -- the world's second-largest economy - - would be far more complicated than it has been with Russia, and would require the same unity with Europe, which hasn't always agreed with Biden on how to approach Beijing. "This is an incredibly important summit. It is taking place on an extraordinary basis in the midst of a crisis. It is partly to make sure that we and our allies [are] on the same page, which is good. But it's also very important for sending a signal to Vladimir Putin," said Kurt Volker, a former US ambassador to NATO and special envoy for Ukraine. Volker identified several messages the alliance must send during its summit, including recommitting to the Article 5 guarantee of collective defense and making clear the use of nuclear weapons by Russia would warrant a Western response. But he said NATO must also make clear that Ukraine -- not a member of its grouping -- is nonetheless a matter of critical importance to its members. "I think it's very important that NATO also send a signal about Ukraine, that Ukraine's survival as an independent and sovereign state in Europe is a NATO interest," Volker said. "We don't want to say what we don't do. We don't want to be too specific about what we will do. But we need to send a signal to Putin that we're not going to sit by while he destroys and eliminates a sovereign European country."

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2. On NATO's Vulnerable Eastern Edge. Baltic Nations Face High Stakes in Ukraine Crisis (Washington Post, Missy Ryan, Michael Birnbaum, Paul Sonne, and Steve Hendrix, 20 Mar 22)...

Late last month, Estonia's foreign minister, Eva-Maria Liimets, flew into Kyiv to join her counterparts from fellow Baltic nations in an expression of solidarity with Ukraine as tensions mounted with Russia. Like Ukraine, the three Baltic states — Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — were once part of the Soviet Union. Unlike Ukraine, they had joined NATO in the early 2000s, and now enjoy the protection the alliance's mutual defense guarantee provides. After she arrived, Liimets, a soft-spoken career diplomat, took a walk around central Kyiv's cobblestone streets in the cold night air. A tense calm suffused the city. Early the next morning, a little before 6 a.m. on Feb. 24, Estonia's ambassador in Ukraine called her with an urgent message: President Vladimir Putin's invasion had begun. Like it was for millions in Ukraine — where the airspace was now closed and roads were quickly jammed by people trying to flee — the high stakes of the slow-building showdown with Russia were starkly apparent. Within minutes, Liimets packed her bags and was on her way to Estonia's nearby embassy, and then, escorted by Ukrainian security, in a convoy headed west toward the Polish border. As they navigated droves of fleeing residents — it took more than four hours to get out of Kyiv — she could hear the sound of distant shelling. As Russia presses its invasion deeper into Ukraine, Baltic leaders say the world has finally woken up to the admonitions they have been making for years: that Putin is prepared to use force, like he did in Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, to advance his political goals. "Unfortunately, we were right," Liimets said in an interview. Putin's action in Ukraine, she said, "shows that Russia has not felt enough international pressure and they could continue with their ... plan to invade one of their neighboring countries."

As the global implications of Putin's assault set in, Baltic nations' appeals for greater deterrence are translating into additional troop and aircraft deployments. Already in recent months, new NATO and U.S. forces have been dispatched to the region. In Estonia, a British-led force of some 2,500 NATO troops conducts training and exercises with local forces. Additional NATO forces are there for the Baltic air policing mission, which now includes American F-35s and British and U.S. F-16s. There are also American F-35s in Lithuania. Such forces provide valuable reassurance for a country like Estonia, which has an active-duty force of 4,000 troops, and no combat aircraft. At the same time, the region's leaders are urging the bloc to do even more to bolster deterrence along its exposed eastern flank by abandoning a decades-old prohibition on permanent NATO basing there. They also want an expansion of the "air policing" mission over the Baltic Sea and the placement of NATO air defense systems, like Romania and Poland already have. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda issued a stark warning this month, saying that Putin "will not stop in Ukraine." The NATO reinforcements come after years in which Baltic officials say their fears were dismissed by much of Europe as paranoia or some kind of post-Soviet stress disorder. Even after Russia launched the first state-on-state cyberattack in 2007, a digital assault on Estonia over its decision to relocate a Soviet-era monument, NATO's military planners moved slowly, drawing up detailed defense plans for the region only after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Across the Baltic countries, residents are showing their support for Ukraine, hanging blue-and-yellow flags and protesting outside Russian embassies, and taking what action they can to push back against Putin. In Lithuania, a volunteer corps of online “elves,” including at least one member of Parliament, methodically debunks and derides Russian trolls and bots. Others post five-star reviews of Russian hotels and restaurants merely as a way of including photographs and data about Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilians. A popular app automatically connects users to one of 40 million randomly generated Russian phone numbers and provides tips on starting a conversation about Ukraine when the call is answered. “Our biggest weapon is that we understand the Russians and we speak their language,” said Aleksandra Ketleriene, 34, an online reporter for the national broadcasting service. A large portion of the region’s population remembers the Soviet occupation, which ended in 1991. During the decades of Soviet rule, the Kremlin lured ethnic Russians to the Baltics by giving them better jobs and better housing than what was available to local residents, the most rebellious of whom were sent to prison camps in Siberia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russians who were left behind, especially in Latvia and Estonia, posed a challenge for local policymakers, who faced the difficulty of integrating large numbers of people who looked to Russia as their political and cultural homeland. “The Ukrainians are fighting for us,” said Dainius Navikas, a management consultant in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital. Last week, he donated a vehicle to be converted to military use and delivered to Ukrainian fighters as part of a private aid campaign that has already netted more than 17 million euros from Lithuania’s 2.8 million citizens. “If they lose, we could be next.”

Others are making preparations for what they fear might be an eventual Russian assault. At social gatherings in Riga, the capital of Latvia, young families are swapping details of their plans to evacuate further west should it become necessary. Some are laying backup plans for their children to leave the country without them if need be. In the Estonian capital, Tallinn, residents are checking their basements in case they need to use them as shelters. In the university town of Tartu, one grocery store’s shelves were empty of iodine, the solution that protects against radiation exposure after a nuclear attack. “So far we are not being threatened, as far as I understand,” said Dima Golubevs, a 40-year-old Latvian video producer at a recent protest outside Russia’s embassy in Riga. But he noted that he was still a tiny bit nervous about whether NATO would come to the aid of Latvia in the event of a Russian invasion. “I can say 99 percent I feel safe,” Golubevs said. “But 1 percent is still a lot.” Even as European leaders show a united front in support of Ukraine, some Baltic officials feel a more urgent threat to their security than do other NATO nations. Last week, Lithuania’s Parliament approved a resolution calling for a no-fly zone over Ukraine, a step that the United States and other NATO leaders have said they will not take because it could trigger war with Russia.

While Baltic nations want to support Ukraine, officials also feel constrained in the military aid they can supply to Ukraine, mindful of the need to keep weaponry in reserve in case they need it themselves. More than a frontal attack on NATO, some officials worry about the possibility that Putin could launch a smaller maneuver to show that NATO is weak — for example, seizing an island off the coast of Estonia — or renew hybrid warfare, like the cyberattacks that struck Estonia in 2007. “If he wins in Ukraine, it will legitimize war for him,” as a way to achieve his goals with other countries, said one Baltic official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter frankly. Despite the stepped-up defenses, there is also concern that the West might relax its resolve, either due to a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia or because of the high cost of economic sanctions on Russia — with potentially problematic results in Eastern Europe. “My biggest fear is that the minute there is the slightest concession from Russia, countries will rush to lift these sanctions,” said Toomas Ilves, who served as Estonia’s president from 2006 to 2016. While the world may now share the Baltics’ perspective more than ever before, Ilves said, “there is little joy in being right.”

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3. ‘Do the Right Thing’: How US, Allies United to Punish Putin  
(AP, Josh Boak, 20 Mar 22)...

Just days before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, President Joe Biden quietly dispatched a team to European Union headquarters in Belgium. These were not spy chiefs or generals, but experts in reading fine print and tracking the flow of money, computer chips and other goods around the world. Their mandate: inflict maximum pain on Russian President Vladimir Putin, making it harder, if not impossible, for him to fund a prolonged war in Ukraine and denying him access to technologies at the core of modern warfare. There were intense meetings in February in Brussels, Paris, London and Berlin, often running six hours at a time as the allies tried to craft the details of a historic economic blockade, according to Biden administration officials. Some of the exports the U.S. wanted to ban were met with reluctance by the Europeans, who would essentially be telling their own companies to forgo several billion dollars in annual revenues from Russia. When there was a deadlock, U.S. negotiators would put Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo on the phone. "You can say 'no' now, but when the body bags are coming out of Ukraine, you're not going to want to be a holdout," Raimondo said she told allied counterparts. "Do the right thing." Everyone signed on — and before the invasion. Raimondo said what ultimately drove the agreement and the fast timeline was the threat of Putin's imminent attack on Ukraine. "We all got religion fast that it was time to band together and stick together," she said. "If you cause enough pain, isolate Putin, it will bring this war to an end."

The wealthiest nations in the world — outside of China — are directly confronting Putin on their preferred terms. They have imposed sanctions in which their strengths intersect with Russia's vulnerabilities. Russia is reliant on the U.S., the EU, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan for cutting-edge technologies and investment, so the allies decided to cut Moscow off. It's a strategic play designed to trap Putin in a downward spiral, as foreign investors pull out their money in response to the atrocities. It's also a remarkable show of unity that could be tested in the coming weeks by the allies' own dependence on fossil fuels. A group of economists estimated Thursday that EU countries have transferred more than 13.3 billion euros (\$14.7 billion) to Russia for oil, natural gas and coal since the war began, essentially funding Putin's war machine. While the allied talks in the lead-up to the war were critical, the EU was not just waiting around for U.S. direction to act. Bloc members had been consulting for months. One EU diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal talks, outlined in an interview as far back as January potential penalties that included the export ban, noting that the EU had held together its coalition on enforcing sanctions since Russia's 2014 occupation of parts of the Donbas region in Ukraine. But this time, the U.S. and EU responded to Russia's aggression with a novel set of policies to cripple Putin's ability to fight by denying it access to the semiconductors, computers, telecommunications equipment, lasers and sensors integral to war materiel. This is a supply chain squeeze that will force Russia to raid existing airplanes, tanks and other gear for spare parts essentially eroding its military and economic capacity. The same U.S. and EU officials dealing with their own supply chain challenges after the pandemic found a way to amplify the problem for Russia through trade regulations.

In a sign of early success, U.S. officials point to the closing of Lada auto plants in Russia and the more than 300 companies that have stopped doing business with Russia. The companies are not just Starbucks, but chipmakers such as Germany's Infineon that said it stopped all direct and indirect deliveries to Russia as well as technical support. Within days of the invasion, the allies blocked the foreign assets of Russia's central bank. Two senior Biden administration officials, who were not authorized to publicly discuss the strategy and spoke on condition of anonymity, said this option was not initially presented to allies out of concern that Russia could move its money ahead of time. They waited to present the asset freeze until the invasion started and the images of bombings and death compelled the Europeans to almost immediately agree. The freeze rendered half of the more than \$600 billion in Putin's war chest unusable. While the Russian stock market has been closed and the value of the ruble has plunged, the sanctions are designed so that the financial effects tightens over time. As long as Ukraine is able to hold out with military aid against severe casualties, the sanctions will do more to exhaust Putin. EU Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis on Thursday praised the "very good coordination" among nations and said the sanctions "are biting hard. Russia's financial markets are close to collapse." He also noted that the sanctions create costs for the allies, though the price is much less than the consequences of the war spreading. Yet with every new round of sanctions, the unity of the 27 EU members is tested ever more. If imposing a ban on Russian oil and gas comes up, Germany and Italy, both heavily dependent on Russian energy, will be in a tough spot to contain the drive of several eastern member nations like Poland and the Baltic states that want to hit Putin as hard as possible as soon as possible. The U.S. is less dependent on Russian oil and natural gas, making it easier for Biden to ban those

imports earlier this month. There is also the risk that the sanctions will fail to stop Putin or that Russia can still find ways to bring goods into its economy. Trade data analyzed by ImportGenius show that China supplanted Germany in 2021 as the leading source of exports to Russia — and U.S. officials say that Russia has solicited help from the Chinese government.

On Twitter, Olivier Blanchard, former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund and now a fellow at the Peterson Institute of International Economics, equated the sanctions to the bombing of German factories during World War II. Those bombings disrupted the German war machine in ways that made it impossible to prolong an extended fight — and economists had a role in choosing the targets. For all that has been done, questions remain about whether it is enough. Blanchard recommends expanding the export controls from defense-related production to “anything which disorganizes production” in the Russian economy. If Russian-made refrigerators need a gasket made in the EU, restricting access to that gasket makes it harder for the Russian economy to function, he said. Tania Babina, a finance professor at Columbia University who was born in Ukraine, said that sanctions tend not to stop dictators and she warned that Putin might ultimately become even more entrenched unless the U.S. and EU take more aggressive action. She said Europeans need to add sanctions that ban the use of Russian oil and natural gas. “He is going to throw everything to win, will send his grandma to fight if needed,” Babina said. “He cannot lose Ukraine. That is why it is so paramount to cut off Russia’s energy export revenues.” But Babina noted that there is another far more chilling cost to the allied strategy of sanctions: Ukrainian lives. “How many people do we let die before Putin runs out of assets?” she asked.

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#### 4. Russia-Ukraine War Puts Emphasis on Race for Hypersonic Weapons in the US (AP, David Sharp, 20 Mar 22)...

Lagging behind Russia in developing hypersonic weapons, the US Navy is rushing to field its first, with installation on a warship starting as soon as late next year. The United States is in a race with Russia and China to develop these weapons, which travel at speeds akin to ballistic missiles but are difficult to shoot down because of their maneuverability. The Russian military says it already deployed hypersonic missiles and claimed Saturday to have used one for the first time in combat against a target in Ukraine. The Pentagon couldn’t confirm a hypersonic weapon was used in the attack. The American military is accelerating development to catch up. The US weapon would launch like a ballistic missile and would release a hypersonic glide vehicle that would reach speeds seven to eight times faster than the speed of sound before hitting the target. In Maine, General Dynamics subsidiary Bath Iron Works has begun engineering and design work on changes necessary to install the weapon system on three Zumwalt-class destroyers. The work would begin at a yet-to-be-named shipyard sometime in the fiscal year that begins in October 2023, the Navy said.

Hypersonic weapons are defined as anything traveling beyond Mach 5, or five times faster than the speed of sound. That’s about 3,800 mph (6,100 kph). Intercontinental ballistic missiles far exceed that threshold but travel in a predictable path, making it possible to intercept them. The new weapons are maneuverable. Existing missile defense systems, including the Navy’s Aegis system, would have trouble intercepting such objects because maneuverability makes their movement unpredictable and speed leaves little time to react. Russia says it has ballistic missiles that can deploy hypersonic glide vehicles as well as a hypersonic cruise missile. The US is “straining just to catch up” because it failed to invest in the new technology, with only a fraction of the 10,000 people who were working on the program in the 1980s, said US Rep. Jim Cooper, a Tennessee Democrat who’s chair of a subcommittee that monitors the program. “If we want to pursue parity, we will need to back this effort with more money, time, and talent than we are now,” he said.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine serves as a backdrop as the Pentagon releases its budget proposal that lays out its goals for hypersonics and other weapon systems later this month. The three stealthy Zumwalt-class destroyers to be

equipped with the new weapons have plenty of space to accommodate them — thanks to a design failure that works to the Navy’s advantage in this instance. The ships were built around a gun system that was supposed to use GPS-guided, rocket-boosted projectiles to pound targets 90 miles (145 kilometers) away. But those projectiles proved to be too expensive, and the Navy canceled the system, leaving each of the ships with a useless loading system and a pair of 155-mm guns hidden in angular turrets. The retrofit of all three ships will likely cost more than \$1 billion, but will give a new capability to the tech-laden, electric-drive ships that already cost the Navy \$23.5 billion to design and build, said Bryan Clark, a defense analyst at the Hudson Institute. “The engineering is not that hard. It’ll just take time and money to make it happen,” Clark said.

The Navy intends to field the weapons on the destroyers in the 2025 fiscal year and on Virginia-class nuclear-powered attack submarines in the 2028 fiscal year, the Navy said. The destroyers would be based in the Pacific Ocean, where they would be a deterrent to China, should it become emboldened by Russia’s attack on Ukraine and consider attacking Taiwan, Clark said. The US focus on hypersonic weapons represents a pivot after hesitating in the past because of technological hurdles. Adversaries, meanwhile, continued research and development. Russia fired off a salvo of Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles in late December, heralding the completion of weapon testing. But Russia may be exaggerating the capability of such superweapons to compensate for weakness in other areas, said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst at the Lexington Institute. For the time being, Russia doesn’t have many of the weapons, and it’s unclear how effective they are, he said.

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#### 5. Pentagon’s Work With Ukraine’s Biological Facilities Becomes Flashpoint in Russia’s Information War (Wall Street Journal, Sharon Weinberger, 20 Mar 22)...

On his first official visit abroad, the new senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, was taken to a facility in Ukraine where the U.S. helped scientists working with dangerous biological materials. But rather than produce biological weapons, U.S. officials in that ramshackle building were trying to prevent lethal pathogens from falling into the hands of terrorists. “I removed a tray of glass vials containing *Bacillus anthracis*, which is the bacterium that causes the anthrax,” recalls Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official who was in charge of the U.S.-funded program that worked with the Ukrainian government. Mr. Weber said he showed the tray “to a very concerned-looking young senator.” Mr. Obama himself recalled seeing in his 2005 trip to Ukraine “test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded.” A decades-old Pentagon program that was used to secure biological weapons across the former Soviet Union — and to build trust between Washington and Moscow after the Cold War — has instead become a new flashpoint in an information war between the two countries in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Moscow has accused the Pentagon of funding weapons work in Ukraine’s biological laboratories. “These were not peaceful experiments,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month. China, whose leader Xi Jinping has cultivated a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has echoed those allegations. “Russia has found during its military operations that the U.S. uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans,” the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters.

U.S. officials have flatly denied those claims and warned that Moscow could use its allegations to justify its own use of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine. “We believe that Moscow may be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon and then falsely blame Ukraine to justify escalating its attacks on the Ukrainian people,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week. “Manufacturing events and creating false narratives of genocide to justify greater use of military force is a tactic that Russia has used before.” The allegations have shocked those who are most familiar with the Pentagon’s post-Cold War initiative, called the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. That is because not only has Russia been aware of the Pentagon’s work securing chemical, biological and nuclear facilities across the former Soviet Union, but it had also been its beneficiary for many years. “They’re outrageous claims,” said Robert Pope, the head of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, or DTRA, the arm of the Pentagon in charge of running the program. “We were created 30 years ago to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and Russia knows well we eliminate weapons of mass destruction.” The program, which dates back to 1991 and continues today, stretches across the former Soviet Union. Since the program started, the Pentagon has spent approximately \$12

billion on securing material used in weapons of mass destruction in post-Soviet republics, according to a DTRA spokeswoman. Of those funds, about \$200 million has been spent on the biological work in Ukraine since 2005. The funds have supported dozens of labs, health facilities and diagnostic sites around the country, the DTRA spokeswoman said.

Mr. Weber, who was in charge of negotiating the initial agreement with Kyiv to work on securing the country's biological materials and facilities, said that work expanded to Ukraine after the 9/11 attacks, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. U.S. policy makers grew worried about the potential for terrorists to steal biological materials—fears that were heightened after letters containing anthrax were sent in the U.S. mail to congressional offices and media outlets. The FBI eventually concluded that an American scientist employed at a military lab sent the letters.

The president of Ukraine at the time, Leonid Kuchma, concerned about the threat of terrorism in his own country, asked the U.S. for help. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, Ukraine had been starved of the funds needed to secure its biological facilities. Mr. Weber put together a team that visited Ukraine's biological and chemical facilities, which ranged from large laboratories to small veterinary research centers. "We found that a number of them had dangerous pathogen collections left over from Soviet days," he said. "They were in pretty bad shape."

Ukraine's laboratories—unlike some in other former Soviet republics—weren't directly involved in the Cold War biological-weapons program, but they did have pathogens that fed into offensive work, according to Mr. Weber. Those pathogens, like anthrax, could pose a threat if released, whether accidentally or on purpose. The focus of U.S. work in Ukraine was to consolidate that biological material, much of it related to agriculture, into secure facilities, which the U.S. would pay to build or upgrade. Paul McNelly, who from 1995 to 2003 directed the Defense Department's chemical and biological elimination programs in Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, said he was stunned with what he saw inside the former Soviet facilities.

"You would walk into these places and the refrigerators that stored these dangerous pathogens, they had no locks on them at all," Mr. McNelly said. "There would be vials that were labeled tularemia, plague, different things like that. And these people, most of them, weren't masked. Their gowns were antiquated." He added: "It was horrible." As part of the program, the Pentagon spent \$1 billion to build the Russians a facility in Shchuchye, Siberia, to demilitarize some two million chemical weapons. By the time it was done in 2009, ties with Moscow were growing tense. The price of oil was going up, giving Russia more revenue to wean itself off foreign assistance. At the same time, Mr. Putin was consolidating power.

As a result, the Russian government became a less-willing partner to the Pentagon's drive to secure the deadly materials, according to James Tegnalia, who served as the head of DTRA from 2005 to 2009. "They wanted our money, but they didn't want to admit that we built the facility," Mr. Tegnalia said. "You could see that they were getting ready to pull back."

Russia's Foreign Ministry had in the past praised the program. But by 2012, Moscow declined to renew cooperation, saying it could pay for the work on its own. In 2014, the year Moscow illegally annexed Crimea and began backing separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region, the program in Russia drew to a close. A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., didn't respond to a request for comment on the Pentagon program. Yet even with that chapter of its cooperation over, the Russian claims about the Pentagon conducting secret weapons work in Ukraine came as a surprise not only to those who have worked on the program but also to other Western officials. The Kremlin has in the past used such charges as cover for its own actions, they say. "We are concerned that Moscow could stage a false-flag operation, possibly including chemical weapons," North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week.

U.S. officials have declined to discuss what specific intelligence, if any, they have to indicate Russia might be preparing to deploy chemical or other unconventional weapons to Ukraine. But they say Russia has a history of using chemical weapons, including against Mr. Putin's domestic political opponents, and it has encouraged their use in Syria by President Bashar al-Assad's government. The Russian government shot back against the U.S. allegations, denying plans to use chemical weapons. In a post last week on its official Telegram channel, the Russian Defense Ministry said the units fighting in Ukraine "do not have chemical munitions." Mr. Tegnelia, the former DTRA director, views Russia's allegations as a path to an even more dangerous escalation. "If you see them using chemical weapons in Ukraine, watch out," he said, "because they're only one step away from nuclear weapons."

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#### 6. West Hits Vladimir Putin's Fake News Factories With Wave of Sanctions (Guardian, Jon Unge, 20 Mar 22)...

Twelve key disinformation outlets used to bolster Vladimir Putin have been hit with sanctions in an online crackdown on "false and misleading" reports claimed to be orchestrated by Russian intelligence. The Foreign Office announced last week that sanctions would be imposed on the Internet Research Agency, the notorious Russian-based troll factory. Two other alleged disinformation websites, New Eastern Outlook and Oriental Review, were also targeted. The Internet Research Agency has been exposed in the past for paying Russia-based bloggers £500 a month to flood the internet with pro-Putin comments on chat forums, social networks and the comment sections of western publications. Government investigators also claim Russian intelligence supports international news and analysis websites which promote the Kremlin's view of the Ukraine invasion. Tom Southern, of the Centre for Information Resilience, a non-profit UK social enterprise which counters disinformation, said the impact of Russian information manipulation campaigns in the Ukraine conflict was being blunted by concerted action by governments and social media companies. "This seems to be a turning point against this fake news," he said.

The US treasury has imposed sanctions on the three outlets identified by the UK authorities. It has also taken action against at least nine others, five of which have been targeted with sanctions since the Ukraine invasion. One of the websites sanctioned by the US is the Strategic Culture Foundation, which describes itself as a "platform for extensive analysis on Eurasian and global affairs". The website has cited Russian claims of a "covert project" to turn Ukraine into a nuclear power. One of its authors also claimed the novichok poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury in March 2018 was likely to be a British "false flag" operation to "incriminate, demonise and delegitimise Russia". The US treasury describes the website as an online journal registered in Russia which is directed by the country's foreign intelligence service. It states: "It publishes conspiracy theorists, giving them a broader platform to spread disinformation, while trying to obscure the Russian origin of the journal so that readers may be more likely to trust the sourcing." The Twitter and Facebook accounts of the website have been suspended since September 2020. The Strategic Culture Foundation did not respond to a request for comment, but says on its website that allegations it was connected with Russian intelligence services were "unsubstantiated" and were "a glimpse into the dystopian future of suppressing dissident voices by governments previously known as democratic".

American officials have also sanctioned three other outlets claimed to be linked to the Strategic Culture Foundation: the news outlets SouthFront, NewsFront and InfoRos. All three are alleged by US officials to be connected to Russian intelligence. Bret Schafer, a senior fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a US group that tracks online disinformation, said it did not appear the tactics previously used to interfere in the American electoral system – with thousands of accounts on numerous platforms – were being widely deployed for the Ukraine conflict. He said Russia-backed websites were being used to get false information and propaganda more widely disseminated, but were being routinely blocked on social media. "They are trying to get dirty information into the online ecosystem and hope it is picked up by websites and individuals with larger reach," he explained. The Russian state-backed news channel RT had its licence to broadcast in the UK revoked by media regulator Ofcom last week. Analysts said the channel's output was the "tip of the iceberg" in the Kremlin's propaganda campaign. The Ukraine government

has faced disinformation attacks, including a faked video circulated online last week of president Volodymyr Zelenskiy advising his soldiers to lay down their arms. It was quickly dismissed by Zelenskiy as a “childish provocation”. Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, last week said the government was taking action against Russian propaganda, from both the Kremlin’s press office and online disinformation outlets. She said: “We are going further and faster than ever in hitting those closest to Putin – from major oligarchs, to his prime minister, and the propagandists who peddle his lies and disinformation. We are holding them to account for their complicity in Russia’s crimes in Ukraine.”

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## 7. Truth Is Another Front in Putin’s War

(New York Times, Steven Lee Myers and Stuart A. Thompson, 20 Mar 22)...

In the tense weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russian officials denied that it planned anything of the sort, denouncing the United States and its NATO allies for stoking panic and anti-Russian hatred. When it did invade, the officials denied it was at war. Since then, the Kremlin has cycled through a torrent of lies to explain why it had to wage a “special military operation” against a sovereign neighbor. Drug-addled neo-Nazis. Genocide. American biological weapons factories. Birds and reptiles trained to carry pathogens into Russia. Ukrainian forces bombing their own cities, including theaters sheltering children. Disinformation in wartime is as old as war itself, but today war unfolds in the age of social media and digital diplomacy. That has given Russia — and its allies in China and elsewhere — powerful means to prop up the claim that the invasion is justified, exploiting disinformation to rally its citizens at home and to discredit its enemies abroad. Truth has simply become another front in Russia’s war. Using a barrage of increasingly outlandish falsehoods, President Vladimir V. Putin has created an alternative reality, one in which Russia is at war not with Ukraine but with a larger, more pernicious enemy in the West. Even since the war began, the lies have gotten more and more bizarre, transforming from claims that “true sovereignty” for Ukraine was possible only under Russia, made before the attacks, to those about migratory birds carrying bioweapons.

Russia’s message has proved successful domestically, where the Kremlin’s claims go unchallenged. Surveys suggest a majority of Russians support the war effort. Internationally, the campaign has seeped into an information ecosystem that allows them to spread virulently, reaching audiences that were once harder to reach. “Previously, if you were sitting in Moscow and you wanted to reach audiences sitting in, say, Idaho, you would have to work really hard doing that,” said Elise Thomas, a researcher in Australia for the Institute of Strategic Dialogue, referring to disinformation campaigns dating to the Soviet Union. “It would take you time to set up the systems, whereas now you can do it with the press of a button.” The power of Russia’s claim that the invasion is justified comes not from the veracity of any individual falsehood meant to support it but from the broader argument. Individual lies about bioweapons labs or crisis actors are advanced by Russia as swiftly as they are debunked, with little consistency or logic between them. But supporters stubbornly cling to the overarching belief that something is wrong in Ukraine and Russia will fix it. Those connections prove harder to shake, even as new evidence is introduced. That mythology, and its resilience in the face of fact-checking and criticism, reflects “the ability of autocrats and malign actors to completely brainwash us to the point where we don’t see what’s in front of us,” said Laura Thornton, the director and senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund’s Alliance for Securing Democracy.

The Kremlin’s narratives today feed on pre-existing views of the war’s root causes, which Mr. Putin has nurtured for years — and restated in increasingly strident language last week. The strategy to deceive, or at least confuse, international observers was used after the bombing of a maternity ward in Mariupol on March 9. Twitter and Facebook eventually removed the posts, but gruesome photographs, stamped “Fake,” continued circulating across the internet, including on the chat app Telegram. Another meme gained even more traction, relying on a yearslong campaign in Russia to stoke unfounded fears that the United States was manufacturing biological weapons in Ukraine. The day after the bombardment, official Russian accounts falsely claimed that a pregnant woman seen in photos from Mariupol had faked her injuries. The Story appeared on the official accounts of more than a dozen Russian embassies, according to data collected by FakeReporter, an Israeli group that studies disinformation, and

ricocheted across Twitter, Facebook and Telegram. Many of the posts used the exact same media and similar language, suggesting a coordinated campaign. Twitter and Facebook eventually removed the posts, but gruesome photographs, stamped "Fake," continued circulating across the internet, including on the chat app Telegram.

Another meme gained even more traction, relying on a yearslong campaign in Russia to stoke unfounded fears that the United States was manufacturing biological weapons in Ukraine. The claim gained ground in English-language social media just two days into the invasion after a Twitter post by the account WarClandestine went viral. Until the account was suspended, it peddled QAnon conspiracy theories about secretive government plots. These theories fester and then seep into the mainstream. By early March, the Russian Defense Ministry claimed it had uncovered "traces of a military biological program" in Ukraine, which it said was "financed by the U.S. Defense Ministry. The Fox News host Tucker Carlson soon floated the idea on his show, airing Russia's statement and dismissing the explanation from United States officials that they were diagnostic and biodefense laboratories used for research, saying, "Whether you call them weapons or not is completely irrelevant, because they can be used as weapons." Mr. Carlson's commentaries were then picked up in Russian media, including in a Telegram post by the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti that received over one million views. China's government and state media parroted the claim too, in what was clearly an effort to discredit the American government's frequent criticism of China's behavior.

When Russia took such claims to an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, however, it faced withering criticism. "Russia has today brought into the Security Council a series of wild, completely baseless and irresponsible conspiracy theories," the British representative, Barbara Woodward, told the Council. "Let me put it diplomatically: They are utter nonsense." Russia's accusations about nefarious American activities in Ukraine date back decades, resurfacing in new forms with each new crisis, like the political upheaval in 2014 that led to Russia's annexation of Crimea. Ukraine is waging an information campaign of its own, aiming to discredit Russia, exaggerate its own military successes and minimize its losses. It has also circulated false reports of heroism, including the martyrdom of soldiers defending an island in the Black Sea and the exploits of an ace fighter pilot in the skies over Kyiv. By most accounts, Ukraine has so far been winning the information war, led by a powerful social media operation that flooded the internet with its own jumble of anecdotes and myths, bolstering morale among Ukrainians and uniting the Western world behind its cause. The most central figure in their campaign has been President Volodymyr Zelensky himself, whose video messages to Ukrainians and the world have combined bravery with the stage presence of the television performer he once was.

Russia, though, has more tools and reach, and it has the upper hand with weaponry. The strategy has been to overwhelm the information space, especially at home, which "is really where their focus is," said Peter Pomerantsev, a scholar at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University who has written extensively about Russian propaganda. Russia's propaganda machine plays into suspicion of the West and NATO, which have been vilified on state television for years, deeply embedding distrust in Russian society. State media has also more recently echoed beliefs advanced by the QAnon movement, which ascribes the world's problems largely to global elites and sex traffickers. Those beliefs make people feel "scared and uncertain and alienated," said Sophia Moskalenko, a social psychologist at Georgia State University. "As a result of manipulating their emotions, they will be more likely to embrace conspiracy theories." Mr. Putin's public remarks, which dominate state media, have become increasingly strident. He has warned that nationalist sentiment in Ukraine is a threat to Russia itself, as is NATO expansion. Yet when the invasion began, it seemed to catch the organs of the propaganda apparatus unprepared. Officials and state media had just spent weeks accusing the Biden administration of exaggerating what Russia claimed were simply regular military exercises, not the buildup of an invasion force. "Clearly, they did not prepare the information warfare machine," Mr. Pomerantsev said. "It takes months to prepare something like this."

That could explain the changing, disjointed nature of Russia's campaign. The threat of biological weapons in Ukraine — let alone secret American weapons factories producing them there — was not cited as a rationale for the "special military operation" that Mr. Putin announced at dawn on Feb. 24. These falsehoods emerged only later. "They throw stuff out and they see what works," said Ms. Thomas, the researcher from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. "And what's really working for them at the moment is the biolabs stuff." The Kremlin's campaign has gone beyond simply propagating its message. It has moved swiftly to silence dissenting points of view that could cut through the fog of war and discourage the Russian population. For now, the campaign appears to have rallied public opinion behind Mr. Putin, according to most surveys in Russia, though not as high as might be expected for a country at war. "My impression is that many people in Russia are buying the government's narrative," said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center. "They have doctored images on state-controlled media. Private media don't cover the war, fearing 15 years in prison. Same goes for people on the social media. Russia has lost information warfare globally, but the regime is quite successful at home." The question is for how long.

Cracks have appeared in the information fortress the Kremlin is building. A week after the invasion began, when it was already clear the war was going badly for Russian troops, Mr. Putin rushed to enact a law that punishes "fake news" with up to 15 years in prison. Media regulators warned broadcasters not to refer to the war as a war. They also forced off the air two flagships of independent media — Ekho Moskvy, a liberal radio station, and Dozhd, a television station — that gave voice to the Kremlin's opponents. Access to Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and most recently Instagram has also been severed inside Russia — all platforms the country's diplomats have continued to use outside to misinform. Once spread, disinformation can be tenacious, even in places with a free press and open debate, like the United States, where polls suggest that more than 40 percent of the population believes the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald J. Trump. "Why are people so surprised that this kind of widespread disinformation can be so effective in Russia when it was so effective here?" Ms. Thornton of the German Marshall Fund said. As the war in Ukraine drags on, however, casualties are mounting, confronting families in Russia with the loss of fathers and sons. That could test how persuasive the Kremlin's information campaign truly is. The Soviet Union sought to keep a similar veil of silence around its decade-long quagmire in Afghanistan in the 1980s, but the truth seeped into public consciousness anyway, eroding the foundation of the entire system. Two years after the last troops pulled out in 1989, the Soviet Union itself collapsed.

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8. TikTok Was 'Just a Dancing App'. Then the Ukraine War Started  
(Guardian, Kari Paul, 20 Mar 22)...

Many have called the invasion of Ukraine the world's first "TikTok war", and experts say it is high time for the short video platform — once known primarily for silly lip syncs and dance challenge — to be taken seriously. Some politicians are doing just that. In a speech, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, appealed to "TikTokers" as a group that could help end the war. Last week, Joe Biden spoke to dozens of top users on the app in a first-of-its-kind meeting to brief the influencers on the conflict in Ukraine and how the US is addressing it. But even as world leaders increasingly legitimize the platform, others continue to dismiss it as frivolous. The White House meeting was lampooned on Saturday Night Live in a skit, and mocked relentlessly on Twitter, while the Republican senator Josh Hawley scolded Biden for asking "teenagers to do his job". Experts say this mentality is a mistake. "TikTok is constantly overlooked and deprioritized by people who do not take the time to understand it," said Abbie Richards, an independent researcher who studies the app. "Many of the problems we are seeing with it today stem from this false idea that it is just a dancing app."

Ukraine-related content on TikTok has exploded since the country was invaded on 24 February, with videos tagged #Ukraine surpassing 30.5bn views as of 17 March. One report from the New York Times found that, proportionally, Ukraine content on TikTok outpaces that on platforms more than twice its size. With that dramatic rise came an influx of misinformation and disinformation. Videos of unrelated explosions were re-posted as if they were from Ukraine. Media uploaded from video games were passed off as footage of real-life events. Russian propaganda went

viral before it could be removed. “We saw immediately from the start of the conflict that TikTok was structurally incompatible with the needs of the current moment regarding disinformation,” Richards said. TikTok has a number of features that make it uniquely susceptible to such issues, according to a paper published by Harvard’s Shorenstein Center on Media titled *TikTok, the War on Ukraine, and 10 Features that Make the App Vulnerable to Misinformation*. Its core features prime it for remixing media, allowing users to upload videos and sound clips without attributing their origins, the paper said, which makes it difficult to contextualize and factcheck videos. This has created a digital atmosphere in which “it is difficult – even for seasoned journalists and researchers – to discern truth from rumor, parody and fabrication”, researchers added. Design features within the app also create an easy pathway for misinformation, researchers say. Users post mostly under pseudonyms; the date of upload for videos is not prominently displayed, complicating attempts to contextualize content; and the newsfeed structure – with each video taking up the entirety of a user’s screen – makes it difficult to seek out additional sources. Unlike on Facebook, where the user’s feed is filled primarily with content from friends and people they know, TikTok’s “for you page” is largely content from strangers determined by the company’s opaque algorithm. And the more a platform relies on algorithms rather than a chronological newsfeed, the more susceptible it can be to mis- and disinformation, experts say. That is because algorithms favor content that gets more engagement. “One thing that is common across all platforms is that algorithms are optimized to detect and exploit cognitive biases for more polarizing content,” said Marc Faddoul, a researcher at the TikTok Observatory where he studies the platform and its content policies. “Disinformation is very engaging for users, so it is more likely to appear on feeds.” These issues are exacerbated by the age and size of TikTok. The app is relatively young, launched in 2016, and has grown rapidly to 130m in the United States and more than 1bn globally. Though smaller than Facebook, which has 230m users in the US and 2.9bn globally, the platform is facing many of the same issues with fewer resources and less experience. TikTok is continuing to evolve after it saw usership soar during the pandemic-induced lockdowns of 2020, said Emily Dreyfuss, a researcher at Harvard’s Shorenstein Center on Media who co-authored the research paper. “That is when we really started to see a shift from what people thought was just an app for teenagers to do viral dance tricks to a real part of the cultural conversation,” she said.

TikTok has, like many other social media companies, scrambled to keep up with the onslaught of disinformation about the war in Ukraine. It uses a combination of algorithms and human moderators to manage the platform, spokeswoman Jamic Favazza told the Guardian, with teams that speak more than 60 languages and dialects including Russian and Ukrainian. It has rushed out the launch of a state-controlled media policy to address propaganda put out by Russian entities. “We continue to respond to the war in Ukraine with increased safety and security resources to detect emerging threats and remove harmful misinformation,” Favazza said. Meanwhile TikTok added digital literacy tips on its Discover page “to help our community evaluate and make decisions about the content they view online”. It has for years voluntarily released transparency reports about what content it has removed. But researchers say there is more to be done. Despite these moves, some state-controlled media accounts such as RT remain on the app, though access to them has been banned in the EU. Richards, the TikTok researcher, noted that a disinformation campaign she studied for a recent report remains on the platform, with dozens of videos using the caption “Russian Lives Matter” continuing to rack up thousands of views.

In many ways TikTok has been far more responsive to criticism than its predecessors, including social media giants such as Facebook. But while the company is dutifully flagging misinformation and cracking down on Russian state content, reining in disinformation on a mass scale is becoming more complicated than ever as influencers’ power grows. Well-followed accounts have an outsized influence on what media their followers consume, regardless of how much expertise they actually have in a given subject matter. Studies show consumers are substantially more likely to trust a recommendation from someone they follow on social media than a traditional advertisement, and the same goes for information shared online. TikTok is “driven by a culture that values individual creators and platform-specific microcelebrities”, the Shorenstein Center paper argued, making influencers and people with large followings particularly susceptible to inadvertently sharing inaccurate or manipulated content. “Influencers have great incentive to enter the discourse about a breaking news event or ongoing crisis, since these posts can boost users’ profiles; even one viral video can popularize an entire account,” the paper said. Meanwhile, very few checks and balances exist in terms of how they operate in the online media space, said Dreyfuss, noting that they operate in similar media spaces as journalists with far less training or media literacy, such as how to factcheck false claims that

even seasoned researchers struggle to detect. "There is no formal accountability for influencers and they are often catering only to the whims of their fans," Dreyfuss said. Experts say it is urgent that legislators and the general public take this collision of massive influence with little accountability seriously. In inviting top influencers to the White House, the Biden administration took a meaningful step in that direction. For their part, influencers are also recognizing the power that they hold. One 18-year-old TikTok star with more than 10.5m followers told the Washington Post she sees herself as "a White House correspondent for Gen Z" who is there to "relay the information in a more digestible manner".

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#### 9. Poland's Open-Door Policy Helps Ukrainian Refugees Build New Lives (Deutsche Welle, Monika Sieradzka, 20 Mar 22)...

For Ukrainian refugees in Poland these days, the most important word is "PESEL" — the abbreviation for the Polish national identity number. Poland's government has promised refugees from neighboring Ukraine that they can stay in the country for up to 180 days and access the labor market, health care system and social benefits. Refugees need a PESEL number for that. Polish authorities set up one of the biggest registration centers so refugees can apply for a PESEL number at the National Stadium in Warsaw. On Friday evening, a day before the center opened, long lines had already formed outside the building. Flasks full of hot tea were provided for the people waiting at the gate to the stadium. "I will wait here as long as necessary. I need a work permit, I need to find work, and I need to do it as soon as possible," 24-year-old Viktoria told DW. The IT specialist from Kyiv was allowed to go in at 9 a.m. the following day. During the night, she took turns standing in line with her friends and sleeping in a car in the stadium's parking lot. Viktoria's persistence paid off — she's hoping to get the PESEL number within a few days. Others aren't so lucky. Anyone who got to the stadium after 7 a.m. had no chance of being served the same day. Volunteers had prepared purple wristbands and handed them out to those who were guaranteed to get their turn the next day.

There are currently over 2 million Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Some 123,000 received PESEL numbers within the first two days of the registration drive. Additional registration points — such as the one at the National Stadium — and registration buses that travel to refugee shelters should speed up the operation. City and municipal offices, which typically issue the national identity numbers, are overwhelmed. In the Polish city of Przemysl, near the Ukrainian border, the city office is working at full speed, but with only four fingerprint machines and a total of seven officers, there are long waiting times here as well. "I don't speak Polish, and I expect it probably won't be possible to work at a bank," she told DW. "But I need to find some kind of work quickly to secure a living for my son and me." Kokesnyk took her passport with her when she fled Ukraine, making the formalities easier. Those who escaped the war without proof of identity also receive refuge in Poland but registering and receiving an ID number takes longer.

A law recently passed by the Polish parliament ensures refugees' access to the labor market, health care and social benefits, including monthly child benefits of €110 (\$121) per child. New arrivals from Ukraine receive the equivalent of €70 in welcome money, after which they have to fend for themselves. The new law also guarantees Polish citizens who host Ukrainians the equivalent of €9 a day for expenses. Alexandra Stefaniv from Lviv sits in the waiting room while her Polish relative Leon Bortnik helps fill out the application. The logistics entrepreneur from Przemysl is taking care of his Ukrainian relatives in a recently inherited apartment that had been empty. "I suddenly got a call from my mother's sister from Ukraine. She asked me if I could host her and her immediate family. There is only one right answer to that," Bortnik tells DW. He wants to help Stefaniv find a job and knows many people in the region. For Stefaniv, who is 46, her own future is highly uncertain. "I'm confused. I have no idea what to do in Poland. Should I look for work? But I do hope that the war will be over soon and that I can return home," she says, adding that her husband stayed in Lviv, and she never planned to leave Ukraine.

Since the war started, 3.3 million Ukrainians have emigrated, many to Poland. Even before that, the country of 38

million people had more than a million Ukrainian migrants who left their country since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2021, 90% of respondents in a survey by the University of Warsaw's Center for Prejudice Research said they accepted Ukrainians as colleagues and neighbors. In recent decades, migrants in Poland have accounted for a small fraction of society. Apart from Ukrainian emigrants since 2014, there is no other migrant group of comparable size. Compared to other EU countries, Poland had closed itself off to migrants. The current arrival of refugees is a completely new phenomenon. After more than three weeks of an outpouring of solidarity during which Ukrainian war refugees were welcomed with open arms, questions are emerging in the media of how the already overburdened social and health care systems can serve millions more people. Concerns are also growing among some parent associations about the prospect of overcrowded school classes.

Agnieszka Lada-Konefal, deputy director of the German Poland Institute in Darmstadt, speaks of an enormous challenge for the administration and society that will irrevocably change the country. "Poles will have to learn to live together with people who are somewhat different," the political scientist told DW, adding it was an experience that many people already had with Ukrainians taking refuge in the country in recent years. Schoolchildren will also have to learn to adapt to classmates with a different language and culture as well as difficult experiences of war, she said. "Children and young people will have to cope with that," says Lada-Konefal. "They will have to learn to live with others, to open up. That is part of development." But parts of society may feel overwhelmed by the number of refugees, and more migration from Ukraine could also be used by populists to "spread hatred and resentment," the political scientist said. "If the costs are high and the crisis and the war drag on for a long time, it's hard to say whether Polish society will be able to accept this and learn to live with it," Lada-Konefal adds.

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10. Turkey Says Russia and Ukraine Nearing Agreement on 'Critical' Issues (Reuters, 19 Mar 22)...

Turkey's foreign minister said in an interview published on Sunday that Russia and Ukraine were nearing agreement on "critical" issues and he was hopeful for a ceasefire if the two sides did not backtrack from progress achieved so far. Russian forces invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. President Vladimir Putin has called Russia's actions a "special operation" meant to demilitarize Ukraine and purge it of what he sees as dangerous nationalists. Ukraine and the West say Putin launched an aggressive war of choice. Foreign ministers Sergei Lavrov of Russia and Dmytro Kuleba of Ukraine met in the Turkish resort town of Antalya earlier this month with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also attending. The discussions did not yield concrete results. But Cavusoglu, who also travelled to Russia and Ukraine last week for talks with Lavrov and Kuleba, told Turkish daily Hurriyet that there had been "rapprochement in the positions of both sides on important subjects, critical subjects". "We can say we are hopeful for a ceasefire if the sides do not take a step back from the current positions," he said, without elaborating on the issues. Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin, speaking to al Jazeera television, said the two sides were getting closer on four key issues. He cited Russia's demand for Ukraine to renounce ambitions to join NATO, demilitarisation, what Russia has referred to as "de-nazification", and the protection of the Russian language in Ukraine.

Ukraine and the West have dismissed Russian references to "neo-Nazis" in Ukraine's democratically elected leadership as baseless propaganda, and Kalin said such references were offensive to Kyiv. Kyiv and Moscow reported some progress in talks last week toward a political formula that would guarantee Ukraine's security, while keeping it outside NATO, though each sides accused the other of dragging matters out. Kalin said a permanent ceasefire could come only through a meeting between Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. But he said Putin felt that positions on the "strategic issues" of Crimea and Donbas were not close enough for a meeting. Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 while part of the eastern industrial Donbas region was seized by Russian-backed separatist forces that year.

NATO member Turkey shares a maritime border with Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea, has good relations with both and has offered to mediate between them. It has voiced support for Ukraine, but has also opposed far-reaching Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the invasion. While forging close ties with Russia on energy, defence and trade and relying heavily on Russian tourists, Turkey has sold drones to Ukraine, angering Moscow. Turkey also opposes Russian policies in Syria and Libya, as well as Moscow's annexation of Crimea. President Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly said Turkey will not abandon its relations with Russia or Ukraine, saying Ankara's ability to speak to both sides was an asset.

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11. U.S. Suggested Turkey Transfer Russian-Made Missile System to Ukraine (Reuters, Humejra Pamuk, 19 Mar 22)...

The United States has informally raised with Turkey the unlikely possibility of sending its Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems to Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces, according to three sources familiar with the matter. U.S. officials have floated the suggestion over the past month with their Turkish counterparts but no specific or formal request was made, the sources told Reuters. They said it also came up briefly during Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to Turkey earlier this month. The Biden administration has been asking allies who have been using Russian made equipment and systems including S-300s and S-400s to consider transferring them to Ukraine as it tries to fend off a Russian invasion that began on Feb. 24. The idea, which analysts said was sure to be shot down by Turkey, was part of a wider discussion between Sherman and Turkish officials about how the United States and its allies can do more to support Ukraine and on how to improve bilateral ties.

The Turkish authorities have not commented on any U.S. suggestion or proposal relating to the transfer to Ukraine of Ankara's S-400 systems, which have been a point of long-standing contention between the two NATO allies. Turkish foreign ministry officials were not immediately available for comment. Turkish sources and analysts said any such suggestion would be a non-starter for Turkey, citing issues ranging from technical hurdles related to installing and operating the S-400s in Ukraine, to political concerns such as the blowback Ankara would likely face from Moscow. Washington has repeatedly asked Ankara to get rid of the Russian-built surface-to-air missile batteries since the first delivery arrived in July 2019. The United States has imposed sanctions on a Turkey's defence industry and removed NATO member Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet programme as a result. Ankara has said it was forced to opt for the S-400s because allies did not provide weapons on satisfactory terms.

U.S. officials are keen to seize this moment to draw Turkey back into Washington's orbit. Efforts to find "creative" ways to improve the strained relationship have accelerated in recent weeks, even though no specific proposal has so far gained traction, U.S. and Turkish sources have said. "I think everyone knows that the S-400 has been a long standing issue and perhaps this is a moment when we can figure out a new way to solve this problem," Sherman told Turkish broadcaster Haberturk in an interview on March 5. It was not clear what exactly she meant and the State Department has not answered questions about her comments. The White House did not respond to a request for comment about the suggestion made during her visit to Turkey. The effort is also part of a wider bid by the Biden administration to respond to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's plea to help protect Ukraine's skies. Russian or Soviet-made air defense systems such as S-300s that other NATO allies have and S-400s are sought after. One source familiar with U.S. thinking said Washington's floating of the possibility came as a result of the renewed effort to improve ties at a time when Ankara has been spooked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Turkish President Erdogan had not received a specific heads up from Russian President Vladimir Putin on his plans of a full-scale attack on Ukraine, another source familiar with the discussions said. Turkey shares a maritime border with Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea and has good ties with both. It has said the invasion is unacceptable and

voiced support for Ukraine, but has also opposed sanctions on Moscow while offering to mediate. Ankara has carefully formulated its rhetoric not to offend Moscow, analysts say, with which it has close energy, defence and tourism ties. But Ankara has also sold military drones to Kyiv and signed a deal to co-produce more, angering the Kremlin. Turkey also opposes Russian policies in Syria and Libya, as well as its 2014 annexation of Crimea. "Turkey has managed to walk on the razor's edge and a transfer of a Russian S-400 would certainly lead to severe Russian ire," said Aaron Stein, director of research at the Philadelphia-based Foreign Policy Research Institute. "And for Erdogan, the S-400 has become a symbol of Turkish sovereignty, so trading it away wouldn't be all roses and flowers."

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## 12. Zelenskyy Says He's Willing to Talk With Putin but Not Yield His Nation's Independence (Politico, David Cohen, 20 Mar 22)...

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine said on Sunday he was ready to negotiate with Russian President Vladimir Putin but not willing to yield on his nation's territorial integrity. Speaking through an interpreter on CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS," he said: "I am ready for negotiations with him. I was ready over the last two years, and I think that without negotiations we cannot end this war." "If there is just 1 percent chance for us to stop this war," he added. "I think that we need to take this chance, we need to do that." Ukraine's president also warned that talks were the best hope to avert a third world war. Zelenskyy's nation continues to hold off a Russian military that was widely believed to be one of the most powerful in the world but has suffered extensive casualties, some of it from Russian airstrikes on civilian targets. During the interview with Zakaria, he displayed a wide range of emotions, including defiance in the face of the invasion, pride in how his nation has responded, frustration with other world leaders for not taking his previous warnings about Russia seriously, concern about what Russian President Vladimir Putin might do next, and despair over the losses that his nation is suffering. "Unfortunately, our dignity is not going to preserve lives," he said at one point.

In discussing negotiations, Zelenskyy said that his nation was willing to make only limited compromises, but not the handing over of territory his citizens are fighting so hard to retain. He said his nation would need "security guarantees, sovereignty, restoration of territorial integrity, real guarantees for our country" in order to agree to stop the fighting. "There are compromises for which we cannot be ready as an independent state," he said. "Any compromises related to our territorial integrity and our sovereignty, and the Ukrainian people have spoken about it they have not greeted Russian soldiers with a bunch of flowers, they have greeted them with bravery, they have greeted them with weapons in their hands." Zelenskyy, who became president in 2019, also said that he had been saying for years that Ukraine deserved to be fully integrated into Europe, as a member of both NATO and the European Union. He said even the promise of those things could have helped block Russian expansionist policies. "If Russia continues to make soundings, testing the crowd, and if they do not see any kind of response from the West, they will continue to advance," he said. "I have been talking about this from the very first day of my presidency."

Zelenskyy reiterated that he had been pleading with other world leaders in the run-up to the current invasion. "I told them that we are running out of time," he said. "You have to admit Ukraine into NATO right now. We did not have much time. You have to accept Ukraine as a member of the EU. We deserve these alliances." But, he noted: "Everyone in the West told me that we do not have any chance of NATO or EU membership. I asked them not to drive the Ukrainian people into a corner because our people are brave." Zelenskyy, who is Jewish and who lost members of his family in the Holocaust during World War II, said he found it absurd that Putin, conjuring up the image of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, has said Ukraine is dominated by neo-Nazis.

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## 13. US Backs Zelenskyy's Efforts to Negotiate With Putin (Los Angeles Times, Erin B. Logan, 20 Mar 22)...

The Biden administration is backing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's efforts to negotiate a peaceful end to Russia's invasion of his country as it continued to accuse Russian forces of deliberately targeting civilians in what would amount to war crimes, top U.S. officials said Sunday. "We have supported the negotiations that President Zelenskyy has attempted to do with the Russians," Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told CNN, though she quickly sought to temper expectations. "And I do use the word 'attempted' because the negotiations seem to be one-sided, and the Russians have not leaned into any possibility for a negotiated and diplomatic solution. ... But we're still hopeful that the Ukrainian effort will end this brutal war." Zelenskyy had told CNN on Sunday that "without negotiations, we cannot end this war," a day after calling for direct talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the conflict. "Russian forces have come to exterminate us, to kill us," he said speaking through an interpreter. "If there is just a 1% chance to stop this war, we need to do that."

Zelenskyy's pleas come as Ukrainian officials on Sunday accused Russia of bombing an art school in the besieged city of Mariupol where hundreds had taken shelter. Zelenskyy in a daily address said the attack will "go down in history" as a war crime. "The terror the occupiers did to the peaceful city will be remembered for centuries to come," Zelenskyy said. In a Saturday statement on Telegram, the city council of Mariupol said that "several thousand" residents had been taken to camps in Russian territory. Thomas-Greenfield said she could not confirm the reports but added it would be "unconscionable for Russia to force Ukrainian citizens into Russia, and put them in what will basically be concentration and prisoner camps."

U.S. officials have been critical of Russian attacks on hospitals, schools and other infrastructure since it launched its invasion on Feb. 24. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III on Sunday accused Putin of targeting "cities, towns and civilians" because "he's not been able to achieve the goals as rapidly as he wants to achieve." Austin said that Putin's tactics were "disgusting" and that intentionally targeting civilians would constitute war crimes. His comments echoed those by President Joe Biden who last week called Putin a "war criminal." U.S. and Western officials are also concerned that Putin may order the use of chemical and biological weapons. To lay the groundwork for such an attack, the Kremlin has been leveling "spurious accusations that the U.S. was supporting Ukraine's chemical weapons program," Thomas-Greenfield said. "This is a 'false flag' effort by the Russians," she said. "They are advancing what they might intend to do. We have seen it happen before. They are the ones who've used chemical weapons. They used them in Syria. They have used chemical weapons against their own people. And we are concerned that they may use chemical weapons in Ukraine."

The United Nations has said that nearly 900 civilians have been killed so far in Ukraine, and more than 3 million people have fled the nation, setting off a refugee crisis. NATO nations are scrambling to handle the potential humanitarian disaster while ratcheting up pressure on Putin to withdraw his forces. Biden plans on traveling to Brussels to attend an emergency NATO summit to discuss measures the alliance can take to further counter Putin. Since the invasion, the U.S. and its allies have imposed stiff economic sanctions on the Kremlin, curtailed imports of Russian oil and restricted airspace to Russian commercial air traffic. In the hopes of stiffening Ukrainian resistance to the Russian onslaught, the U.S. and NATO members have boosted the flow of arms, humanitarian supplies and financial assistance to Kyiv. While stressing the U.S. commitment to defending NATO countries against any Russian attack and bolstering its troop presence in Europe, Biden has said he will not dispatch troops to Ukraine. U.S. officials believe such a step would probably set off a broader conflict.

Zelenskyy has invited Biden to Kyiv, a trip that was ruled out on Sunday by Thomas-Greenfield and White House press secretary Jen Psaki. In a tweet, Psaki said the NATO summit "will be focused on continuing to rally the world in support of the Ukrainian people and against President Putin's invasion of Ukraine, but there are no plans to travel into Ukraine." The invasion has not gone the way Putin and his military commanders had hoped. Much of the fighting throughout the country has reached a stalemate, according to experts and U.S. officials. A report by the

Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, released on Saturday assessed that “Ukrainian forces have defeated the initial Russian campaign of this war.” “The initial Russian campaign to seize Ukraine’s capital and major cities and force regime change has failed,” the report said.

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14. US Not Optimistic About Ukraine Talks as Zelenskiy Ups Pressure on Biden  
(Guardian, Richard Luscombe, 20 Mar 22)...

Joe Biden’s ambassador to the United Nations warned on Sunday there was little immediate hope of a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine, as pressure continued to build on the US president ahead of a crucial Nato summit in Europe this week. Linda Thomas-Greenfield was reacting on CNN’s State of the Union to an interview with Volodymyr Zelenskiy in which the Ukrainian president told the same network only talks would end the war and its devastating toll on civilians. “We have to use any format, any chance, to have the possibility of negotiating, of talking to [Russian president Vladimir] Putin,” Zelenskiy told Fareed Zakaria, the host of GPS. “If these attempts fail, that would mean that this is a third world war.” Thomas-Greenfield said she saw little chance of a breakthrough. “We have supported the negotiations that President Zelenskiy has attempted with the Russians, and I use the word attempted because the negotiations seem to be one-sided, and the Russians have not leaned in to any possibility for a negotiated and diplomatic solution,” she said. “We tried before Russia decided to move forward in this brutal attack on Ukraine and those diplomatic efforts were not responded to well by the Russians, and they’re not responding now. But we’re still hopeful that the Ukrainian effort will end this brutal war.”

The Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, told NBC’s Meet the Press: “Turkey is doing some real effort to try to facilitate, support talks between Russia and Ukraine. It’s far too early to say whether these talks can lead to any concrete outcome.” Biden, who faces growing dissatisfaction over his approach to the war, will travel to Brussels on Thursday. He will hear a proposal from Poland for Nato to send a peacekeeping force into Ukraine, something Thomas-Greenfield said was unlikely. “I can’t preview what decisions will be made and how Nato will respond to the Polish proposal,” she said. “What I can say is American troops will not be on the ground in Ukraine at this moment. The president has been clear on that. “Other Nato countries may decide that they want to put troops inside of Ukraine, that will be a decision that they have made. We don’t want to escalate this into a war with the United States but we will support our Nato allies.” Thomas-Greenfield was asked about reports that thousands of residents of the besieged city of Mariupol have been deported to Russia. “I’ve only heard it,” she said. “I can’t confirm it. But I can say it is disturbing. It is unconscionable for Russia to force Ukrainian citizens into Russia and put them in what will basically be concentration and prisoner camps.”

Republicans were critical of the pace and content of US support for Ukraine. Following Zelenskiy’s address to Congress on Wednesday, the White House announced \$800m in military aid, following a \$13.6bn package. But Biden has rejected a no-fly zone and the transfer of Polish Mig fighter jets. “The president has had to be pushed and pulled to where he is today,” the Wyoming Republican senator John Barasso told ABC’s This Week. “It was Congress that brought about sanctions, that brought about the ban on Russian oil, that brought about weapons and all of this big aid package. So far the administration has only released \$1bn of that. We might not have been in this situation if they had done punishing sanctions before the tanks began to roll.” Speaking to CBS’s Face the Nation, the Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, said he believed Biden “needs to step up his game”. The president, McConnell said: “has generally done the right thing but never soon enough. I am perplexed as to why we couldn’t get the Polish-Russian Migs into the country.” McConnell added that Biden should visit friendly countries close to the conflict zone, such as Romania, Poland, and the Baltic nations. “They’re right on the frontlines and need to know that we’re in this fight with them to win,” he said. McConnell also condemned Republican extremists who have opposed support for Ukraine, such as the North Carolina congressman Madison Cawthorne, who has called Zelenskiy “a thug”. “There are some lonely voices out there who are in a different place,” McConnell said.

Concern is rising among Biden's allies. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the Democratic Senate whip, reiterated the call to approve air support for Ukraine. "We're asking for one-third of the Polish air force to be sent into Ukraine," he told ABC. The people of Poland, of course, want to make certain that they're safe. They're only a few miles away from the devastation that's going on in Ukraine. "There are other ways for us to provide surface-to-air missiles and air defenses that will keep the Russians at bay in terms of their aerial attacks. There are ways to do that that are consistent with the Nato alliance and would not jeopardise expanding this into world war three or even worse." Marek Magierowski, the Polish ambassador to the US, stressed that the proposal for a peacekeeping force in Ukraine was only "a preliminary concept". "We can't take any decisions unilaterally, they have to be taken by all Nato members," he told CNN, adding: "If there is an incursion into Nato territory, I believe that Russia can expect a very harsh response on the part of our alliance." Zelenskiy lamented the provision only of economic and limited military support. "If we were a Nato member, a war wouldn't have started," he said. "If Nato members are ready to see us in the alliance, do it immediately because people are dying on a daily basis. "But if you are not ready to preserve the lives of our people, if you just want to see us straddle two worlds, if you want to see us in this dubious position where we don't understand whether you can accept us or not, you cannot place us in this situation, you cannot force us to be in this limbo."

Zelenskiy, however, appeared to acknowledge last week that Ukraine would not join Nato. On CBS's Face the Nation, the US defense secretary, Lloyd Austin, said the use of chemical weapons by Russia, which many analysts predict, would produce a "significant reaction" from the US and the international community. On NBC, Stoltenberg said the use of chemical weapons "would be a blatant and brutal violation of international law". But he would not say such an outcome would change Nato policy towards intervention. Biden this week spoke to the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, seeking to prevent support for Russia. The Chinese ambassador to the US, Qin Gang, spoke to CBS. He said: "What China is doing is sending food, medicine, sleeping bags and baby formula, not weapons and ammunition to any party." Gang also said Chinese condemnation of the Russian invasion, for which some have called, would not "solve the problem". "I would be surprised if Russia will back down by condemnation," he said. In Ukraine, fighting continues. The retired US army general and former CIA director David Petraeus told CNN the conflict had reached "a bloody stalemate, with lots of continued damage on both sides, lots of destruction, especially from the Russians".

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15. US and NATO Officials Struggle to Decipher Status of Negotiations Between Russia and Ukraine (CNN, Zachary Cohen, Natasha Bertrand, and Alex Marquardt, 20 Mar 22)...

US and NATO officials believe Russian President Vladimir Putin has not backed off his original demands in talks with Ukraine, and there is a heavy dose of skepticism in Western capitals about how credible Moscow's engagement truly is -- even as the status of those negotiations remains difficult to decipher, according to multiple sources briefed on the situation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has recently indicated he is willing to consider some concessions to Russia to help bring an end to the violence, including a neutrality policy -- albeit one underpinned by robust security guarantees, raising more questions about the current state of talks and specific elements of any peace deal that may be under consideration. "I'm ready for negotiations with (Putin). I was ready for the last two years. And I think that without negotiations, we cannot end this war." Zelensky told CNN's Fareed Zakaria in an exclusive interview Sunday. But he warned that any failure of negotiation attempts fail could lead to "a third World War." Ukrainian and Russian negotiators have met four times since the start of Russia's invasion. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov weighed in on the possibility of Ukraine agreeing to neutral status during a media event in Moscow on Saturday. "After our operation in Ukraine ends, and I hope its ends with a signing of a comprehensive agreement on the issues I mentioned -- security issues, Ukraine's neutral status with the guarantees of its security as (Putin), a couple of months ago as I recall, commented at a news conference on our initiative of non-expansion of NATO, he said we understood every country needs guarantees of its security," said Lavrov. But details on negotiations remain scant with many NATO countries, including the US, remaining on the outside looking in when it comes to the secretive talks, with one European defense official calling negotiations "a bit of a dark avenue right now." The Biden administration still sees no indication that Putin is willing or ready to deescalate the conflict -- making it difficult for US officials to be optimistic about the current state of negotiations, one source familiar with the situation said. But at the same time, this source also said that the US is not pressuring Ukraine to accept or reject

specific concessions and is not involved in the negotiation process. The US National Security Council declined to comment.

Some of the terms Ukraine has said it may be willing to consider seem more feasible than others, but at the end of the day, NATO countries are still skeptical of Russia's engagement.

"It is very close hold, and no one really knows what's going on," the European defense official said. "Ukraine's positions haven't changed -- ceasefire, withdrawal of troops and security guarantees." "Anyone who says they know something about the status of the talks, (they) really don't," the official added. Putin laid out several issues to achieve a ceasefire with Ukraine in a Thursday phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, according to Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin. "The first is Ukraine's neutrality," Kalin said in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet* published Saturday, adding that would mean Ukraine agreeing to not become a NATO member. "Second, disarmament and mutual security guarantees in the context of the Austrian model. Third, the process that the Russian side refers to as 'de-Nazification.' Fourth, removing obstacles to the widespread use of Russian language in Ukraine. It is understood that some progress has been made in the first four articles of the ongoing negotiations. It is too early to say that there is full agreement or that an agreement is about to be signed." Kalin said Putin had additional demands that were "the most difficult issues" -- the recognition of the annexation of Crimea and the two so-called republics in Donbas. Kalin said these final two issues "are not acceptable demands for Ukraine and the international community." "If a point is reached in the first four articles and an agreement is reached, there can be a discussion at the leaders' level regarding the fifth and sixth articles," Kalin said in the interview, adding that if the negotiations take place, "it may be possible to reach an agreement and end the war." US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Sunday declined to set terms on what the US would or would not accept when it came to an agreement between Ukraine and Russia to end the fighting. "This is for the Ukrainians themselves to decide what is too much for them. It is not our decision on that and we support their efforts. So I can't preview what they will end up coming up in their negotiations with the Russians," she told CNN's Jake Tapper on "State of the Union." Asked by Tapper again, if the US would recognize Crimea or Donbas as a part of Russia should that be a part of the agreement, Thomas-Greenfield again declined to answer. "I can't say that at the moment. We certainly have not recognized the independent Donbas regions just declared as independent. But I can't review how we will respond to a negotiated settlement that the Ukrainians come up with the Russians to save the lives of their own people."

The lack of clarity about the status of negotiations is raising additional questions about what Ukraine is willing to agree to and how Russia's demands would be implemented if they ultimately reach some sort of agreement. Zelenksy said Saturday there were "compromises" his country could not make in negotiations with Putin. "Any compromises related to our territorial integrity and our sovereignty and the Ukrainian people have spoken about it, they have not greeted Russian soldiers with a bunch of flowers, they have greeted them with bravery, they have greeted them with weapons in their hands," he told CNN's Zakaria when asked about the Russian demands. "You cannot just make a president of another country to recognize anything by the use of force," he added. Many details of Russia's demands, whether Ukraine would accept them and how Ukraine would even implement them remain unclear, a senior NATO official said. That includes what it would mean for Ukraine to adopt a "neutral" status with the West -- a possibility that one congressional source told CNN has caused heartburn for US officials. "Does that mean they forswear NATO? Does that mean they forswear the (European Union)? Can they not have any other external assistance?" the NATO official said. "My sense is it's going to be a very complex negotiation."

A European diplomat told CNN last week that if Ukraine were to adopt a neutrality policy and also demilitarize, it would effectively be a surrender -- calling such a move "Moscow-style neutrality." The Kremlin has floated the notion that Kyiv could adopt a Swedish or Austrian neutrality policy. However, a Swedish diplomat dismissed the notion of Swedish neutrality, saying the idea that their country is neutral is not true and attempts to try to frame it as such are consistent with longstanding Russian efforts to misrepresent Sweden's national security policy. "Whenever the term 'Austrian neutrality' comes up, it has to be remembered that this is a model of an armed neutrality. This

form of neutrality doesn't mean that a country lies down its arms and hopes that nobody attacks it. It's a neutrality where a country -- at least in theory -- is armed and ready to defend itself against all foreign belligerents," said Martin Weiss, Austria's ambassador to the US. The NATO official added that it is unclear what kind of agreement Russia and Ukraine might come to about the territory Russia has taken control of since invading on February 24. The official said the "hope" expressed by both Russian and Ukrainian officials in recent days appears to be belied by the fact that "some pretty clear differences remain" between the parties. "I think we just need to be mindful that the Russians almost certainly will seek to continue to resupply and will probably continue to fight, up until the time that things are agreed," the official said. "Whatever the solution, if there's diplomatic resolution and there's an agreement, it has to be clear and binding. And it has to be monitorable. ... People will be looking to ensure that the Russians end the war conclusively. And there isn't some lingering threat that remains." While the source familiar with the Biden administration's view of the talks told CNN that some of the terms Ukraine has said it may be willing to consider seem more feasible than others, the source also indicated that the US will be wary of Russia's intentions until Putin shows some signs that he is ready to deescalate.

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16. Chemical Weapons Would Violate International Law, NATO Boss Warns Russia (UPI, Adam Schrader, 20 Mar 22)...

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Sunday warned Russia that the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine would violate international law. "Any use of chemical weapons would be a blatant and brutal violation of international law, the ban on the use of chemical weapons," Stoltenberg told NBC's Meet the Press. "At the same time, we know that Russia has used chemical agents in Europe before, against their own political opponents and Russia has been facilitating and supporting the Assad regime in Syria, where chemical weapons has been used." Stoltenberg added that NATO must prevent the "very bloody, ugly, horrific conflict" from escalating into a full-fledged war between NATO and Russia which could potentially involve the United States directly. His comments come after Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told CNN that the United States would "respond aggressively" if Russia were to use chemical weapons in Ukraine. "We are concerned that they may use chemical weapons in Ukraine," she said. "We have been clear, if they escalate to this level, we will respond aggressively to what they are doing." Russian officials on Saturday tried to deflect from a possible chemical attack by claiming that Ukrainian "nationalists" would use such methods against Russian troops. Mikhail Mizintsev, chief of Russia's National Defense Management Center, claimed without evidence to Russian state media agency TASS had placed mines in ammonia and chlorine storage facilities. Russia has been known to plant false flags in apparent attempts to justify its own use of such tactics.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Sunday told CBS that Russian forces were "stalled" in Ukraine in with Putin "moving his forces into a woodchipper." Russia's Ministry of Defense said Sunday that it had targeted ammunition and fuel depots in Ukraine with hypersonic missiles over the weekend, according to The New York Times. It would be the first time Russia had used such missiles if true, though whether the missiles were hypersonic has not been verified. Austin said that the use of such missiles would not be a "game-changer" for Russia's outcome in the war. "I think, again, the reason that he's resorting to using these types of weapons is because he's trying to reestablish some momentum," Austin said. "You kind of question why he would do this. Is he running low on precision-guided munitions?" The Institute for the Study of War said in a report Saturday that Russian forces continue to make limited advances "but are very unlikely to be able to seize their objectives in this way." "The doctrinally sound Russian response to this situation would be to end this campaign, accept a possibly lengthy operational pause, develop the plan for a new campaign, build up resources for that new campaign, and launch it when the resources and other conditions are ready," the report reads. "The Russian military has not yet adopted this approach. It is instead continuing to feed small collections of reinforcements into an ongoing effort to keep the current campaign alive. We assess that that effort will fail."

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17. Zelenskyy Says Siege of Mariupol Involved War Crimes (AP, Cara Anna, 20 Mar 22)...

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said early Sunday the siege of the port city of Mariupol would go down in history for what he said were war crimes committed by Russian troops. "To do this to a peaceful city, what the occupiers did, is a terror that will be remembered for centuries to come," Zelenskyy said in a video address to the nation. Russian forces have pushed deeper into the besieged and battered city, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and local authorities pleaded for more Western help. In the capital, Kyiv, at least 20 babies carried by Ukrainian surrogate mothers are stuck in a makeshift bomb shelter, waiting for parents to travel into the war zone to pick them up. Some just days old, the babies are being cared for by nurses who cannot leave the shelter because of constant shelling by Russian troops who are trying to encircle the city. The fall of Mariupol, the scene of some of the war's worst suffering, would mark a major battlefield advance for the Russians, who are largely bogged down outside major cities more than three weeks into the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II. "Children, elderly people are dying. The city is destroyed and it is wiped off the face of the earth," Mariupol police officer Michail Vershnin said from a rubble-strewn street in a video addressed to Western leaders that was authenticated by The Associated Press. Details also began to emerge Saturday about a rocket attack that killed as many as 40 marines in the southern city of Mykolaiv the previous day, according to a Ukrainian military official who spoke to The New York Times.

Russian forces have already cut Mariupol off from the Sea of Azov, and its fall would link Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, to eastern territories controlled by Moscow-backed separatists. It would mark a rare advance in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance that has dashed Russia's hopes for a quick victory and galvanized the West. Ukrainian and Russian forces battled over the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Vadym Denysenko, adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said. "One of the largest metallurgical plants in Europe is actually being destroyed," Denysenko said in televised remarks. The Mariupol city council claimed hours later that Russian soldiers had forcibly relocated several thousand city residents, mostly women and children, to Russia. It didn't say where, and AP could not immediately confirm the claim. Zelenskyy adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said the nearest forces that could assist Mariupol were already struggling against "the overwhelming force of the enemy" and that "there is currently no military solution to Mariupol." Despite the siege in Mariupol, many remained struck by Ukraine's ability to hold back its much bigger, better-armed foe. The United Kingdom's Defense Ministry said Ukraine's airspace continued to be effectively defended. "Gaining control of the air was one of Russia's principal objectives for the opening days of the conflict and their continued failure to do so has significantly blunted their operational progress," the ministry said on Twitter.

Russia is now relying on stand-off weapons launched from the relative safety of Russian airspace to strike targets within Ukraine, the ministry said. In Mykolaiv, rescuers searched the rubble of the marine barracks that was destroyed in an apparent missile attack Friday. The region's governor said the marines were asleep when the attack happened. It wasn't clear how many marines were inside at the time, and rescuers were still searching the rubble for survivors the following day. But a senior Ukrainian military official, who spoke to The New York Times on condition of anonymity to reveal sensitive information, estimated that as many as 40 marines were killed, which would make it one of the deadliest known attacks on Ukrainian forces during the war. Estimates of Russian deaths vary widely, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands. Russia had 64 deaths in five days of fighting during its 2008 war with Georgia. It lost about 15,000 in Afghanistan over 10 years, and more than 11,000 in years of fighting in Chechnya. Russia's number of dead and wounded in Ukraine is nearing the 10% benchmark of diminished combat effectiveness, said Dmitry Gorenburg, a researcher on Russia's security at the Virginia-based CNA think tank. The reported battlefield deaths of four Russian generals — out of an estimated 20 in the fight — signal impaired command, Gorenburg said. Russia would need 800,000 troops — almost equal to its entire active-duty military — to control Ukraine long-term in the face of armed opposition, said Michael Clarke, former head of the British-based Royal United Services Institute, a defense think tank. "Unless the Russians intend to be completely genocidal — they could flatten all the major cities, and Ukrainians will rise up against Russian occupation — there will be just constant guerrilla war," said Clarke.

The Russian military said Saturday that it used its latest hypersonic missile for the first time in combat. Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Kinzhal missiles destroyed an underground warehouse storing Ukrainian missiles and aviation ammunition in the western region of Ivano-Frankivsk. Russia has said the Kinzhal, carried by MiG-31 fighter jets, has a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and flies at 10 times the speed of sound. Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said the U.S. couldn't confirm the use of a hypersonic missile. U.N. bodies have confirmed more than 847 civilian deaths since the war began, though they concede the actual toll is likely much higher. The U.N. says more than 3.3 million people have fled Ukraine as refugees. Evacuations from Mariupol and other besieged cities proceeded along eight of 10 humanitarian corridors, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said, and a total of 6,623 people left. Vereshchuk said planned humanitarian aid for the southern city of Kherson, which Russia seized early in the war, could not be delivered because the trucks were stopped along the way by Russian troops.

Ukraine and Russia have held several rounds of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict but remain divided over several issues, with Moscow pressing for its neighbor's demilitarization and Kyiv demanding security guarantees. Around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked. At least 130 people survived the Wednesday bombing of a Mariupol theater that was being used a shelter, but another 1,300 were believed to be still inside, Ludmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner, said Friday. "We pray that they will all be alive, but so far there is no information about them," Denisova told Ukrainian television. A satellite image from Maxar Technologies released Saturday confirmed earlier reports that much of the theater was destroyed. It also showed the word "CHILDREN" written in Russian in large white letters outside the building. Russian forces have fired on eight cities and villages in the eastern Donetsk region in the past 24 hours, including Mariupol, Ukraine's national police said Saturday. Dozens of civilians were killed or wounded, and at least 37 residential buildings and facilities were damaged including a school, a museum and a shopping center. In the western city of Lviv, Ukraine's cultural capital, which was hit by Russian missiles on Friday, military veterans were training dozens of civilians on how to handle firearms and grenades. "It's hard, because I have really weak hands, but I can manage it," said one trainee, 22-year-old Katarina Ishchenko.

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#### 18. US Condemns 'Unconscionable' Forced Deportations of Civilians From Mariupol (Guardian, Lorenzo Tondo, Jon Henley, and Daniel Boffey, 20 Mar 22)...

Forced civilian deportations from Mariupol to Russia are "disturbing" and "unconscionable" if true, the US has said, after Ukrainian officials accused Moscow of transporting thousands of people against their will out of the devastated port city. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, America's ambassador to the UN, said the US had not yet confirmed the allegations, made on Saturday by Mariupol city council and repeated in detail on Sunday by Ukraine's human rights spokesperson, Lyudmyla Denisova. "I've only heard it. I can't confirm it," Thomas-Greenfield told CNN. "But I can say it is disturbing. It is unconscionable for Russia to force Ukrainian citizens into Russia and put them in what will basically be concentration and prisoner camps." As the UN said 10 million people – about a quarter of Ukraine's prewar population – had been displaced by the conflict and Ukrainian authorities accused Moscow of bombing an art school in Mariupol where more than 400 people had taken shelter, Denisova said Russian troops had "kidnapped" residents and taken them to Russia. "Several thousand Mariupol residents have been deported to Russia," she said on Telegram. After processing at "filtration camps", some had been transported to the Russian city of Taganrog, about 60 miles (100km) from Mariupol, and from there sent by rail "to various economically depressed cities in Russia", she said.

Denisova said Ukrainian citizens had been "issued papers that require them to be in a certain city. They have no right to leave it for at least two years with the obligation to work at the specified place of work. The fate of others remains unknown." Russian news agencies have reported that hundreds of people whom Moscow are calling refugees have been taken by bus from Mariupol to Russia. Denisova said the "abductions and forced displacements" violated the Geneva and European human rights conventions and called on the international community to "respond ... and increase sanctions against the terrorist state of the Russian Federation". Resident Anna Iwashyna, 39, who

recently fled Mariupol to Zaporizhzhia, said: "I don't know if people are being taken to Russia by force, but I can say for sure nobody is going there willingly." Iwashyna said conditions in the city were atrocious. "The entire infrastructure has been destroyed," she told the Guardian. "There are no shops, no pharmacies, no medical aid, fires are all around the city, there are no firefighters. There's nowhere to get food." Iwashyna said she had seen "dead bodies on the street, with my own eyes. Right by the Maritime University. There was a missile, it was still stuck into an intersection, and there was a dead person on the sidewalk. I could hear planes all night long, they are bombing and bombing and bombing the city, non-stop." Another resident, former journalist Roman Kruglyakov, left his hometown of Mariupol to stay in a nearby village at the beginning of the war. From March 17 to March 19, he made three trips back to the devastated city to pick up his trapped family members. "Out of the 25 people who I took out, there was not one who wanted to evacuate to Russia," he said. "They all want to go to Zaporizhzhia but not everyone is able to."

Days after Russian shells struck a theatre in the city that was also being used as a shelter, local authorities said Mariupol's G12 art school had been destroyed while women, children and elderly people were inside. There was no immediate word on casualties at the site and no further update on the search for survivors at the theatre. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, on Sunday described Russia's siege of the city as "a terror that will be remembered for centuries to come". Bombarded since the start of the invasion, many of Mariupol's residents have been without heat, power or water for more than a fortnight. Local authorities have said at least 2,300 have died, some of whom had to be buried in mass graves. Denisova also accused Russian forces of the murder of 56 elderly people in the town of Kreminna in the Luhansk region after a Russian tank "cynically and purposefully fired at a home for the elderly". Fifteen survivors were "abducted by the occupiers", she said, calling the attack "another act of horrific genocide". Mariupol authorities said on Sunday that nearly 40,000 residents had managed to leave the city in the previous week, mostly in their own vehicles, despite ongoing air and artillery strikes. Ukraine's deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, said seven safe routes would again be open across the country on Sunday.

In the north-eastern city of Sumy, authorities evacuated 71 orphaned babies through a humanitarian corridor, the regional governor, Dmytro Zhyvotyskiy, said on Sunday. He said the orphans, most of whom need constant medical attention, would be taken to an unspecified foreign country. But in the capital, Kyiv, authorities said at least 20 babies carried by Ukrainian surrogate mothers were being cared for by nurses in a bomb shelter because of constant shelling, with parents unable to travel into the war zone to pick them up. The head of the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, said more than a quarter of Ukraine's prewar population had fled their homes to escape the Russian onslaught. "Among the responsibilities of those who wage war, everywhere in the world, is the suffering inflicted on civilians who are forced to flee their homes," Filippo Grandi tweeted. "The war in Ukraine is so devastating that 10 million have fled either displaced inside the country, or as refugees abroad," he said. The UN said 3,389,044 Ukrainians had left the country since Russia's invasion began on 24 February, 90% of them women and children. More than 6.5 million people are internally displaced.

The UN human rights office, OHCHR, said it had confirmed the deaths of 902 civilians in Ukraine since the start of the conflict, adding that most of the casualties were from explosive weapons such as heavy artillery shells, missile and airstrikes, OHCHR said. The actual toll will be significantly higher, it said. As military experts said Russia's largely stalled ground advance was forcing Moscow to switch to a war of attrition, the Kremlin said on Sunday it had deployed another of its new Kinzhal (Dagger) hypersonic missiles, which travel faster than the speed of sound and can change direction mid-flight. Ukraine has confirmed that missile attacks took place on a fuel depot near the southern city of Mykolaiv and an ammunition depot in western Ukraine, but said the missile type had not yet been determined. Russian shelling also heavily damaged the Azovstal metallurgical plant in Mariupol, one of the largest in Europe, Ukrainian officials said. "The economic losses for Ukraine are immense," tweeted an MP, Lesia Vasylenko. The mayor of the encircled northern city of Chernihiv said on Sunday a hospital had been hit in the latest shelling, killing dozens of civilians. "The city is suffering from an absolute humanitarian catastrophe," Vladislav Atroshenko said.

Details are also emerging of a rocket attack that killed as many as 40 marines in Mykolaiv, a Black Sea port city, on Friday, according to the New York Times, which cited an unnamed Ukrainian military official. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said on Sunday that the frontlines between Ukrainian and Russian forces were “practically frozen” as Russia did not have enough combat strength to advance further. “[Over the past day] there were practically no rocket strikes on [Ukrainian] cities,” Arestovych added. Britain’s defence ministry said Russian forces had made “limited progress in capturing cities” but had instead “increased its indiscriminate shelling of urban areas, resulting in widespread destruction and large numbers of civilian casualties”. It warned that Russia would “continue to use its heavy firepower to support assaults on urban areas as it looks to limit its own already considerable losses, at the cost of further civilian casualties.” David Petraeus, the former US military commander and CIA chief, said it was “absolutely confirmed” that Ukrainian forces had killed at least four Russian generals. The Russian forces’ command-and-control structure had “broken down”, he said. “Their comms have been jammed by the Ukrainians. They’re literally stealing cell phones from Ukrainian civilians to communicate among each other.”

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#### 19. Russia Says Long-Range Missiles Hit Three Ukrainian Military Facilities (New York Times, Ivan Nechepurenko, 20 Mar 22)...

Russia said on Sunday it had used advanced long-range missiles to hit three military facilities in different parts of Ukraine. There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials, and the claims could not immediately be independently verified. The statement from Russia’s defense ministry comes as its ground advances have largely stalled. While Russian forces have faced fierce resistance in and around key cities such as Mariupol, Mykolaiv, and the capital, Kyiv, Ukrainian forces can do little to fend off attacks by cruise and other missiles launched from hundreds of miles away. Russia said on Sunday that its missiles had struck a Ukrainian military training center in the northern town of Ovruch and a large fuel depot near the city of Mykolaiv, a strategic Russian target on the way to the port city of Odessa, which hosts the headquarters of the Ukrainian Navy.

Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, the Russian defense ministry’s spokesman, said in a statement Sunday that Russia struck the fuel depot with a Kinzhal missile, which it claims is hypersonic. Those claims have not been independently verified. That is the same type of missile that Russia claimed it used for the first time on Saturday to strike an ammunition depot in western Ukraine. While the Ukrainian government confirmed that the facility was hit, it did not say whether a hypersonic weapon was used. Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser, acknowledged on Sunday that Russia was using Kinzhal missiles, but did not specify where or when they had been used. The U.S. defense secretary, Lloyd J. Austin III, told CBS’s “Face the Nation” that he could not confirm or dispute whether Russia was using hypersonic weapons. Cruise missiles launched from the Black Sea on Sunday also destroyed a military factory’s workshops in the northern town of Nizhyn, General Konashenkov said.

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#### 20. Russian Mercenaries in Ukraine Linked to Far-Right Extremists (Guardian, Mark Townsend, 20 Mar 22)...

Russian mercenaries fighting in Ukraine, including the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, have been linked to far-right extremism including an organisation designated by the US as terrorist, analysis reveals. Although Vladimir Putin says his “special military operation” is aimed at the “denazification” of Ukraine, an investigation has found links between pro-Russian forces and violent rightwing extremism, including those directly affiliated with Wagner. One post on the messaging app Telegram, dated 15 March, shows the flag of the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), a white-supremacist paramilitary organisation which the US lists as terrorist, allegedly flown by Moscow-backed separatists in Donetsk. The post was shared by a pro-Putin channel. Much of the extremist content, posted on Telegram and the Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK), relates to a far-right unit within the Wagner Group called Rusich with others linked to pro-Kremlin online communities, some bearing the name and logo of

## Wagner Group.

Adam Hadley, the executive director of Tech Against Terrorism, a London-based initiative supported by the UN counter-terrorism executive directorate, said their analysis indicated that Russian-backed forces in Ukraine, including the Wagner Group, are “almost certainly connected with extreme far-right organisations”. Hadley added: “Given Putin’s absurd demands for the ‘denazification’ of Ukraine, we suggest he should first root out neo-Nazis in his own ranks before pointing the finger at others.” One of the most secretive organisations in Russia, the Wagner Group doesn’t officially exist. However, reports suggest hundreds of its members are fighting in Ukraine with claims shortly after the invasion that its mercenaries were operating in Kyiv with orders from the Kremlin to assassinate the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It is also understood that efforts are being made by private messaging groups in Russia to recruit a new brigade of mercenaries to fight in Ukraine. Recently, the Russian defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, announced that 16,000 fighters from the Middle East had volunteered to fight with the Russian army. One account on VK is dedicated to the Rusich “sabotage and assault reconnaissance group” which appears to be operating in Ukraine, according to a post on 17 March. The Rusich logo features a Slavic Swastika known as a Kolovrat. Another recent VK posting lists Rusich as part of a coalition of separatist groups and militias including the extreme far-right group, Russian National Unity. One image shared on VK by a Rusich-affiliated account shows fighters, seemingly in Ukraine although it has proved impossible to verify, holding a Valknut flag, a symbol also commonly appropriated by white supremacists.

It has been reported that mercenary units recruited to Wagner are being given names like “The Hawks”, possibly to steer away from the group’s reputation after repeated accusations of human rights abuses in its operations in Syria and Libya. The Tech Against Terrorism analysis found a prominent Wagner Group-affiliated Telegram channel sharing an image in May 2021 of the Kolovrat allegedly daubed on a cliff in Palmyra, Syria. It also found Telegram channels – named “Wagner PMC” in Russian – sharing footage and memes as recently as 4 March relating to the torture and beheading of a Syrian captive by Wagner mercenaries in 2017. The Wagner group was first identified in 2014, when backing pro-Russian separatists in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. It is owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin, one of Putin’s closest allies, and has since conducted covert operations across Africa and the Middle East. Military experts believe that mercenaries allow the Kremlin – which has always denied any links with mercenary groups – to keep its death toll down. In an effort to control its narrative, Russia recently opened a criminal case against Facebook’s owner, Meta, accusing it of being an extremist organisation. The move by Russian prosecutors came after the the US tech giant temporarily allowed the use of terms such as “death to the Russian invaders”. Hadley added: “We condemn Russia for weaponising terrorism in this way and subverting international counter-terrorism norms.”

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## PREPARE

### 21. Albania: NATO to Open Balkan Airbase Converted From Ex-Soviet Era Facility (Euronews, Daniel Bellamy, 20 Mar 22)...

An old Soviet-era air base in Albania is set to become a tactical base of operations for NATO. It means there will be a NATO base in the western Balkans when it re-opens in 2023. Military spending is now on the rise in much of Europe — most notably in Germany — but also in the Balkans. Tensions are also rising in Albania’s backyard and Balkan rivals Croatia, which is a NATO member, and Serbia, which opposes the alliance, appear to be in a mini arms race. Serbia has bought MiG-29 fighter jets and tanks from its fellow Slavic ally Russia, whilst Croatia has bought 12 Rafale fighter jets from France. Work started in January to upgrade the Kuçovë air base as a modern hub of operations and its ability to host an array of modern era fighter jets.

NATO and Albania have pledged €50 million for the Kuçovë air base which is expected to be operational by the end

of 2023. It's 85 kilometres south of Tirana, the capital, is named after the small nearby town of Kuçovë — which under Albania's communist regime was called Stalin City. It was built in the 1950s using prison labour under leader Enver Hoxha who, despite being communist, resisted joining the USSR. Viktor Vangjeli, 83, served for 27 years in Kuçovë flying MiG-19s before he retired in 1990. He talked about the daily flights countering rare air space violations by neighbours during the Cold War. "The flying intensity during those times under the Cold War has been very high," he said, adding that this air base "was in charge, until 1962, for the coverage of all the country's air space". He said that Kuçovë's conversion to a modern NATO hub would be beneficial to the next generation of Albanian pilots who would be trained to fly modern jets.

After the fall of the communist regime in 1990, Albania's air force had more than 200 MiGs, a type of Soviet era fighter jet, across three air bases. Most of them have now been scrapped and the country's old Russian and Chinese-made jets stopped flying in 2005. For a few years, some old Antonov-2 planes, another Soviet era warplane, were used for agriculture or other purposes. Albania's air force now has some Cougar helicopters and is expecting to get a few Blackhawk ones, but no jets. Albania, a NATO member since 2009, also hopes to join the European Union. It's joined in with the EU's hard-hitting sanctions and has strongly denounced Russia's aggression.

v/r,

(b)(6)

Combatant Command Representative to United States European Command

EC-J3 Office Comm: (b)(6)

EC-J5W Office Com

EC-J32 Office DSN

EC-J5W Office DSN

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## DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, March 10

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<https://dtra1portal.unet.dtra.mil/SI/PA/PADocs/Defense%20Morning%20Clips%2010%20Mar%202022.pdf>

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## OVERVIEW

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin notified Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak that the U.S. would not support the transfer of Polish MiG-29s to Ukraine, while Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that the U.S. is investigating how to transfer jets to Ukraine in a way that does not endanger U.S. personnel, Politico reported. Separately, White House press secretary Jen Psaki warned that Russia might use chemical weapons in Ukraine after Russia accused the U.S. of supporting biological weapons development, according to Newsweek. Also of note, in testimony before the HASC, INDOPACOM Commander Adm. John C. Aquilino warned that China was running “a dedicated campaign ... to uproot the rules-based order” and added that U.S. allies and partners recognize the changing threats posed by Chinese modernization, U.S. Naval Institute News wrote.

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## TOP STORIES

1. Blinken: U.S. focused on providing Ukraine jets ‘in the right way’

Politico Online, Mar. 9 (1648) | Samuel Benson

U.S. officials on Wednesday all but shut the door on arming Ukraine with fighter jets, one day after the Pentagon rejected a Polish proposal that would have transferred MiG-29 aircraft to the Ukrainian government via an American airbase in Germany. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin notified Polish Minister of National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak on a phone call Wednesday that the U.S. would not support a transfer of jets to Ukraine, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said.

2. U.S. Says Ukraine ‘Diagnostic, Biodefense’ Labs Have No ‘Biological Weapons’

Newsweek Online, Mar. 9 (2308) | Tom O’Connor

Moscow has alleged to have uncovered a plot by Kyiv to unleash biological or chemical weapons as a pretext for blaming Russia and drawing in further support for Ukraine’s efforts to resist a military incursion from the neighboring nation. The White House weighed in on the affair Wednesday as Press Secretary Jen Psaki addressed the claims directly in a series of tweets. “This is all an obvious ploy by Russia to try...to justify its further premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine,” Psaki wrote.

3. A Chinese Takeover of Taiwan Would Prompt Different Pentagon Response, Top Indo-Pacific Official Says

U.S. Naval Institute News, Mar. 9 (1807) | John Grady

The Pentagon's senior civilian for the Indo-Pacific testified Wednesday that the United States' response to the Chinese aggressively moving to take over Taiwan would be different from Washington's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ely Ratner, assistant secretary for Indo-Pacific security affairs, said when China is the "pacing competitor" in the region, "Taiwan is the pacing scenario." Without going into details in an open hearing, he pointed to a number of security agreements between Taipei and Washington that differ from arrangements between the United States, NATO and Ukraine.

#### DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Next US defense budget will get a boost due to Ukraine invasion -- Pentagon comptroller  
BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1314) | Valerie Insinna

US defense spending is likely to increase given Russia's ongoing war with Ukraine, the Pentagon's comptroller said today. The boost to US defense budgets is unlikely to be as "dramatic" as Germany's recent pledge to increase modernization funds for its military by €100 billion (\$110 billion), Mike McCord said during remarks at the McAleese and Associates conference today. There will instead likely be a "similar vector impact" to US defense spending, he said.

#### EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

5. Spending Bill Clears House, Minus Covid Funds

New York Times, Mar. 10 (0300), Pg. A1 | Emily Cochrane

The House on Wednesday passed a sprawling \$1.5 trillion federal spending bill that includes a huge infusion of aid for war-torn Ukraine and money to keep the government funded through September, after jettisoning a package to fund President Biden's new Covid-19 response effort.

6. Harris Lands in Poland Amid Turbulence Over Jets for Ukraine

Associated Press, Mar. 9 (1749) | Aamer Madhani and Lisa Mascaró

Vice President Kamala Harris' trip to Warsaw to thank Poland for taking in hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion took an unexpected turn before she even left Washington. She's parachuting into the middle of unexpected diplomatic turbulence over fighter jets.

7. House lawmakers question India's ties to Russia and its partnership with U.S. as competition increases with China in Indo-Pacific

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 9 (1922) | Svetlana Shkolnikova

As the U.S. works to deepen relationships in the Indo-Pacific region, some House lawmakers on Wednesday questioned India's readiness to partner with the U.S. against China due to its longstanding ties with Russia. "It's shocking that such a great country has abstained on the issue of the mass murder in Ukraine," said Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C. "It just seems so unnatural. The relationship with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be with the United States, not in any way associated with the megalomaniac [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

8. How the Pentagon Says It's Tackling Inflation in Its 2023 Budget Request

Air Force Magazine Online, Mar. 9 (1542) | Greg Hadley

Concern over inflation has impacted the Pentagon's planning for the fiscal 2023 budget request, the Defense Department's top financial official said March 9. But, the budget is "substantively" complete, and space figures to be a foundational part of it, he added. Comptroller Mike McCord, speaking at the McAleese conference, teased that there is a "projected date" for the release of the 2023 budget, which has been delayed for more than a month. But that date hasn't been finalized, and McCord said he still hopes to have the National Defense Strategy, also delayed, rolled out before the budget request.

#### EUROPE

9. White House Warns Russia May Use Chemical Weapons in Ukraine

Associated Press, Mar. 9 (2008) | Zeke Miller

The Biden administration publicly warned Wednesday that Russia might seek to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine as the White House rejected Russian claims of illegal chemical weapons development in the country it has invaded. This week, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria

Zakharova — without evidence — accused Ukraine of running chemical and biological weapons labs with U.S. support. White House press secretary Jen Psaki called Russia's claim "preposterous" and said it could be part of an attempt by Russia to lay the groundwork for its own use of such weapons of mass destruction against Ukraine.

#### 10. EUCOM to Poles: forget the MiGs, stick with anti-air & tank weapons for Ukraine

BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 9 (2246) | Colin Clark

In what seems to be the Pentagon's final word on the back-and-forth proposal about shifting Polish fighter jets to Ukraine, the head of America's European Command, who also serves as the top military commander for NATO, has declared that the "transfer of MiG-29 aircraft will not appreciably increase the effectiveness of the Ukrainian Air Force." Instead, Gen. Tod Wolters said, "We believe the most effective way to support the Ukrainian military in their fight against Russia is to provide increased amounts of anti-tank weapons and air defense systems, which is on-going with the international community."

#### 11. Hospital Hit as Attacks on Civilians Grow

New York Times, Mar. 10 (0300), Pg. A1 | Richard Pérez-Peña

Misery deepened in Ukraine, where millions of people were caught in besieged cities, and in Russia, where the West's economic sanctions were biting hard. Russian forces bombarded Ukrainian cities, prevented hundreds of thousands of civilians from escaping and destroyed a maternity hospital on Wednesday, while the Kremlin accused the United States of waging "an economic war" against Russia. The misery wrought by Russia's Ukraine invasion on Feb. 24 deepened further in both countries — destruction and deprivation in Ukraine, and the toll of the West's tightening vise grip on Russia's economy.

#### 12. Invasion Brings NATO New Focus

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 10 (0200), Pg. A1 | Daniel Michaels, Sune Engel Rasmussen and Evan Gershkovich

Troops at Lithuania's Rukla military base have stood at high alert for years, worried about the threat posed by Russia, across the border 62 miles away. Their NATO allies to the west had played down those concerns. Now NATO is pouring resources into the remote outpost. Since President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, other North Atlantic Treaty Organization members have sent 600 troops to Rukla and doubled the number of allied forces throughout this tiny country to 3,000. NATO plans to add another 1,000 troops from the U.S. and other countries.

#### 13. West's Tactical Challenge: Navigating Putin's Red Lines

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 10 (0200), Pg. A1 | Stephen Fidler

The U.S. and its allies are walking a fine line in Ukraine, seeking to help the country thwart Russia's invasion while avoiding crossing Moscow's red lines and getting pulled into a direct conflict with a nuclear-armed adversary. So far, Washington and Western European capitals have responded to the steadily increasing violence of Moscow's military offensive with weapons deliveries, intelligence sharing and financial aid to Kyiv, as well as sweeping economic sanctions against Russia.

#### 14. Subtle Shift Raises Hopes For a Diplomatic Solution

New York Times, Mar. 10 (0300), Pg. A17 | Anton Troianovski, Patrick Kingsley and Michael Crowley

When President Vladimir V. Putin launched his invasion two weeks ago, he said a primary goal was the "denazification" of Ukraine. He referred to the Ukrainian government as a "gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis," making it clear that his aim was to topple it. But in recent days, the language has shifted, with the Kremlin signaling that Mr. Putin is no longer bent on regime change in Kyiv. It is a subtle shift, and it may be a head-fake; but it is prompting officials who have scrambled to mediate to believe that Mr. Putin may be seeking a negotiated way out of a war that has become a much bloodier slog than he expected.

INDO-PACIFIC

15. South Korea's President-elect Wants Tougher Stance on North Korea

Associated Press, Mar. 10 (0133) | Hyung-Jin Kim and Kim Tong-Hyung

South Korea's president-elect Yoon Suk Yeol said Thursday he would solidify an alliance with the United States, build up a powerful military and sternly cope with North Korean provocations, hours after he won the country's hard-fought election to become its next leader. "I'll rebuild the South Korea-U.S. alliance. I'll (make) it a strategic comprehensive alliance while sharing key values like a liberal democracy, a market economy and human rights," Yoon told a televised news conference.

16. Philippines Ready to Back U.S. If It Gets Embroiled in War

Associated Press, Mar. 10 (0050) | Not Attributed

The Philippine president is ready to open the country's "facilities" to American forces under a 1951 mutual defense treaty if Russia's war against Ukraine turns for the worse and embroils the United States in the fighting, Manila's ambassador to Washington said Thursday. Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez said President Rodrigo Duterte made the remarks in a recent meeting in Manila where the president also expressed concern over the global economic impact of the unfolding crisis. The Philippines has condemned the invasion and voted yes on a U.N. General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate halt to Moscow's attack and the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine.

17. Australia to boost defence force by nearly a third

Agence France-Presse, Mar. 9 (2022) | Not Attributed

Australia will boost its defence forces by some 30 percent by 2040, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Thursday, describing it as the country's largest military build-up in peacetime.

18. U.S. intensifies intelligence reconnaissance, missile defense around Korean Peninsula

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Mar. 9 (1742) | Byun Duk-kun

The United States has intensified its intelligence collection activities around the Korean Peninsula, while its missile defense forces in the region have also been ordered to increase alert amid an increase in North Korean missile activities, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) said Wednesday. "The United States condemns the recent series of ballistic missile launches by the DPRK," the Hawaii-based Indo-Pacific Command said in a released statement. "In light of this, on March 7, 2022, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command ordered intensified Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance collection activities in the Yellow Sea, as well as enhanced readiness among our ballistic missile defense forces in the region," it added.

CHINA

19. Taiwan says China closed off part of South China Sea to look for crashed plane

Reuters, Mar. 9 (2327) | Not Attributed

China closed off a part of the South China Sea close to Vietnam this month in its hunt for a crashed aircraft, Taiwan's intelligence agency said on Thursday, offering an alternate explanation for an exercise Beijing has called military drills.

MIDDLE EAST

20. Iran nuclear talks stumble over unresolved Russian demands

Reuters, Mar. 9 (1713) | John Irish and Francois Murphy

Parties trying to revive the Iran nuclear deal scrambled on Wednesday to resolve last-minute Russian demands that threaten to scupper negotiations, diplomats said, with the United States appearing unwilling to engage with Russia on the matter.

AIR FORCE

21. Air Force can't buy its first hypersonic ARRW as planned, following budget cut

BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1728) | Valerie Insinna

The US Air Force's hopes for buying its first hypersonic missiles this year appear to be dead, with Congressional appropriators halving funding for the service's flagship hypersonic weapons program in a new fiscal 2022 omnibus spending bill. The Air Force had requested about \$161 million in the FY22

budget request to buy the first 12 AGM-183A Air Launched Rapid Response Weapon (ARRW) missiles from manufacturer Lockheed Martin. However, the proposed spending bill cuts about \$80 million of that total, stating that procurement of the new weapon is early to need.

22. Pentagon restricted known info about F-35 in controversial 'controlled' tester report

BreakingDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1217) | Valerie Insinna

The section of the controversial "controlled" version of the Pentagon's independent weapons testers' annual report that deals with the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter contains little information that would be a surprise to close watchers of the program, despite claims by the Pentagon that it needed to protect sensitive information from public disclosure. A close reading of the CUI version of the report, which Breaking Defense obtained courtesy of the Project on Government Oversight, revealed no bombshells with regard to the Lockheed Martin-made F-35, the most expensive single weapons program in US history.

ARMY

23. Wormuth predicts stability for modernization funding

InsideDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1508) | Evan Ochsner

Army Secretary Christine Wormuth on Wednesday said she anticipates modernization programs will have continuity in funding at least through fiscal year 2023 and they currently benefit from higher overall defense spending. Still, the Army will have to continue to balance its need for legacy systems and the growing expenses its modernization programs will require over the coming years.

MARINE CORPS

24. Berger: Marine Corps Force Design capabilities 'theater-agnostic'

InsideDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1533) | Not Attributed

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger stressed today that the capabilities the Marine Corps is pursuing as part of its Force Design 2030 effort are not limited to use in any specific theater. "We know what the pacing threat is, that's critical to informing our force design," Berger said during a Wednesday speech at the McAleese Defense Programs Conference. "But the capabilities are theater-agnostic. Force design is going to enable us to operate a fight to win in an even more diverse set of circumstances, regions and scenarios than we can today."

NAVY

25. Navy's New 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan Will Avoid Details—Again

DefenseOne.com, Mar. 9 (1958) | Caitlin M. Kenney

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said the maritime service is intentionally leaving its long-term plans vague to give "decision space" for leaders to meet unknown threats and needs that may arise. Critics, including top Republicans, have panned the move for preventing lawmakers from being able to critique the Biden administration's plans. Del Toro said he favors transparency and clear definition of the Navy's plans one decade out, but questioned the benefit of speculating too far into the future.

26. Navy offers a new argument for decommissioning cruisers: They're not safe

Defense News Online, Mar. 9 (1808) | Megan Eckstein

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said March 9 the service does not want to continue to operate some of its worst-off cruisers because it's no longer safe. "The wear and tear is significant, and the safety of our people in the United States Navy always has to come first in times of peace, without question. And so it would be irresponsible to continue to upgrade some of those platforms today at great risk to personnel safety," he said at the McAleese Defense Programs Conference.

27. Gilday to put out NAVPLAN update 'within another month'

InsideDefense.com, Mar. 9 (1620) | Not Attributed

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday will release an update to his navigation plan within the next month. "The navigation plan was always intended to keep the Navy honest on those key

competencies that we have to deliver during what we consider to be a critical decade,” Gilday said today at the McAleese Defense Programs Conference.

#### SPACE FORCE

28. Space programs moving up on DoD’s budget priority list

SpaceNews Online, Mar. 9 (1932) | Sandra Erwin

Pentagon funding for space programs will grow in the coming years as the U.S. military increasingly relies on satellites to conduct operations, the Defense Department’s comptroller Mike McCord said March 9. “Space is probably emerging in our internal reviews as the most important foundational area for everything that we are doing and everything that we need to be doing,” McCord said at the McAleese & Associates’ annual defense programs conference.

#### INSTALLATIONS

29. Aquilino: Fuel Logistics to Be Dispersed in Wake of Red Hill Closure

Seapower Magazine Online, Mar. 9 (1702) | Richard R. Burgess

The commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region addressed concerns from Congress about the impact of the closure of the Red Hill fuel depot in Hawaii during March 9 testimony on Capitol Hill. Rep. Mike Rogers, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, said in his opening remarks that Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro’s decision to close Red Hill was made “without laying out the resources to replace that capacity. That’s extremely short-sighted. The response from the department has been the same: the answer is just one policy announcement away. And that’s unacceptable.”

30. Spending bill adds \$150 million toward draining Red Hill fuel tanks in Hawaii

Stars and Stripes Online, Mar. 9 (2057) | Wyatt Olson

A massive \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill debated Wednesday in the U.S. House of Representatives includes \$150 million for emptying and permanently closing the Navy’s Red Hill fuel storage facility in Hawaii that was the source of widespread well-water contamination. The money comes in addition to \$100 million included in a stopgap funding bill signed by President Joe Biden last month. That bill keeps the government funded until Friday, theoretically giving Congress time to pass the Fiscal Year 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Bill now in the House.

31. First Afghan Refugees Arrive At New Center in Virginia

Associated Press, Mar. 9 (1141) | Ben Fox

A first group of Afghan refugees have arrived at a new temporary housing facility in Northern Virginia as the U.S. works to resettle people who fled the Taliban takeover of their country in August, the Department of Homeland Security said Wednesday.

#### NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Put U.S. Boots in Ukraine to Defend a UN-Approved Security Zone

DefenseOne.com, Mar. 9 (1705) | James Jeffrey

The Ukrainian government should be encouraged to appeal to the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution under Chapter VI, establishing a Humanitarian Safe Zone with a ceasefire regime in Ukrainian territories abutting its Western neighbors. (A resolution under Chapter VII, which would allow legal enforcement with troops under U.N. control, would be better but undoubtedly impossible.) A model of this kind of peacekeeper border deployment is Resolution 1701, which ended the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 2006.

33. Russia’s Failure Is China’s Gain

Wall Street Journal, Mar. 10 (0200), Pg. A23 | Seth Cropsey

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has inaugurated a new era of political competition but not a new cold war. The American people and their leaders need to prepare for a new kind of geopolitical competition—more intense, more dangerous and more aggressive than anything since World War II. Bismarck, Metternich and Louis XIV’s world of unrestrained power to achieve national objectives is back. And while the immediate threat is Russia, the more formidable one is China.

34. Why regime change in Moscow is not the goal

Washington Post, Mar. 10 (0115), Pg. A21 | James Hohmann

So far, none dare call it “regime change.” Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Vice President Harris and White House press secretary Jen Psaki have all emphasized in recent days that ousting Russian President Vladimir Putin is not the goal of U.S. policy. “What we want is that he will leave Ukraine,” said Harris.

35. No foot-dragging on Red Hill closure

Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Mar. 9 (N/A), Pg. A12 | Editorial

“There will be no surprises.” A senior Department of Defense official spoke to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser’s editorial board on Monday on behalf of his boss, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, who had just popped off a pretty big surprise: The massive underground fuel tanks at Red Hill will be shut down. Millions of gallons of jet fuel parked just 100 feet above a critical freshwater aquifer will be removed. Austin, who came in with the Biden administration, cannot speak for what the Navy has said and done in years past, the official said, but the secretary promises that from here on, the military will move “in lockstep with the people in Hawaii,” making decisions cooperatively, sharing all information. So — no more surprises. And we do want to believe. But this is not our first rodeo.

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## DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, April 12

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<https://dtra1portal.unet.dtra.mil/SI/PA/PADocs/Defense%20Morning%20Clips%2012%20Apr%202022.pdf>

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## OVERVIEW

President Biden held a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with their Indian counterparts to highlight a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, according to the Associated Press. Separately, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said the U.S. was monitoring, but could not confirm, claims by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Russia intended to unleash chemical weapons on Ukrainian units in Mariupol as part of an impending assault in the east, the Washington Post reported. Also of note, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to reaffirm Europe's commitment to toughening sanctions against Russia as long as the war persisted, while warning that Russia likely intended to intensify the violence, the New York Times wrote.

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## TOP STORIES

### 1. Biden Urges Modi Not to Step Up Indian Use of Russian Oil

Associated Press, Apr. 11 (2245) | Josh Boak, Fatima Hussein and Ashok Sharma

President Joe Biden asked India's Narendra Modi on Monday not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other nations try to cut off Moscow's energy income following the invasion of Ukraine. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to refrain from Russian oil, a source of tension with the U.S. Meeting by video call, Biden told Modi that the U.S. could help India diversify its sources of energy, according to press secretary Jen Psaki. Even though India receives little of its oil from Russia, it stepped up recently with a major purchase as other democracies are trying to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

### 2. New assault in east Ukraine expected

Washington Post, Apr. 12 (0115), Pg. A1 | Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

### 3. A Talk With Putin Deepens the Fear of Worse Attacks

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski

Austria's chancellor visited President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday -- the first Western leader to see him in person since the Ukraine invasion -- and said he came away feeling not only pessimistic

about peace prospects but fearing that Mr. Putin intended to drastically intensify the brutality of the war.

#### DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. After hearing Silicon Valley complaints, Hicks says no 'magical' fix to acquisition

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 (1450) | Valerie Insinna

When more than 15 space- and software-related startups gathered at the Space Force's SpaceWERX innovation hub to speak with Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks, it meant an opportunity to share horror stories about bureaucratic red tape they'd encountered while working with the Defense Department — a near universal experience among attendees.

#### EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

5. U.S. Debates Using Hague Court To Investigate Russian Atrocities

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Charlie Savage

The Biden administration is vigorously debating how much the United States can or should assist an investigation into Russian atrocities in Ukraine by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, according to officials familiar with internal deliberations. But laws from 1999 and 2002, enacted by a Congress wary that the court might investigate Americans, limit the government's ability to provide support. And the United States has long objected to any exercise of jurisdiction by the court over citizens of countries that are not part of the treaty that created it -- like the United States, but also Russia.

6. For America's security aid programs, who will run the show?

Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (0900) | Joe Gould

With the world transfixed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and debates breaking out on Twitter over whether the U.S. should send the country fighter aircraft and missile defense systems, security assistance — usually a wonky topic — is having a moment. But it's not just about public attention. With Democrats holding the reins in Washington, State Department officials have recommended a list of reforms to America's globe-spanning security aid programs.

7. New Head Of Europe Command Expected

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12 (0200), Pg. A6 | Nancy A. Youssef and Gordon Lubold

A top American Army general in Europe is expected to be elevated to lead all U.S. and allied forces on the continent, U.S. officials said, marking the biggest change to NATO military leadership since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The Pentagon is also set to name a new general to lead Special Operation forces, the officials said. Both would succeed commanders who are expected to retire this year as part of a normal rotation of commanders.

#### INDO-PACIFIC

8. Despite Russia tensions, U.S. and India deepen defense ties

Defense News Online, Apr. 11 (1932) | Joe Gould

Eyeing China, U.S. and India committed to deeper defense ties in space and cyberspace as well as an expansion of their joint military exercises, officials from both countries announced Monday. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in Washington with their Indian counterparts — Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar — amid rising tensions between the allies over India's muted criticism of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

9. India, US to hold dialogue on artificial intelligence

Press Trust of India, Apr. 12 (0137) | Lalit K Jha

India and the US have agreed to hold a dialogue on artificial intelligence to harness opportunities for joint innovation and cooperation in new domains, the two countries announced after the 2+2 ministerial.

10. US has not yet made determination on potential sanctions or waivers to India under CATSAA law – Blinken

Press Trust of India, Apr. 12 (0209) | Lalit K Jha

The US has not yet made any decision on potential sanctions or waivers to India under CATSAA law for its purchase of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said. The US administration is required under its domestic law, Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) to impose sanctions on any country that has significant transactions with Iran, North Korea or Russia.

11. Australia to Fund \$1.1 Billion Darwin Port to Stem China Threat

Bloomberg News, Apr. 12 (0022) | Ben Westcott

Australia will build a new A\$1.5 billion (\$1.1 billion) port in Darwin to boost the export of gas and critical minerals, in competition with the city's main port which was controversially leased to a Chinese-owned company in 2015.

12. With Threats All Around, Japan Moves to Shed Its Pacifist Constraints

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A9 | Motoko Rich

Late in February, just days after the Russian invasion, Ukraine asked Japan to ship an assortment of military equipment, from antitank weapons and ammunition to electronic radar and bulletproof vests. Although it could not compare with the airlift of arms sent by American and European officials, the military aid marked a decisive moment in Japan's evolution away from the pacifist identity it has embraced since the United States pushed to insert a clause renouncing war into Japan's postwar Constitution.

13. U.S. Carrier Group Arrives as North Korea Ramps Up Threats

Bloomberg News, Apr. 12 (0415) | Jon Herskovitz

A U.S. aircraft carrier group was in international waters east of the Korean Peninsula for the first time in nearly five years, reports said, as Pyongyang is poised for provocations that could include its first nuclear test since 2017.

EUROPE

14. Europe Moves to Arm Ukraine as Sanctions Fail to Sway Putin

Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (1141) | Kevin Whitelaw, Marc Champion and John Follain

Ukraine's allies in Europe are moving beyond their usual emphasis on diplomacy and sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with a new focus on urgently arming Kyiv as the best chance at changing Vladimir Putin's decision-making.

15. NATO Anti-Aircraft Weapon Donations Aren't Covering Ukraine Losses

Newsweek Online, Apr. 11 (1237) | David Brennan

Slovakia last week became the first country to donate a sophisticated Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft system to Ukraine, as leaders in Kyiv stress the need for more and better anti-aircraft weapons to blunt Russia's punishing aerial bombardment. But the Slovakian system alone is not enough to replenish Ukraine's mauled anti-aircraft network. As Kyiv prepares to face Russian President Vladimir Putin's renewed offensive in the eastern Donbas region, Ukrainian leaders are still stressing the need to defend their airspace and the importance of Western support in doing this.

16. Russian forces left bombs, death and destruction around Kyiv. Now, a painstaking demining operation is underway

CNN.com, Apr. 11 (2008) | Frederik Pleitgen and Vasco Cotovio

As Russian forces retreated, they left behind scores of unexploded shells and bombs in addition to mines they planted to slow down the Ukrainian advance, to protect their withdrawal, or perhaps, simply to scorch the earth. Russian forces have been accused of regularly using cluster munitions against civilian targets in Ukraine. Earlier this month, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said it received credible allegations that Russian armed forces have used cluster munitions in populated areas at least 24 times.

17. U.S. Army chief of staff on hand as ally Lithuania announces training for Ukrainians

Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 11 (0934) | John Vandiver

Lithuania will host a mission to train Ukrainian soldiers to use new weaponry that the Baltic country's fellow NATO allies are sending Kyiv to assist in its war against invading Russian forces. Lithuanian defense officials announced the plan Sunday, the same day U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. James McConville was in the country for security talks.

18. Albania's former 'Stalin City' looks West with NATO airbase

Reuters, Apr. 12 (0139) | Not Attributed

In an Albanian city once named for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, dozens of Soviet- and Chinese-made planes rust in the open air on a former communist airbase, some with flat tyres, others covered with dust. The site in the central city now called Kucova is being transformed into a modern NATO airbase, a symbol of Albania's westward shift -- and a key military buffer in Europe as Russia wages war in Ukraine. The base, due to be completed in 2023, will give the "alliance an important strategic facility in the Western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Black Sea region", the NATO official said.

RUSSIA

19. Russian Navy Taking on Resupply Role Nearly 50 Days Into Ukrainian Invasion

U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 11 (1829) | Heather Mongilio

Russian Navy ships in the Black Sea are currently resupplying troops in Ukraine instead of playing an offensive role, a senior defense official said Monday. Day 47 into the Ukrainian invasion, and the Russian Navy continues to mostly support the invasion. The country has a couple dozen ships in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the senior defense official told reporters.

20. Russia's invasion has escalated a brewing battle over space

Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A5 | Noah Bierman

A 57-second video posted by the Russian government last month caught the attention of scientists and diplomats, but not in a way that inspired optimism about the future of global cooperation in outer space. The dark yet jaunty satirical video, depicting what would be the certain demise of the station, presaged more serious threats to an endeavor that has come to symbolize post-Cold War cooperation in space.

MIDDLE EAST

21. Iran Says Nuclear Deal in 'E.R.' Hanging on U.S. Decision

Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (0500) | Arsalan Shahla

Iran said the 2015 nuclear deal is alive but lingering in the "emergency room," with its fate resting on a decision by the U.S. that could lift sanctions on Tehran's economy and oil exports. Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, told reporters the Islamic Republic had finalized all the details needed to revive the landmark accord with other world powers involved in stalled negotiations in Vienna.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

22. Pakistan Picks Interim Prime Minister Whose Family Is Dogged by Graft Accusations

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A6 | Salman Masood and Christina Goldbaum

The Pakistani Parliament selected the opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif to become the country's prime minister on Monday, ushering in a new government after the ouster of Imran Khan and capping a week of political turmoil that pushed the fragile democracy to the brink. Mr. Sharif is the younger brother of Nawaz Sharif, who served as prime minister three times, and like other family members, he has been dogged by accusations of graft and malfeasance that were the focus of several corruption investigations. Now, Shehbaz Sharif's rise to prime minister is seen in some circles as an implicit rebuke of Mr. Khan's professed mission of dismantling Pakistan's political dynasties and rooting out corruption in politics.

AFRICA

23. A Purple Heart reminds us that U.S. troops are still fighting in Northern Africa

Task & Purpose, Apr. 11 (1315) | Max Hauptman

Last week, Master Sgt. Steven Corley, an intelligence noncommissioned officer with 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was awarded the Purple Heart during a ceremony in Stuttgart, Germany. Corley was wounded in January “while serving as the leader of a six-person team in northwest Africa where he was responsible for intelligence exploitation and integration with partners and allies.” As Gen. Steven Townsend, the AFRICOM commander, said during the ceremony on Friday, “Wherever you look in Africa, when it’s somewhere tough or dangerous, SOCAFRICA is there.”

24. EU halting military training in Mali but staying in Sahel

Agence France-Presse, Apr. 11 (1505) | Not Attributed

The EU on Monday decided to halt its military training missions in Mali but will keep a presence in the Sahel, the bloc’s top diplomat said on Monday. “We are halting the training missions for the (Malian) armed forces and national guard,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a media conference, but added: “The Sahel remains a priority. We’re not giving up on the Sahel, far from it. We want to commit even more to that region.”

ARMY

25. The Army’s transformation begins with these new units

Army Times Online, Apr. 11 (1135) | Todd South

Major changes to the Army’s doctrine, equipment and operations have arrived in upgraded gear, future-focused technology and new ways to do battle. But where these elements converge is in units filled with soldiers. And the Army isn’t letting its soldiers sit around and wait for new gear before figuring out how to fight a peer threat in large scale combat. They’re making major shifts in how big formations contribute while also tinkering with the look, function and capabilities of smaller, subordinate units.

26. Electronic warfare and drone swarms: Here’s the Army’s plan for EDGE 22

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 (0745) | Andrew Eversden

The US Army will be “working heavily” with electronic warfare and experimenting with large drone swarms as part of an upcoming sensor-to-shooter experiment in the Utah desert, according to a senior Army aviation official. “We’ll basically be scrimmaging with our partners and allies,” Maj. Gen. Walter Rugen, director of the Future Vertical Lift Cross-Functional Team, said during his presentation at the Army Aviation Association of America conference in Nashville, Tenn.

MARINE CORPS

27. Four Sikhs Sue Marines Over Ban on Wearing Beards While Deployed

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A20 | Dave Philipps

A Marine artillery captain named Sukhbir Singh Toor has been on a mission over the past year to become the first Sikh in the United States Marine Corps allowed to openly practice his religion while in uniform. During that time he has won a string of victories against the strict dress standards of the Marine Corps, and he can now wear the beard, long hair and turban required of a faithful Sikh while on duty. But recently, the Marine Corps dug in, refusing to allow him or any other Sikh to wear a beard on a combat deployment or during boot camp, saying that beards would hinder the corps’s ability to function and put lives at risk. On Monday, Captain Toor and three other Sikhs sued the Marine Corps in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, saying the corps’s refusal to grant a religious waiver is arbitrary and discriminatory, and violates the constitutional right to free exercise of their religion.

NAVY

28. Surface Navy tackling diversity as part of push for better retention, leadership

Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (1756) | Megan Eckstein

As the U.S. Navy tries to boost the warfighting performance of all its units, the surface force is looking at diversity and leadership as ways to get after that. Commander of Naval Surface Forces Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener said the surface force is the most diverse of all the Navy’s major warfare areas, but he’s not

satisfied and thinks that focusing on diversity and inclusion can help the force gain further advantage over potential adversaries in multiple ways.

29. A Sailor With Diagnosed Mental Health Issues Says He's Being Targeted for Seeking Help  
Military.com, Apr. 11 (1923) | Konstantin Toropin

Jatzael Alvarado Perez began struggling with life aboard the destroyer USS Farragut last year. The ship was in the process of getting ready to deploy, and a combination of the conditions aboard the Mayport, Florida-based ship and long stretches at sea were taking a toll on the 23-year-old sailor. After a couple of false starts, Perez would take the advice of a chaplain and seek help for the growing strains on his mental health, eventually receiving a diagnosis of a mood disorder. Instead of getting that help, though, he's faced repeated disciplinary actions, a positive drug test that suddenly wasn't, allegations of making it all up and, finally, confinement to the ship and a reduction in rank. Eventually, the situation drove his wife to spill everything in a post on Facebook.

#### NATIONAL GUARD

30. Space National Guard put on indefinite hold  
SpaceNews Online, Apr. 11 (1206) | Sandra Erwin

Instead of having a dedicated reserve force, the U.S. Space Force would have a regular active-duty force with full-time and part-time members, according to a proposal the Department of the Air Force submitted to Congress April 1. The proposal approved by Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall would establish in law "a new approach to managing reserve component forces by merging what has traditionally been called active-duty forces and reserve forces into a new component that provides full-time and part-time service options to Guardians," Kendall's spokesman Lt. Col. Justin Brockhoff, said in a statement to SpaceNews.

#### INSTALLATIONS

31. Students, staff remain wary of tap water

Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A1 | Esme M. Infante

At the 13 Oahu schools affected by the Navy's water contamination crisis, now that their water supply has been declared safe, the faucets are finally flowing. However, trust in the reported safety of the water still is not.

#### NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Putin's War Roils U.S.-India Ties

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12 (0200), Pg. A15 | Walter Russell Mead

The headlines focused on Europe last week as Russia regrouped for another brutal assault on Ukraine, but the Indo-Pacific is also heating up. Kurt Campbell, senior Asia policy maker at the National Security Council, planned a trip to the Solomon Islands to stave off a potential Chinese diplomatic coup, while President Biden added a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi even as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin prepared for in-person meetings with their Indian counterparts. In the long run, both sets of meetings could change world politics more than the struggle in Ukraine.

33. A clear U.S. defense of Taiwan

Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A11 | Shinzo Abe

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reminded many people of the fraught relationship between China and Taiwan. But while there are three similarities between the situation in Ukraine and Taiwan, there are also significant differences.

34. Deadliest Weapon in Ukraine Is a Cell Phone

Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 12 (0200) | James Stavridis

As the war in Ukraine pushes well into its second month, much of the outcome thus far — including Russian failures in executing their battle plans — is the result of logistics. Moscow has struggled abysmally to get gasoline, ammunition and food to its frontline troops. On the Ukrainian side, the flow

of weapons and other materiel from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the U.S. has been breathtaking. But one area of warfare hangs in the balance: information. Despite ample video evidence of widespread war crimes by Russian troops, provided by Ukrainian forces and international journalists, the Kremlin is still managing the information war with energy, imagination and fairly effective counternarratives.

35. The U.S. military should be prepared for a humanitarian assistance role in the Ukraine crisis  
Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (2100) | Louis C. Tripoli

At the most recent NATO summit, President Biden announced \$1 billion in new funding for food, clean water, shelter, and medical care for those in Ukraine and those who have fled to neighboring countries, but there may be a role for more direct assistance if requested by the countries that are affected. In addition to these efforts, it is worth considering the U.S. military's humanitarian assistance and disaster response, or HADR, core capabilities for this crisis. U.S. forces have responded to a myriad of global disasters. No matter the disaster, whether a tsunami, earthquake, or epidemic, the U.S. military provided essential resources, transportation, medical supplies and treatment centers, and logistical support in exigent circumstances. Of course, host nations (or NATO) must first request humanitarian assistance from the U.S. before the processes of invoking U.S. military HADR can go forward.



# 0.DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, April 11

## OVERVIEW

Russian-launched missiles twice struck the airport in Dnipro, Ukraine, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned this week will be crucial as Russian troops moved “to even larger operations” in east Ukraine, the *Associated Press* reported. Separately, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the U.S. was “surging resources, weapons, military equipment, but also diplomatic resources” to support Ukraine, and has mobilized at “unprecedented scope, scale and speed,” the *Washington Post* wrote. Also of note, Serbia took delivery of HQ-22 surface-to-air missile systems from China, becoming the first European state to operate the Chinese missiles, and raising possible concerns about Serbian belligerence toward Kosovo, according to the *Associated Press*.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. Ukrainian Defenders Dig in as Russia Boosts Firepower

*Associated Press, Apr. 11 (0406) | Adam Schreck and Cara Anna*

A showdown looms in Ukraine after Russia appointed a new military commander and looked to concentrate its attacks in the east, while Ukraine’s president said his troops will hold their ground, urging Western leaders, in particular President Joe Biden, to do more. Western military analysts say Russia’s assault increasingly is focusing on a sickle-shaped arc of eastern Ukraine — from Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, in the north to Kherson in the south.

### 2. Ukraine presses for more weapons

*Washington Post, Apr. 11 (0115), Pg. A1 | Taylor Telford, Annabelle Timsit, Bryan Pietsch and Julian Duplain*

Russian forces bombarded several towns in eastern Ukraine on Sunday, destroying an airport and damaging several civilian targets, as the war careens toward a pivotal new phase. The shift of the war and fears of full-scale military confrontation on open terrain prompted Ukrainian officials to again call for Western alliances to step up weapons supply efforts to strengthen Ukraine’s position on the battlefield. Ukrainians continued to flee eastern Ukraine through humanitarian corridors, though authorities said they were stymied by Russian troops violating cease-fires and holding up buses at checkpoints.

### 3. China Makes Semi-secret Delivery of Missiles to Serbia

*Associated Press, Apr. 10 (0938) | Dusan Stojanovic*

Russian ally Serbia took the delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft system in a veiled operation this weekend, amid Western concerns that an arms buildup in the Balkans at the time of the war in Ukraine could threaten the fragile peace in the region.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Ukraine crisis to headline India-U.S. 2+2 dialogue**

*The Hindu Online (India), Apr. 10 (2250) | Sriram Lakshman and Dinakar Peri*

India and the U.S. will hold their fourth annual '2+2' Defence and Foreign Ministry dialogue on April 11 in Washington, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine looming over the discussions and occupying a prominent place on the agenda. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who arrived in Washington on Saturday night, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, arrived on Sunday, will meet their counterparts, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, in the first such dialogue of the Biden administration.

### **5. Austin addresses Ukrainian troops in U.S. for training ahead of their return home**

*Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 10 (1842) | Mike Brest*

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with some of the Ukrainian forces who received training in the United States and are set to return home shortly. The Ukrainian troops, which had been in the U.S. participating in the prescheduled military education program at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, got additional training since the conclusion of the program last month on some of the weapons the U.S. is providing to them.

## **COVID-19**

### **6. With COVID Mission Over, Pentagon Plans for Next Pandemic**

*Associated Press, Apr. 11 (0042) | Lolita C. Baldor*

A COVID-19 patient was in respiratory distress. The Army nurse knew she had to act quickly. That nurse's mission was to get urgent care for her patient. Now, the U.S. military mission is to use the experiences of Cobleigh's team and other units pressed into service against the pandemic to prepare for the next crisis threatening a large population, whatever its nature. Their experiences, said Gen. Glen VanHerck, will help shape the size and staffing of the military's medical response so the Pentagon can provide the right types and numbers of forces needed for another pandemic, global crisis or conflict.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **7. White House, Republicans clash on U.S. endgame in Ukraine-Russia war**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 10 (1043) | Ben Wolfgang*

Deep differences over the endgame in Ukraine came into sharp focus Sunday morning, with Biden administration officials saying that Washington wants to improve Kyiv's position at the negotiating table with Russia as top congressional Republicans argued that the U.S. can help ensure an unmitigated defeat for Moscow.

### **8. Bipartisan group of lawmakers arrives in Poland**

*The Hill Online, Apr. 10 (0746) | Mychael Schnell*

A bipartisan group of lawmakers arrived in Poland this weekend to meet with U.S. forces and allies in the region amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## **EUROPE**

### **9. The wartime president: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks with Scott Pelley in Kyiv**

*CBSNews.com (60 Minutes), Apr. 10 (1926) | Scott Pelley*

On February 24, with the Russian invasion coming at him from three sides, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reached for his most powerful weapon – his phone. The moment Zelenskyy told his people he refused to flee, Ukraine refused to fall. Leaders don't become legends often, but over these nearly seven weeks, this 44-year-old former comedian inspired his country to stand up to the overwhelming force of Russia. Last Wednesday, we were admitted to Zelenskyy's fortified war rooms to meet the man who stands between the Russian army and the free world. We met President Zelenskyy in the blacked-out hallways of his command center in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. It is a fortress, crowded with troops, machine guns, mines, explosives and a great deal more.

### **10. Ukraine says 1,200 bodies found near Kyiv as east braces for onslaught**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 10 (2226) | Not Attributed*

Ukraine said Sunday it had found more than 1,200 bodies in the Kyiv region, the scene of atrocities allegedly committed by Russian troops, as residents in the country's east braced -- or fled -- ahead of an expected massive offensive.

### **11. Zelenskiy praises Germany's position towards Ukraine after call with Scholz**

*Reuters, Apr. 10 (1932) | Maria Starkova and Ronald Popeski*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday he had discussed possible additional sanctions on Russia in a call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and praised what he said was a more favourable change in Germany's position towards Kyiv.

### **12. US police agencies are sending protective gear to Ukrainian civilians in what experts call an unprecedented move**

*CNN.com, Apr. 10 (1313) | Emma Tucker and Zachary Cohen*

The governors of Iowa and Nebraska announced last week interagency initiatives to donate police protective gear, including military-grade equipment such as helmets and vests, to Ukraine to help civilians defend themselves against Russia's invasion. The agencies join a growing list of police departments -- from California to Ohio to Vermont -- that are donating non-lethal police gear to aid Ukrainian civilians, according to a CNN review of state-by-state efforts and interviews with some of those involved.

**13. Sweden and Finland consider joining NATO amidst Ukraine-Russia war**

*NPR News (Weekend Edition), Apr. 10 (0815) | Ayesha Rascoe*

As Russia continues to wage war in Ukraine, Sweden and Finland are considering joining NATO. Ayesha Rascoe asks former U.S. ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder about the implications.

**RUSSIA**

**14. U.S. Doubts New Russian War Chief Can End Moscow's Floundering**

*Associated Press, Apr. 10 (1651) | Robert Burns and Hope Yen*

Russia has tapped a new Ukraine war commander to take centralized control of the next phase of battle after its costly failures in the opening campaign and carnage for Ukrainian civilians. U.S. officials don't see one man making a difference in Moscow's prospects.

**15. Ukraine says Russians stole lethal substances from Chernobyl**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 10 (0735) | Not Attributed*

Russian forces who occupied the Chernobyl nuclear plant stole radioactive substances from research laboratories that could potentially kill them, Ukraine's State Agency for Managing the Exclusion Zone said on Sunday.

**CHINA**

**16. In Russia's information war, its greatest weapon turns out to be China**

*Washington Post, Apr. 11 (0115), Pg. A10 | Elizabeth Dwoskin*

Russian propaganda about the war in Ukraine cratered last month after Russian state news channels were blocked in Europe and restricted globally. But in recent weeks, China has emerged as a potent outlet for Kremlin disinformation, researchers say, portraying Ukraine and NATO as the aggressors and sharing false claims about neo-Nazi control of the Ukrainian government.

**INDO-PACIFIC**

**17. Keep focus of Ukraine war on issue of sovereignty – PM**

*Straits Times (Singapore), Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A1 | Tham Yuen-C*

Seeing the war in Ukraine as a battle between democracies and autocracies complicates the problem and automatically puts Beijing in the wrong camp, making it untenable for China to denounce Russia, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

**18. Rising Tensions Fuel Indo-Pacific Arms Sales**

*National Defense Magazine Online, Apr. 10 (1118) | Meredith Roaten*

With tensions rising in the Indo-Pacific and China increasingly intimidating its neighbors, nations in the region are seeking capabilities that will set them up for success in potential future conflicts.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

### **19. Israel Steps Up Campaign Against Iran**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 11 (0200), Pg. A8 | Dion Nissenbaum*

The Israeli military says it has carried out over 400 airstrikes in Syria and other parts of the Middle East since 2017 as part of a wide-ranging campaign targeting Iran and its allies, offering its fullest picture yet of its undeclared war with Tehran.

### **20. Iran says US ‘imposing new conditions’ in nuclear talks**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 10 (0451) | Not Attributed*

Iran’s foreign minister said Sunday that Washington is “imposing new conditions” in the negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement.

## **AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN**

### **21. Islamic State Morphs And Grows in Pakistan, Afghanistan**

*Associated Press, Apr. 11 (0207) | Kathy Gannon*

Since coming to power in Afghanistan eight months ago, the Taliban have touted their success in repressing the Islamic State group, but the militants have expanded into neighboring Pakistan, stepping up attacks there. Analysts say IS has morphed into a borderless terrorist group, one of the deadliest in a region that has spawned many violent, radical organizations.

### **22. Pakistan lawmakers to elect new PM after Khan ousted**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 11 (0211) | Zain Zaman Janjua*

Shehbaz Sharif was set Monday to become Pakistan’s new prime minister, but the country still faces months of political crisis with ousted premier Imran Khan vowing disruption from the wings. Khan was dismissed Sunday after losing a no-confidence vote, paving the way for an opposition alliance that faces the same issues that bedevilled the cricket star-turned-politician.

## **INSTALLATIONS**

### **23. Water Woes**

*Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Apr. 10 (N/A), Pg. A1 | Sophie Cocke*

The potential water shortage facing urban Honolulu is already threatening to hold up hundreds of units of affordable housing, new residential and commercial projects in Kakaako and a major environmental upgrade to a

sewage treatment plant, among other planned developments – a predicament that could have far-reaching effects on the island’s economy. After a November fuel spill from the Navy’s Red Hill fuel facility contaminated the groundwater and drinking water system that serves Joint Base Pearl Harbor- Hickam and surrounding neighborhoods, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply shut down three of its wells to ensure the fuel didn’t migrate into the municipal water system. The primary well, the Halawa shaft, comprises 20% of the water supply for urban Honolulu.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **24. The U.S. has a big stake in how the Ukraine war ends**

*Los Angeles Times Online, Apr. 10 (0700) | Doyle McManus*

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, now in its seventh week, shows no sign of abating. Vladimir Putin’s army has abandoned its assault on Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, but is launching a new offensive in the country’s east. Ukraine’s allies, led by the United States and Britain, have stepped up their supplies of tanks and anti-aircraft weapons. But every war must end some day, whether in a victory for one side or a split-the-difference cease-fire. In Washington and other Western capitals, debate has begun over what terms Ukraine and its allies should seek for ending this one – or what goals they should hold out for.

### **25. The Pentagon Must ‘Campaign’ Against China, Not Hope for a Goal-Line Stand**

*DefenseOne.com, Apr. 10 (0600) | Bryan Clark and Dan Patt*

During the lead-up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration released an unprecedented amount of classified intelligence regarding Russian plans, even revealing insider knowledge of Vladimir Putin’s intentions. This attempt at deterrence by detection failed; Putin invaded anyway. But the quality of allied intelligence-gathering and the new National Defense Strategy point toward a potentially better way to dissuade adversaries, through what the Pentagon calls “campaigning.”

### **26. The great mismatch in America’s courtship of South-east Asia**

*Straits Times (Singapore) (Power Play), Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A17 | Charissa Yong*

The leaders of Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising the United States, Australia, India and Japan, have held multiple virtual meetings since President Joe Biden took office in January last year, and held their first in-person summit in Washington back in September. In contrast, the in-person summit of Asean, or the Association of South-east Asian Nations, and Mr Biden has been almost 1½ years in the making - and has yet to come to pass. The stalled summit is a concern because such meetings are usually an opportune avenue for the US to signal its commitment to the region. They also tend to jump-start deeper cooperation, as the venue where significant announcements are made.

### **27. U.S. Should Show India It’s Better Partner Than Putin**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 10 (2200) | Editorial*

India has surprised and disappointed many of its fellow democracies by refusing to directly condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Some U.S. officials have even let their frustrations spill out in public. Although understandable, such criticisms are mostly unproductive. The U.S. and its allies should instead concentrate on showing India that the country's interests are better served through partnership with the West, not Vladimir Putin.

## **28. Don't allow Navy to sidestep orders**

*Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Apr. 10 (N/A), Pg. E2 | Editorial*

Very little about the Red Hill saga has been straightforward, so it's only logical for Oahu residents to be skeptical about the Navy's dismissal of a captain in charge.

## **TOP STORIES**

### **1. Ukrainian Defenders Dig in as Russia Boosts Firepower**

Associated Press, Apr. 11 (0406) | Adam Schreck and Cara Anna

KYIV, Ukraine -- A showdown looms in Ukraine after Russia appointed a new military commander and looked to concentrate its attacks in the east, while Ukraine's president said his troops will hold their ground, urging Western leaders, in particular President Joe Biden, to do more.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned Sunday in a nightly address that this week will be as crucial as any during the war, saying "Russian troops will move to even larger operations in the east of our state."

Ukraine's fate as the war shifts south and east depends on whether the United States will help match a surge in Russian weaponry, he said, echoing comments he made in an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday.

"To be honest, whether we will be able to (survive) depends on this," Zelenskyy said in a "60 Minutes" interview. "Unfortunately, I don't have the confidence that we will be receiving everything we need."

Zelenskyy said he was grateful to Biden for U.S. military aid to date but added that he "long ago" forwarded a list of specific items Ukraine desperately needed.

"He has the list," Zelenskyy said. "President Biden can enter history as the person who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people who won and chose the right to have their own country. (This) also depends on him."

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer was due to meet Monday in Moscow with Putin, after meeting with Zelenskyy in Kyiv. Austria, a member of the European Union, is militarily neutral and not a member of NATO.

Also Monday, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said it was sending a military transport plane and a support team of 50 to Europe to carry much-needed equipment and supplies to key distribution centers.

More than six weeks of war in Ukraine has flattened cities, killed untold thousands and isolated Moscow economically and politically, and experts say the next phase of the battle may begin with a full-scale offensive that could determine the course of the conflict.

Questions remain about the ability of depleted and demoralized Russian forces to conquer much ground after their advance on the capital, Kyiv, was repelled by determined Ukrainian defenders. Britain's Defense Ministry says Russia is trying to compensate for mounting casualties by recalling veterans discharged in the past decade.

In his Sunday night address, Zelenskyy also accused Russia of trying to evade responsibility for war crimes in Ukraine.

"When people lack the courage to admit their mistakes, apologize, adapt to reality and learn, they turn into monsters. And when the world ignores it, the monsters decide that it is the world that has to adapt to them," Zelenskyy said.

"The day will come when they will have to admit everything. Accept the truth," he added.

Ukrainian authorities accuse Russian forces of committing war crimes against civilians, including airstrikes on hospitals, a missile attack that killed at least 57 people at a train station and other violence.

In another report of atrocities, the village of Buzova outside the capital, Kyiv, charred vehicles and buildings marked an area where local official Taras Didych told Ukrainian media Sunday that bodies showing "evidence of execution" were found after Russian forces withdrew from the region. It was unclear how many bodies were discovered.

Buzova is near Bucha, another of the towns near Kyiv, where hundreds of bodies, many with their hands bound and signs of torture, were found after the Russian retreat. Russia has falsely claimed the scenes in Bucha were staged.

In Washington, a senior U.S. official said Russia has appointed Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, one of its most seasoned military chiefs, to oversee the invasion. The official was not authorized to be identified and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Until now, Russia has had no central war commander on the ground.

Dvornikov, 60, takes over as Russian military prepares to focus on expanding control in Ukraine's east, where Russia-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region since 2014, declaring some areas independent.

He gained a record for brutality as head of Russian forces deployed to Syria in 2015 to back President Bashar Assad's government during the country's devastating civil war.

Russian authorities do not generally confirm such appointments and have said nothing about a new role for Dvornikov, who received the esteemed Hero of Russia medal from President Vladimir Putin in 2016.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan, speaking Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union," played down the appointment's significance.

"What we have learned in the first several weeks of this war is that Ukraine will never be subjected to Russia," Sullivan said. "It doesn't matter which general President Putin tries to appoint."

Western military analysts say Russia's assault increasingly is focusing on a sickle-shaped arc of eastern Ukraine from Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, in the north to Kherson in the south.

That could counter Russia's earlier problem of spreading its offensive too widely over too broad a geographic area.

Newly released Maxar Technologies satellite imagery showed an 8-mile (13-kilometer) convoy of military vehicles headed south through Ukraine to Donbas, recalling images of the convoy that stalled outside Kyiv before Russia gave up trying to take the capital.

On Sunday, Russian forces shelled government-controlled Kharkiv and sent reinforcements toward Izyum to the southeast to try to break Ukraine's defenses, the Ukrainian military command said. The Russians also kept up their siege of Mariupol, a key southern port that has been under attack and surrounded for nearly 1 ½ months.

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, said Russia's military used air-launched missiles to hit Ukraine's S-300 air-defense missile systems in the southern Mykolaiv region and at an air base in Chuhuiv, a city not far from Kharkiv.

Sea-launched Russian cruise missiles destroyed the headquarters of a Ukrainian military unit stationed farther west in the Dnipro region, Konashenkov said. Neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian military claims could be independently verified.

Missiles twice struck the airport in Dnipro, Ukraine's fourth-largest city, on Sunday, the regional governor said.

In Mariupol, Russia deployed Chechen fighters, reputed to be particularly fierce. Capturing the city on the Sea of Azov would give Russia a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine eight years ago.

The city's residents have lacked food, water and electricity since Russian forces surrounded the city and frustrated evacuation missions. Ukrainian authorities think an airstrike on a theater that was being used as a bomb shelter killed hundreds of civilians, and Zelenskyy has said he expects more evidence of atrocities to be found once Mariupol no longer is blockaded.

On Sunday night, Zelenskyy again appealed for more assistance. Speaking with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, he said he discussed “how to strengthen sanctions against Russia and . . . force Russia to seek peace.”

“I am glad to note that the German position has recently changed in favor of Ukraine. I consider it absolutely logical,” Zelenskyy said.

The Institute for the Study of War, an American think tank, predicted that Russian forces will “renew offensive operations in the coming days” from Izyum, a town southeast of Kharkiv, in the campaign to conquer the Donbas, which comprises Ukraine's industrial heartland.

But in the view of the think tank's analysts, “The outcome of forthcoming Russian operations in eastern Ukraine remains very much in question.”

*--Anna reported from Bucha, Ukraine. Yesica Fisch in Borodyanko, Robert Burns and Calvin Woodward in Washington, and Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report*

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## **2. Ukraine presses for more weapons**

Washington Post, Apr. 11 (0115), Pg. A1 | Taylor Telford, Annabelle Timsit, Bryan Pietsch and Julian Duplain

Russian forces bombarded several towns in eastern Ukraine on Sunday, destroying an airport and damaging several civilian targets, as the war careens toward a pivotal new phase. The shift of the war and fears of full-scale military confrontation on open terrain prompted Ukrainian officials to again call for Western alliances to step up weapons supply efforts to strengthen Ukraine's position on the battlefield.

Ukraine is preparing for a “massive attack in the east,” its ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, warned Sunday on CBS's “Face the Nation.” Of the Russian forces, she said: “There are so many of them and they still have so much equipment. And it looks like they're going to use all of it. So we are preparing for everything.”

Military analysts have been predicting the movement of the war toward the eastern border that Ukraine shares with Russia in an area known as Donbas. The energy-rich region includes territory where pro-Russian forces have been battling the Kyiv government since 2014.

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, cautioned that although leaders have been trumpeting success in driving Russian forces out of Kyiv, "Another battle is coming, the battle for Donbas," he said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The expected Russian offensive could resemble World War II, Kuleba recently told NATO, with large military maneuvers involving thousands of tanks, armored vehicles, artillery and aircraft. With the atrocities mounting in Ukraine, calls have grown to provide the country with offensive weapons that would allow forces to strike inside Russia. Several foreign allies, including the United Kingdom, have pledged new weapons shipments in recent days to help Ukraine in what is expected to be a tougher battle ahead.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on CBS's "60 Minutes" again called on Western countries to step up in providing arms. "They have to supply weapons to Ukraine as if they were defending themselves and their own people," he said in an interview recorded Wednesday and broadcast Sunday. "If they don't speed up, it will be very hard for us to hold on against this pressure."

Zelensky urged even tougher sanctions against Russia and warned that Western nations shouldn't be lulled into complacency thinking that they had staved off World War III by not intervening further.

"I think that today no one in this world can predict what Russia will do. If they invade further into our territory, they will definitely move closer and closer to Europe," he said. "They will only become stronger and less predictable."

Zelensky's message has been relentless since the start of the Russian invasion, when he reportedly said "I need ammunition, not a ride." Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told NATO leaders in Brussels last week that Zelensky had a threefold agenda: "weapons, weapons and weapons."

The United States has been cautious in its approach to providing armaments directly. The country's focus "is on helping the Ukrainians defend their territory in Ukraine and take territory back," Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security adviser, said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

"The United States is surging resources, weapons, military equipment, but also diplomatic resources to support the Ukrainians," he said. He also discounted the notion that the United States hadn't stepped up, saying the country has mobilized resources at "unprecedented scope, scale and speed."

He noted that some of the steps include sourcing weapons systems that Ukrainian forces are already familiar with, such as the Soviet-era S-300 air defense system provided by Slovakia, to which the United States contributed a

key component. The United States is also exploring systems that would require some training for the Ukrainian forces, Sullivan added.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Sunday that the United States needs to be more aggressive in aiding Ukraine. "I think the administration has been better, but they've had to be pushed every step of the way to be more aggressive, sooner," McConnell told Fox News.

Backup can't come soon enough as an eight-mile-long convoy of Russian military vehicles was making its way east, according to satellite images captured Friday and made available by Maxar Technologies, a U.S. space technology firm.

As Russia shifts its military focus, officials in the eastern province of Luhansk urged people to evacuate immediately, saying the region could face a "very ugly and very bloody" fight. Sunday's attacks damaged a school and hit two residential buildings, according to Luhansk's governor, Serhiy Haidai, but no deaths were reported.

Already, more than 4.5 million Ukrainians have fled the country since the Russian invasion on Feb. 24, according to data from the United Nations. That figure is expected to grow as the fighting wears on.

Ukrainians continued to flee eastern Ukraine through humanitarian corridors, though authorities said they were stymied by Russian troops violating cease-fires and holding up buses at checkpoints.

About 2,800 people evacuated conflict areas via humanitarian corridors on Sunday, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said - far fewer than the more than 6,600 who fled conflict zones on Friday.

Amid a backdrop of mounting violence in Ukraine and economic devastation in Russia, President Vladimir Putin is expected to meet Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer on Monday, marking the first time since the invasion that Putin will have met face to face with a European leader. Nehammer visited Ukraine on Saturday and met with Zelensky.

Biden is scheduled to meet virtually with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to push the country to abandon its neutral stance on the war. India has continued to buy Russian energy supplies, even as many countries around the globe have cut ties to punish Russia for its actions.

Biden and Modi will discuss the consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine and "mitigating its destabilizing impact on global food supply and commodity markets," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Sunday in a statement.

Russian forces have now completely withdrawn from the areas around Kyiv and Chernihiv in the north, where their attempt to launch a sweep into the capital was thwarted by fierce Ukrainian resistance, U.S. officials said. Those troops are being refitted and resupplied, apparently for redeployment to the east, the Pentagon said.

In recent days, Ukrainian military officials said, the Russians have begun pushing south, with the eventual aim of seizing the city where a shelling attack on a train station occurred Friday. At least 57 people have died because of the attack and 109 were injured, according to the city's governor.

Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) said Sunday during an interview with CNN that the train station attack was "clearly genocide," arguing that European countries that continue to purchase Russian energy supplies are "funding that genocidal campaign."

Ukrainian officials and the state railway company announced new evacuation routes Sunday for civilians in eastern Ukraine. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said that "all the routes for the humanitarian corridors in the Luhansk region will work as long as there is a cease-fire by the occupying Russian troops."

The refocus to the east, away from the largest cities, could be a challenge for Ukraine's beleaguered forces and an advantage for Russian troops, Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week, noting that Russians are more skilled at fighting in rural terrain.

Unlike near Kyiv, where Ukrainian forces were able to hide in forests, the expansive, open spaces of the east will make it harder for the Ukrainians to run guerrilla operations. For their part, Russian forces will be able to muster large mechanized formations of tanks and armored vehicles. Both sides appear positioned to dig in for a long and bloody battle focused in the east that U.S. officials have warned could last months or more.

Accounts of torture, beheadings and bodies used as booby traps for land mines near Ukraine's capital Kyiv, as well as haunting images of mass graves and bound corpses, have increased the urgency of calls for help.

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission who visited Bucha, Ukraine, last week, said on CNN's "State of the Union" that "a lot has been done, but more has to be done."

It will take at least two weeks for the bodies of those killed in the recent attacks near Kyiv to be recovered from the rubble, Ukrainian Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky said in a television interview. After 24 hours of sifting through debris in Bucha, workers uncovered more than 6,500 explosive devices in doorways, washing machines, cars and under helmets, Monastyrsky said.

Ukraine has opened 5,600 war-crimes cases involving about 500 Russian leaders, including Putin, since Russia's invasion, Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova said Sunday. But the country will face an uphill battle getting Russian officials into court.

The strike on Friday at a railway station in the east was a Russian missile attack that came as evacuees were waiting to escape an expected onslaught in the region, Venediktova said. A missile fragment found near the train station was inscribed with the words "for the children," in Russian.

“These people just wanted to save their lives, they wanted to be evacuated,” Venediktova said, adding that the country has “evidence” it was a Russian strike.

The exodus from Ukraine has caused an outpouring of global support, with donors pledging 9.1 billion euros (\$10 billion) for refugees at an event Saturday convened by Canada and the European Commission.

Pope Francis called for an “Easter truce” and “peace” in Ukraine during a Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican.

“Put the weapons down,” he said, according to Reuters, as tens of thousands of people listened to his address. “Let an Easter truce start. But not to rearm and resume combat, but a truce to reach peace through real negotiations.”

Francis, who has repeatedly denounced Russia’s invasion but has not directly referenced Russia or Putin, said the “folly of war” leads people to commit “senseless acts of cruelty,” the Associated Press reported.

In Russia, those who speak out against the war are under increasing threat. At least four teachers have been turned in by students or parents for antiwar speech, in some of the starkest examples of the government’s quest to identify and punish individuals who criticize the invasion.

It’s a campaign with dark Soviet echoes, inspired last month by Putin, who praised Russians for their ability to identify “scum and traitors” and “spit them out like a fly.”

After weeks of denial, Russian officials have acknowledged recently the scores of military casualties suffered by their forces. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the “significant losses of troops” were a “huge tragedy,” an unprecedented admission from a Russian government that has largely insisted the operation in Ukraine is going according to plan.

Now, as it seeks to rebuild its depleted forces for the next phase of battle, Russia is turning to retired soldiers, according to an intelligence briefing Sunday from the United Kingdom’s ministry of defense.

“The Russian armed forces seek to bolster troop numbers with personnel discharged from military service since 2012,” the ministry said. “Efforts to generate more fighting power also include trying to recruit from the unrecognised Transnistria region of Moldova.”

*--Salvador Rizzo, Lateshia Beachum, Jeanne Whalen, Brittany Shammas, Jennifer Hassan and Christine Armario contributed to this report*

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### **3. China Makes Semi-secret Delivery of Missiles to Serbia**

Associated Press, Apr. 10 (0938) | Dusan Stojanovic

BELGRADE, Serbia -- Russian ally Serbia took the delivery of a sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft system in a veiled operation this weekend, amid Western concerns that an arms buildup in the Balkans at the time of the war in Ukraine could threaten the fragile peace in the region.

Media and military experts said Sunday that six Chinese Air Force Y-20 transport planes landed at Belgrade's civilian airport early Saturday, reportedly carrying HQ-22 surface-to-air missile systems for the Serbian military.

The Chinese cargo planes with military markings were pictured at Belgrade's Nikola Tesla airport. Serbia's defense ministry did not immediately respond to AP's request for comment.

The arms delivery over the territory of at least two NATO member states, Turkey and Bulgaria, was seen by experts as a demonstration of China's growing global reach.

"The Y-20s' appearance raised eyebrows because they flew en masse as opposed to a series of single-aircraft flights," wrote The Warzone online magazine. "The Y-20's presence in Europe in any numbers is also still a fairly new development."

Serbian military analyst Aleksandar Radic said that "the Chinese carried out their demonstration of force."

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic all but confirmed the delivery of the medium-range system that was agreed in 2019, saying on Saturday that he will present "the newest pride" of the Serbian military on Tuesday or Wednesday.

He had earlier complained that NATO countries, which represent most of Serbia's neighbors, are refusing to allow the system's delivery flights over their territories amid tensions over Russia's aggression on Ukraine.

Although Serbia has voted in favor of U.N. resolutions that condemn the bloody Russian attacks in Ukraine, it has refused to join international sanctions against its allies in Moscow or outright criticize the apparent atrocities committed by the Russian troops there.

Back in 2020, U.S. officials warned Belgrade against the purchase of HQ-22 anti-aircraft systems, whose export version is known as FK-3. They said that if Serbia really wants to join the European Union and other Western alliances, it must align its military equipment with Western standards.

The Chinese missile system has been widely compared to the American Patriot and the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile systems although it has a shorter range than more advanced S-300s. Serbia will be the first operator of the Chinese missiles in Europe.

Serbia was at war with its neighbors in the 1990s. The country, which is formally seeking EU membership, has already been boosting its armed forces with Russian and Chinese arms, including warplanes, battle tanks and other equipment.

In 2020, it took delivery of Chengdu Pterodactyl-1 drones, known in China as Wing Loong. The combat drones are able to strike targets with bombs and missiles and can be used for reconnaissance tasks.

There are fears in the West that the arming of Serbia by Russia and China could encourage the Balkan country toward another war, especially against its former province of Kosovo that proclaimed independence in 2008. Serbia, Russia and China don't recognize Kosovo's statehood, while the United States and most Western countries do.

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## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Ukraine crisis to headline India-U.S. 2+2 dialogue**

*Defence, S&T, climate and public health, building supply chains are high on the agenda*

The Hindu Online (India), Apr. 10 (2250) | Sriram Lakshman and Dinakar Peri

WASHINGTON – India and the U.S. will hold their fourth annual ‘2+2’ Defence and Foreign Ministry dialogue on April 11 in Washington, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine looming over the discussions and occupying a prominent place on the agenda.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who arrived in Washington on Saturday night, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, arrived on Sunday, will meet their counterparts, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, in the first such dialogue of the Biden administration.

The last meeting in this format was in October 2020. Last year's meeting was pushed back multiple times, owing to scheduling conflicts, including — notably — a visit from Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi in December 2021.

The agenda for discussion is broad, reflecting the breadth of the “Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership” between the two countries. The two sides will discuss defence, science and technology (particularly emerging technology), climate and public health (particularly cooperation on managing the COVID-19 pandemic), fortifying and building supply chains, as well as people to people ties, as per the readouts of the talks from the U.S. State and Defense Departments.

India and the U.S. will continue their “close consultations on the consequences of President Putin’s brutal war against Ukraine and mitigating the impact by addressing energy and food prices”, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Friday. India has raised the issue of commodity price impacts of the war, including at the United Nations. It has also purchased oil at a discounted price from Moscow — a move that has ruffled feathers in the Biden administration. The U.S. has said it is willing to help provide alternatives to India’s sourcing of oil from Moscow — which accounts for 1–2% of its energy imports. This is likely to feature in the week’s discussions.

American President’s Deputy National Security Advisor, Daleep Singh, visited New Delhi in the last week of March to discourage New Delhi from violating U.S. sanctions. India has pushed back against the notion that U.S. sanctions are applicable to third party countries but has also had to work with the fact that the U.S. banking and financial system still underpins much of the global financial system. Discussions around the impact of sanctions and India’s position in the Russia–Ukraine conflict will be part of Monday’s discussions.

“Obviously, it could cover a range of topics, but we expect that [the war in Ukraine ] to be a central one,” Ms. Psaki had said.

In addition to meeting in the 2+2 format, the Defence and Foreign Mministry principals will hold bilateral meeting with their own counterparts on Monday.

#### *Big ticket defence deals under discussion*

Several big ticket defence deals are in the pipeline, especially for the Navy. The purchase of 30 Predator armed drones for the three Services is in advanced stages but has been delayed pending approval from the Defence Acquisition Council.

Another major deal is a Navy tender for around 26 deck based fighter aircraft for its existing INS Vikramaditya and the indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant which is scheduled to be commissioned in August.

In this context, Boeing is set to demonstrate the compatibility of its F/A-18 Super Hornet Indian Navy’s Shore Based Test Facility (SBTF) in Goa, officials said. Its competitor, French aircraft maker Dassault Aviation, has already carried out demonstration of its Rafale M fighter jet.

A deal for six more P 8I maritime patrol aircraft is in the works, while the Navy will start receiving the first batch of three MH 60R multi role helicopters in June, contracted as part of a deal for 24 helicopters.

#### *Jaishankar to meet several Biden Cabinet members*

While the U.S. Congress is in recess, Mr. Jaishankar is expected to meet officials in the executive branch of the U.S. government, specifically members of the Biden Cabinet. India’s U.S. Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu and his team have been reaching out to U.S. officials and Members of Congress to explain and manage differences

in the relative positions the two countries have on the Russia Ukraine conflict, Mr. Jaishankar is expected to build on these efforts during these talks. He comes to Washington DC after having recent conversations not just with Mr. Blinken but also Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who was in New Delhi on March 25.

On this list of Cabinet meetings is United States Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai — who has led the U.S. side as India and the U.S. relaunched their Trade Policy Forum after four years last November to progress the bilateral trade relationship. A result of those negotiations were the opening up of U.S. markets to Indian mangoes and pomegranate and the Indian market to American pork, cherries and alfalfa hay.

Also on the cards is a meeting between Mr. Jaishankar and U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. The Secretary had tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, one of several guests Gridiron Club Dinner on April 2, an annual dinner hosted by the journalist club to fall ill. She went into home isolation for five days and would return to work after testing negative, the Commerce Department announced on Wednesday.

In addition to interactions at think tanks, a visit by Mr. Jaishankar to Howard University in DC is on the schedule, a U.S. government source indicated to The Hindu. The university is a 'Historically Black College and University (HBCU)', an organisation that educated African American students prior to 1964, i.e., during the segregation era. It is also the alma mater of several powerful Washington residents, notably Vice President Kamala Harris and Gregory Meeks, the chair of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

The Hindu has learnt that a meeting between the External Affairs Minister and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan is also in the works.

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## **5. Austin addresses Ukrainian troops in U.S. for training ahead of their return home**

Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 10 (1842) | Mike Brest

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with some of the Ukrainian forces who received training in the United States and are set to return home shortly.

The Ukrainian troops, which had been in the U.S. participating in the prescheduled military education program at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, got additional training since the conclusion of the program last month on some of the weapons the U.S. is providing to them.

The group is set to leave the U.S. to return to Ukraine on Sunday, the day Austin spoke with the soldiers.

One of the weapons for which these service members are being trained is the Switchblade tactical unmanned aerial system.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby affirmed last week that “less than a dozen” Ukrainian forces had been trained to use the small, precise weapons that have the capability to target in “kamikaze” fashion.

“The Secretary thanked them for their service and for their courage, noting the skill with which the Ukrainian Armed Forces are fighting Russia’s unprovoked invasion,” Kirby said in a statement about Austin’s call. “And he pledged continued U.S support for providing and coordinating additional security assistance.”

“The Ukrainian forces received training on patrol craft operations, communications, and maintenance while at NASVSCIATTS,” Kirby added. “Since the conclusion of the NAVSCIATTS course in early March, the U.S. military provided the group additional advanced tactical training and training on the systems the United States has provided to Ukraine, including on the Switchblade UAV.”

The U.S. has provided \$1.7 billion worth of military assistance to Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. In the six-plus weeks since then, Russian forces have faltered, facing significant resistance from Ukrainian forces in addition to severe self-inflicted problems. They sought to capture the capital of Kyiv, but they withdrew their troops from the area as they refocus their attention on the Donbas region in the southeastern part of the country.

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## **COVID-19**

### **6. With COVID Mission Over, Pentagon Plans for Next Pandemic**

Associated Press, Apr. 11 (0042) | Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON -- A COVID-19 patient was in respiratory distress. The Army nurse knew she had to act quickly.

It was the peak of this year’s omicron surge and an Army medical team was helping in a Michigan hospital. Regular patient beds were full. So was the intensive care. But the nurse heard of an open spot in an overflow treatment area, so she and another team member raced the gurney across the hospital to claim the space first, denting a wall in their rush.

When she saw the dent, Lt. Col. Suzanne Cobleigh, the leader of the Army team, knew the nurse had done her job. “She’s going to damage the wall on the way there because he’s going to get that bed,” Cobleigh said. “He’s going to get the treatment he needs. That was the mission.”

That nurse’s mission was to get urgent care for her patient. Now, the U.S. military mission is to use the experiences of Cobleigh’s team and other units pressed into service against the pandemic to prepare for the next crisis threatening a large population, whatever its nature.

Their experiences, said Gen. Glen VanHerck, will help shape the size and staffing of the military's medical response so the Pentagon can provide the right types and numbers of forces needed for another pandemic, global crisis or conflict.

One of the key lessons learned was the value of small military teams over mass movements of personnel and facilities in a crisis like the one wrought by COVID-19.

In the early days of the pandemic, the Pentagon steamed hospital ships to New York City and Los Angeles, and set up massive hospital facilities in convention centers and parking lots, in response to pleas from state government leaders. The idea was to use them to treat non-COVID-19 patients, allowing hospitals to focus on the more acute pandemic cases. But while images of the military ships were powerful, too often many beds went unused. Fewer patients needed non-coronavirus care than expected, and hospitals were still overwhelmed by the pandemic.

A more agile approach emerged: having military medical personnel step in for exhausted hospital staff members or work alongside them or in additional treatment areas in unused spaces.

"It morphed over time," VanHerck, who heads U.S. Northern Command and is responsible for homeland defense, said of the response.

Overall, about 24,000 U.S. troops were deployed for the pandemic, including nearly 6,000 medical personnel to hospitals and 5,000 to help administer vaccines. Many did multiple tours. That mission is over, at least for now.

Cobleigh and her team members were deployed to two hospitals in Grand Rapids from December to February, as part of the U.S. military's effort to relieve civilian medical workers. And just last week the last military medical team that had been deployed for the pandemic finished its stint at the University of Utah Hospital and headed home.

VanHerck told The Associated Press his command is rewriting pandemic and infectious disease plans, and planning wargames and other exercises to determine if the U.S. has the right balance of military medical staff in the active duty and reserves.

During the pandemic, he said, the teams' make-up and equipment needs evolved. Now, he's put about 10 teams of physicians, nurses and other staff — or about 200 troops — on prepare-to-deploy orders through the end of May in case infections shoot up again. The size of the teams ranges from small to medium.

Dr. Kencee Graves, inpatient chief medical officer at the University of Utah Hospital, said the facility finally decided to seek help this year because it was postponing surgeries to care for all the COVID-19 patients and closing off beds because of staff shortages.

Some patients had surgery postponed more than once, Graves said, because of critically ill patients or critical needs by others. “So before the military came, we were looking at a surgical backlog of hundreds of cases and we were low on staff. We had fatigued staff.”

Her mantra became, “All I can do is show up and hope it’s helpful.” She added, “And I just did that day after day after day for two years.”

Then in came a 25-member Navy medical team.

“A number of staff were overwhelmed,” said Cdr. Arriel Atienza, chief medical officer for the Navy team. “They were burnt out. They couldn’t call in sick. We’re able to fill some gaps and needed shifts that would otherwise have remained unmanned, and the patient load would have been very demanding for the existing staff to match.”

Atienza, a family physician who’s been in the military for 21 years, spent the Christmas holiday deployed to a hospital in New Mexico, then went to Salt Lake City in March. Over time, he said, the military “has evolved from things like pop-up hospitals” and now knows how to integrate seamlessly into local health facilities in just a couple days.

That integration helped the hospital staff recover and catch up.

“We have gotten through about a quarter of our surgical backlog,” Graves said. “We did not call a backup physician this month for the hospital team ... that’s the first time that’s happened in several months. And then we haven’t called a patient and asked them to reschedule their surgery for the majority of the last few weeks.”

VanHerck said the pandemic also underscored the need to review the nation’s supply chain to ensure that the right equipment and medications were being stockpiled, or to see if they were coming from foreign distributors.

“If we’re relying on getting those from a foreign manufacturer and supplier, then that may be something that is a national security vulnerability that we have to address,” he said.

VanHerck said the U.S. is also working to better analyze trends in order to predict the needs for personnel, equipment and protective gear. Military and other government experts watched the progress of COVID-19 infections moving across the country and used that data to predict where the next outbreak might be so that staff could be prepared to go there.

The need for mental health care for the military personnel also became apparent. Team members coming off difficult shifts often needed someone to talk to.

Cobleigh said military medical personnel were not accustomed to caring for so many people with multiple health problems, as are more apt to be found in a civilian population than in military ranks. “The level of sickness and

death in the civilian sector was scores more than what anyone had experienced back in the Army,” said Cobleigh, who is stationed now at Fort Riley, Kansas, but will soon move to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

She said she found that her staff needed her and wanted to “talk through their stresses and strains before they’d go back on shift.”

For the civilian hospitals, the lesson was knowing when to call for help.

“It was the bridge to help us get out of omicron and in a position where we can take good care of our patients,” Graves said. “I am not sure how we would have done that without them.”

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## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **7. White House, Republicans clash on U.S. endgame in Ukraine-Russia war**

Washington Times Online, Apr. 10 (1043) | Ben Wolfgang

Deep differences over the endgame in Ukraine came into sharp focus Sunday morning, with Biden administration officials saying that Washington wants to improve Kyiv’s position at the negotiating table with Russia as top congressional Republicans argued that the U.S. can help ensure an unmitigated defeat for Moscow.

The dual approaches to the next phase of the Russia-Ukraine conflict come as Moscow reassesses its battle plan after aborting its disastrous campaign to capture Kyiv. Russian forces now are preparing for a major assault on eastern Ukraine, particularly the nation’s disputed Donbas region.

With Russian troops on their heels and with casualties mounting, key Republicans say the U.S. and its NATO allies should dramatically ramp up shipments of offensive weapons to Ukraine, such as tanks and fighter jets.

The goal, they say, isn’t a negotiated settlement but rather a clear defeat for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his forces.

“We want the Ukrainians to win, to win, to defeat the Russians, for the Russians to withdraw from the country. And that ought to be our goal,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell told “Fox News Sunday,” going on to criticize the administration’s approach to the eventual end of the Russia-Ukraine war.

“They still don’t understand the goal,” the Kentucky Republican said. “The goal is for Ukraine to win.”

Administration officials have made abundantly clear they want to see Russia's invasion of Ukraine end in failure. But they also seem resigned to the fact that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy may have to make concessions to Moscow in order to permanently end the conflict.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told CNN's "State of the Union" that U.S. efforts to bolster the Ukrainian military are aimed at giving the country more leverage over the Kremlin.

"Russia retreated [from Kyiv]," Mr. Sullivan said. "And they did so because they faced brave and stiff Ukrainian resistance. But that resistance was armed with American weapons and Western weapons that the United States of America delivered. And we are proud of that. We will continue to do that. And we will continue to take every step we possibly can to help the Ukrainians succeed on the battlefield and to improve their position at the negotiating table."

Critics say the administration should instead focus on Russia's defeat and its unconditional withdrawal from Ukraine.

"It's crucially important that the United States be clear that we are absolutely committed to Zelenskyy's victory," Rep. Liz Cheney, Wyoming Republican, told CNN on Sunday. "We should not be talking about ... improving Zelenskyy's position at the negotiating table. This was about defeating Russian forces in Ukraine."

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## **8. Bipartisan group of lawmakers arrives in Poland**

The Hill Online, Apr. 10 (0746) | Mychael Schnell

A bipartisan group of lawmakers arrived in Poland this weekend to meet with U.S. forces and allies in the region amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The group, led by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), met with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak and U.S. Ambassador to Poland Mark Brzezinski during a stop in Warsaw, according to McCarthy's office.

The lawmakers also met with Ukrainian officials, civil society, refugees who fled Ukraine and members of the 82nd Airborne in northeast Poland.

McCarthy in a statement hailed Poland as an "indispensable strategic partner." Of the more than 4.5 million Ukrainians who have fled during the invasion thus far, roughly 2.59 million have sought refuge in Poland, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.

“Poland has been an indispensable strategic partner by accepting millions of refugees, working closely with our military forces, and contributing fully to NATO as we all aim to restore peace and prosperity to the region,” McCarthy said in a statement.

“Our visit today should serve as a powerful message to Putin that we condemn his unprovoked attacks. Evil cannot win,” he added.

The minority leader said the group traveled to Poland to make sure that the U.S. and its allies are supporting Ukraine amid the conflict.

“The whole world is watching what’s unfolding in Ukraine,” McCarthy said. “We see the atrocities being committed by Vladimir Putin, and more importantly, we see the bravery of the Ukrainian people. We are here—as representatives of the United States—to ensure we are doing what is right to support Ukrainians as they defend themselves and their democracy.”

Other lawmakers on the trip included House Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.), House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Michael McCaul (R-Texas), House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Ranking Member Michael Turner (R-Ohio) and Reps. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), French Hill (R-Ark.), Kathleen Rice (D-N.Y.), Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.), Mike Garcia (R-Calif.) and Michelle Fischbach (R-Minn.).

McCarthy’s office said additional stops will be announced in the coming days. Axios, which first reported on the bipartisan delegation last week, said the lawmakers are also scheduled to visit the Ukrainian border.

The trip comes as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine progresses through its sixth week. Another bipartisan group of lawmakers, led by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), is set to visit Berlin, Copenhagen, Warsaw, a Polish city near the Ukrainian border named Rzeszow, and Kangerlussuaq, Greenland this week.

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## EUROPE

### **9. The wartime president: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks with Scott Pelley in Kyiv** CBSNews.com (60 Minutes), Apr. 10 (1926) | Scott Pelley

On February 24, with the Russian invasion coming at him from three sides, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reached for his most powerful weapon – his phone. The moment Zelenskyy told his people he refused to flee, Ukraine refused to fall. Leaders don't become legends often, but over these nearly seven weeks, this 44-year-old former comedian inspired his country to stand up to the overwhelming force of Russia. Last Wednesday, we were admitted to Zelenskyy's fortified war rooms to meet the man who stands between the Russian army and the free world.

We met President Zelenskyy in the blacked-out hallways of his command center in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. It is a fortress, crowded with troops, machine guns, mines, explosives and a great deal more.

*Scott Pelley:* Are you safe here?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking Ukrainian:* Yeah, I'm fine. I feel pretty calm about it. Our guards are worried because there could be an airstrike. But when we get the air-raid evacuation signal we head downstairs.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. President, what has it been like working under these conditions?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in English:* We, we, found a way to work. We don't have another way.

*Scott Pelley:* You found a way how to work, you don't have any other way.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking Ukrainian:* It has to be dark in here, you can't switch the lights on because a bomb could just fly in, during an airstrike.

*Scott Pelley:* You have troops sleeping...

The president and his staff have lived here for 46 days now. The Russian invasion plan expected Kyiv to fall in 3 days. But that relied on one assumption – that Zelenskyy would run.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* When everyone is telling you, you need to go, you need to think. Before I do something, I analyze the situation. I've always done it calmly, without any chaos. I might not be the strongest warrior. But I'm not willing to betray anyone.

*Scott Pelley:* What did you tell your wife and children about your decision?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* I told them this is my choice. And I can't do it any other way. I'm the president of my country. I'm the president of our people. And even if I wasn't president, I would have stayed here. [My family] understood. Not only understood, but fully supported my decision. Fully.

It was the decision that saved Ukraine from immediate collapse.

"Good evening, everyone," he said. "We are all here, our soldiers are here, the citizens of the country are here. We are all here protecting our independence, our country and we're going to continue."

*Scott Pelley:* You had made a decision to give your life for your country if it came to that.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* I don't want to make myself out to be a hero. I love my family. I want to live many more years, but choosing between running or being with my people, of course I'm ready to give my life for my country.

For a man with 44 million lives in his hands, we found Zelenskyy buoyant, gracious, humble and brutally honest.

The day before our visit, an angrier Zelenskyy scolded the UN Security Council "where's the security?" he asked.

*Scott Pelley:* In speaking to NATO, you called them weak. In speaking to the UN Security Council, you said, if you can't help, you shouldn't exist. Not very diplomatic of you. I wonder why you feel the need to speak so bluntly.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* When you are [working] at diplomacy, there are no results. All this is very bureaucratic. That's why the way I'm talking to them is absolutely justifiable. I don't have any more lives [to give]. I don't have any more emotions. I'm no longer interested in their diplomacy that leads to the destruction of my country. A lot of countries have changed their mind about Ukraine and about our people. But I think we've paid too high price for that.

*Scott Pelley:* What must the world understand?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* We are defending the ability of a person to live in the modern world. We are defending the right to live. I never thought this right was so costly. These are human values. So that Russia doesn't choose what we should do and how I'm exercising my rights. That right was given to me by God and my parents.

God was hard to find on our visit to Kyiv's northern suburbs which Russia occupied for weeks. Much of what we found will be difficult to watch. Behind St. Andrew's Church there is a sandy trench not quite full of civilian residents of the town of Bucha. Ukraine stopped the Russians here, 45 minutes from the center of the capital city.

The Russian retreat was so hasty, it seems there was no time to cover up the war crimes. President Zelenskyy visited Bucha two days before our interview.

*Scott Pelley:* What did you see in Bucha?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Death. Just death.

Last Monday was the first time Zelenskyy saw, with his own eyes, what Russia has done in what Vladimir Putin calls the liberation of Ukraine. The day after our interview, we found civilian neighborhoods in Bucha, blocks and blocks shelled and blasted with no purpose but terror. Bodies and parts of bodies lay in the streets, “left out like trash,” Zelenskyy told us. No one knows how many victims are still in their homes, yet to be found.

*Scott Pelley:* There’s a photograph, Mr. President, of you in Bucha with an expression on your face that you have not allowed your people to see during this war. And I wonder what we’re seeing there. Is that heartbreak? Is it anger?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* It’s anger. It’s anger because we don’t understand [the Russians]. You can’t really understand this world. That there are people on this planet who give these orders and people [who carry them out].

In Bucha, neighborhood relief for the hungry and the homeless looked like World War II in color. Valeriy Matvienko was so angry about the senseless Russian bullet wound in his leg, we can’t repeat what he told us in English.

*Valeriy Matvienko, translation:* Some of the Russians were normal. Some of them were totally crazy. You could walk, and they would shoot sometimes up in the air, sometimes at your legs. So, you have to jump in front of them. [Cars] were run over by Russian tanks. Very brutal. Not human.

*Scott Pelley:* Can you tell me what you saw?

We met Tetyana Dmitriivna, who compressed the occupation into a single word.

*Tetyana Dmitriivna, translation:* Horror. Horror. Gunfire was nonstop day and night. Thanks to God it all passed and we survived. It’s simply a miracle. I had two grandchildren with me in the basement. [I never thought] I would live to see this horror.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. Zelenskyy told us he couldn’t believe that human beings could do something like this.

*Tetyana Dmitriivna:* We never believed it either. We are simply in shock. All of us.

*Scott Pelley:* What evidence is there of war crimes across Ukraine?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* The Ukrainian Security Service has intercepted communications. There are [Russian] soldiers talking with their parents [about] what they stole and who they abducted. There are recordings of [Russian] prisoners of war who admitted to killing people. There are pilots in prison who had maps with civilian targets to bomb. There are also investigations being done based on the remains of the dead.

*Scott Pelley:* Should Vladimir Putin be prosecuted for war crimes?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Look, I think everyone who made a decision, who issued an order, who fulfilled an order, everyone who is relevant to this, I believe they are all guilty.

*Scott Pelley:* Do you hold Putin responsible?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* I do believe he's one of them. That's what I believe.

The slaughter of civilians could have been stopped, Zelenskyy told us. He's deeply grateful for the weapons NATO and the U.S. are sending around the clock. But he's bitterly disappointed the allies refuse to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. President Biden has called that an invitation to World War III. But in Zelenskyy's view, it's the kind of inaction the world has suffered before.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. President, in a speech to NATO you said, quote, 'All the people who die will die because of you, because of your weakness.' Are you saying that the West bears some responsibility for these atrocities?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* I remember, all of us remember, books about the second World War, and about the devil in uniform – Adolf Hitler. Are those countries who did not participate in the war responsible? The countries who let German forces march throughout Europe? Does the world carry responsibility for the genocide? Yes. Yes, it does. When you [have the ability to] close the sky – yes it's scary, that a world war could start. It's scary. I understand [that]. And I cannot put pressure on these people because everyone is afraid of war. But whether the world [is responsible] for this, I believe so, yes. I believe so. Stand in front of the mirror every day and ask yourself, were you able to do something? Or were you unable to do something? You will find the answer in the mirror to this question, and to another question – who are you? That's what I believe.

Perhaps Zelenskyy reaches for World War II because of his homeland's history of catastrophe and because he's Ukraine's first Jewish president. Zelenskyy is 44 years old, holds a law degree. He's married with a son and daughter. His family is safe, somewhere in Ukraine. In this war, Zelenskyy is the leading man in a tragedy but he worked his entire career to make people laugh. He was Ukraine's favorite comedian whose sitcom was popular in Russia too.

In his show, called “Servant of the people,” he played a high school history teacher whose anger at corruption in Ukraine explodes into a profane rant. A student posts the tirade and the teacher is elected president.

In 2019, Zelenskyy turned parody into power. He ran on an anti-corruption platform and won 73% of the vote. He was 41 years old. He brought longtime friend and business partner, Andriy Yermak, in as chief of staff.

*Andriy Yermak:* He’s smart. He’s strong. He’s brave. And he is person who is self-made. Zelenskyy is not just the leader of our heroic nation. I think he is the leader of the free world.

*Scott Pelley:* Why do you say President Zelenskyy is the leader of the free world now?

*Andriy Yermak:* Because Ukraine defend not just Ukraine. We defend all democracy.

Zelenskyy has been defending Ukraine since his inauguration day. That green T-shirt which caught the eye of the world was no surprise to Ukrainians. He keeps fatigues in his office because he often visited the battlefield near the Russian border where Ukraine has been in a shooting war with Russia since 2014.

That was when Putin invaded part of Ukraine called the Donbas and seized Ukraine’s Crimea peninsula. In 2014, before Zelenskyy was elected, a Russian anti-aircraft battery in Ukraine shot down an airliner killing 298 civilians.

In our interview, Zelenskyy told us he’s been trying to warn the world that Putin will not stop at Ukraine.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. President, it appears that the free world has calculated that the suffering of your people is not worth even the risk of a nuclear exchange.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* I think so. That’s how it is. Some are using that politically, as an excuse, by saying, ‘We can’t defend Ukraine because there could be a nuclear war.’ I think that today, no one in this world can predict what Russia will do. If they invade further into our territory, then they will definitely move closer and closer to Europe. They will only become stronger and less predictable.

*Scott Pelley:* President Biden says he is outraged by Bucha. NATO leaders say they are outraged by Bucha. So, what should they do now?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Weapons, number one. They need to be very serious about it. They definitely understand what I’m talking about right now. They have to supply weapons to Ukraine as if they were defending themselves and their own people. They need to understand this: If they don’t speed up, It will be very hard for us to hold on against this pressure. The second factor is sanctions. Because we’ve found some things in sanctions that are easy for financial experts to circumvent. Russia has been circumventing them, and this is absolutely true. The Western world knows it. This shouldn’t be allowed. This is not a movie, this is real life. Stop fearing the Russian Federation. We’ve shown we are not afraid.

Friday, a Russian missile strike hit a crowd of refugees striving to escape eastern Ukraine by train. At least 50 were killed, five children. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy calls it a war crime. Tonight, Zelenskyy is fighting a powerful Russian assault on Ukraine's East and South. Russia has not seized its strategic objectives so, instead, it's shelling defiant cities to ruin. The one exception, at least now, is Kyiv. In a feat of arms no one expected, Ukraine's outgunned army defeated the massive Russian force that had been ordered to take the capital city.

Kyiv survives, for the moment, a capital of mummified monuments and 19th century grace. Before, it was a bumper-to-bumper city with 3 million residents. But now the streets are congested only by shadows. Air raids are still a danger but, after nearly seven weeks, the siren doesn't quicken the step like it used to.

*Scott Pelley:* Have you won the battle of Kyiv?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Kyiv. I think, yes, but, this isn't the final victory. I will only be able to tell after we win this war. When we liberate our country, then I will be able to tell. Because Bucha is part of greater Kyiv. Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel if the people of those [towns] were wiped out, then did we win this battle? I'm not sure. We've withstood, and we did not give up what is ours. But whether we won, I can't say.

*Scott Pelley:* No one expected Ukraine to fight Russia to a standstill. And I wonder, how did you manage?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* We united as a nation. Even though [our people] understood that they would be outnumbered tenfold, and there would be no way out, just no way out, we fought for our existence and for survival. That's the combined heroism of everyone – of the people, of the authorities, of the armed forces. We became a single fist.

We saw the Ukrainian punch in the town of Bucha where the remains of a Russian armored column rusted, dead in the street. Neighbors, holed up for weeks, emerged to remember what victory looks like. No one seemed in a hurry to deal with the bits of Russian soldiers in the wreckage. The full story of how the outmanned Ukrainian army stopped the invasion of Kyiv, will fill history books but we already know part of it.

Because the Russians believed that Kyiv would fall in a matter of days, they literally did not bring enough food or fuel for their armored columns. On the other side, the Ukrainians had been trained for years by the California National Guard and other U.S. units. When the invasion happened, the U.S., Britain and other countries flooded Ukraine with light-weight, shoulder-fired anti-tank missiles.

*Scott Pelley:* How much difference have American arms made in this war?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* They're helping. Frankly speaking, I would have wanted more. I don't know if I have the right to say that. But the fact that the United States has helped a lot is true.

Zelenskyy's man in charge of arming Ukraine is chief of staff Andriy Yermak. When we met, he'd just finished a two-hour call with U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Mark Milley. Yermak asked for heavier weapons — faster — first there was artillery.

*Andriy Yermak:* The second, we need the tanks. We need the military jets. And we need everything which give to us opportunity to closed our sky.

*Scott Pelley:* When you ask the Biden administration for artillery, tanks, jet airplanes, the administration says what?

*Andriy Yermak:* We had very deep and very detailed conversation. This is American president who has done for Ukraine more than all other president. But then you have the war and we have openly said we need more. It's not enough. We need it as soon as possible. If we receive this support in time, we will win.

A White House official tells us Yermak got a “yes” to his requests. But filling orders takes time. The Ukrainians need Russian-made weapons that they already know how to use. The U.S. is cajoling allies to ship their Russian gear now on the promise that the U.S. will replace it later. America has thrown in nearly \$2 billion in military aid. From the Ukrainian point of view, of course, nothing is fast enough. Russian bombardment is escalating in the East and South. Cities are being shelled to ruin, including Mariupol, with 450,000 residents.

*Scott Pelley:* What are you expecting now in the East and in the South?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* We think this will be a new wave of this war. We don't know how much [Russian weaponry] there will be. But we understand that there will be many times more than there is now. [All] depends on [how fast] we will be helped by the United States. To be honest, whether we will be able to [survive] depends on this. I have 100% confidence in our people and in our armed forces. But unfortunately, I don't have the confidence that we will be receiving everything we need.

*Scott Pelley:* And so what are you asking of President Biden?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* To tell you the truth. Long ago, I asked President Biden for very specific items. He has the list. President Biden can enter history as the person who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people who won and chose the right to have their own country. [This] also depends on him.

*Scott Pelley:* You are frustrated with President Biden?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* No. I'm not disappointed. I don't know how another president in his place would help us, I don't know. It's difficult. We have a good relationship. I think so at least. Ukraine depends on the support of the United States. And I, as the leader of a country at war, I can only be grateful.

As for the other president at war, we asked Zelenskyy if he would meet, now, face to face with Vladimir Putin. He told us it was worth the chance. They wouldn't resolve everything, Zelenskyy said, but they might stop the killing.

*Scott Pelley:* Are you willing to give up any part of Ukraine for peace?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Overall we are not ready to give away our country. I think we have already given up a lot of [lives]. So, we need to stand firm for as long as we can. But this is life. Different things happen.

*Scott Pelley:* It's negotiable?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Well, this issue would definitely be raised in the course of negotiations. We understand the Russian side. We understand one of their provisions that is always talked about is to recognize Crimea as Russian territory. I will definitely not recognize that. [And] they would really like to take the southern parts of our country. I clearly understand that questions like this will be raised [in negotiations] if there ever are any. But we were not ready to give up our territory from the beginning. Had we been willing to give up our territory, there would have been no war.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. President, in almost every speech to your country you say that Ukraine is going to win. What does winning look like to you?

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, translation:* Victory. First of all, our people would definitely feel victory. They will come back. The return of [refugees] is blood for the body of Ukraine. Without them there is nothing. The bombardments would end. We would recover our territory. There would be no Russian soldiers in our country. Yes, I understand they will not withdraw from Crimea, and we'll be arguing and negotiating for one territory or another in the south of our country, the Donbas. I know exactly what [has to] happen, after which we can say, 'this is victory.' But, if [you don't mind], I'm not going to talk about it just yet.

*Scott Pelley:* Mr. President, we wish you all the luck in the world.

*Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in English:* I need half of it. I think even half will be enough.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy has borrowed more luck than anyone expected. With the reprieve of Kyiv, Ukraine has turned mere admiration into credibility. Its people are suffering grievous loss every hour, but they have proven there was a moment in Kyiv when they silenced the guns of Russia.

*--Produced by Maria Gavrilovic. Associate producer, Alex Ortiz. Broadcast associate, Michelle Karim. Edited by April Wilson and Sean Kelly*

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## **10. Ukraine says 1,200 bodies found near Kyiv as east braces for onslaught**

Agence France-Presse, Apr. 10 (2226) | Not Attributed

Ukraine said Sunday it had found more than 1,200 bodies in the Kyiv region, the scene of atrocities allegedly committed by Russian troops, as residents in the country's east braced -- or fled -- ahead of an expected massive offensive.

Heavy bombardments hammered Ukraine through the weekend, adding to mounting casualties six weeks into Russia's invasion of its neighbour.

Shelling claimed two lives in northeast Kharkiv on Sunday morning, regional governor Oleg Synegubov said, the day after 10 civilians, including a child, died in bombings southeast of the city.

"The Russian army continues to wage war on civilians due to a lack of victories at the front," Synegubov said on Telegram.

In Dnipro, an industrial city of around a million inhabitants, a rain of Russian missiles nearly destroyed the local airport, causing an uncertain number of casualties, local authorities said.

An AFP reporter saw black smoke in the sky above the facility, but a plane also took off later on Sunday, suggesting its runway was still functioning.

President Volodymyr Zelensky again condemned atrocities against civilians, and, after speaking with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said they had agreed "that all perpetrators of war crimes must be identified and punished".

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova said the country was examining the alleged culpability of 500 leading Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, for thousands of war crimes.

And White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan pledged the US would "work with the international community to make sure there's accountability" for what he called "mass atrocities".

At the Vatican, Pope Francis called for an Easter ceasefire to pave the way for peace, denouncing a war where "defenceless civilians" suffered "heinous massacres and atrocious cruelty".

In his nightly address, Zelensky said Russian troops were about to launch "even larger operations" in the east of Ukraine.

"We are preparing for their actions. We will respond," he said.

Residents have been fleeing in their thousands, but Lugansk governor Sergiy Gaiday said many were afraid to leave after a missile strike on a railway station in the city of Kramatorsk on Friday killed 57 people, according to a revised tally issued by local authorities.

“We evacuated “2,700-2,500 people per day, but now there are fewer and fewer,” Gaiday said, adding he was “sure that 20-25 percent” of the region’s population was still there.

“Sometimes we just beg (them) to come out of hiding because we know what comes next,” he said, adding Russian forces would “destroy everything in their path”.

Almost 50 wounded and elderly patients were transported from the east in a hospital train by medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) over the weekend, the first such evacuation since the attack on the Kramatorsk station.

Electrician Evhen Perepelytsia was one of those evacuated after he lost his leg, and almost his life, to shelling in his hometown of Hirske in Lugansk.

“We hope that the worst is over – that after what I’ve been through, it will be better,” said 30-year-old after the train arrived in the western city of Lviv.

Russia’s defence ministry has denied carrying out the Kramatorsk attack.

It said Kyiv and its western allies were continuing to stage “monstrous and merciless” provocations and murdering civilians in the self-proclaimed Lugansk People’s Republic, one of two pro-Russian separatist statelets in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas.

Ukraine on Sunday hit out at the Kremlin and Russian media for laying the groundwork for war “for many years”.

“Russian political elites and propaganda have been inciting hatred, dehumanising Ukrainians, nurturing Russian superiority and laying ground for these atrocities,” Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted on Sunday.

But in an interview with NBC’s “Meet the Press”, Kuleba said he remained open to negotiating with the Russians.

“If sitting down with the Russians will help me to prevent at least one massacre like in Bucha, or at least another attack like in Kramatorsk, I have to take that opportunity,” he said.

Bucha -- where authorities say hundreds were killed, some with their hands bound -- has become a byword for the brutality allegedly inflicted under Russian occupation.

Ukraine's prosecutor Venediktova said 1,222 bodies had been found there and in the broader region around Kyiv so far.

At least two corpses were found inside a manhole at a petrol station on a motorway outside Kyiv on Sunday, an AFP reporter saw.

The bodies appeared to be wearing a mix of civilian and military clothing.

A distraught woman peered into the manhole before breaking down, clawing at the earth and wailing, "My son, my son".

The United Nations said on Sunday that 4,232 civilian casualties had been recorded in Ukraine to date, with 1,793 killed and 2,439 injured.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said he would meet Putin on Monday, which would make him the first European leader to visit the Kremlin since the invasion began on February 24.

Nehammer met the Ukrainian leader in Kyiv over the weekend, and his spokesman said he had informed Berlin, Brussels and Zelensky of the trip to Moscow.

Austria is a member of the European Union, but not of NATO.

EU foreign ministers will also meet Monday to discuss a sixth round of sanctions, even as divisions over a ban on Russia gas and oil imports threaten to blunt their impact.

In a bid to shore up international resolve against Moscow, US President Joe Biden is to hold virtual talks on Monday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, just weeks after saying India had been "shaky" in its response to the invasion.

A US spokeswoman said the two leaders would consult on ways to offset the "destabilizing impact (of the war) on global food supply and commodity markets".

The World Bank on Sunday issued a dire forecast, saying Ukraine's economy would collapse by 45.1 percent this year -- a much bleaker outlook than it predicted even a month ago -- while Russia would see an 11.2 percent decline in GDP.

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## **11. Zelenskiy praises Germany's position towards Ukraine after call with Scholz**

Reuters, Apr. 10 (1932) | Maria Starkova and Ronald Popeski

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday he had discussed possible additional sanctions on Russia in a call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and praised what he said was a more favourable change in Germany's position towards Kyiv.

"I spoke today with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about how to bring to account all those guilty of war crimes. About how to strengthen sanctions against Russia and how to persuade Russia to seek peace," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address, looking relaxed in an armchair.

"I am happy to note that recently Germany's position is changing in Ukraine's favour. And I consider this absolutely logical as a majority of Germans support this policy. I am grateful to them. And I expect that everything we agreed will be implemented. This is very important."

Germany, reluctant in the early stages of the Russian invasion to provide Ukraine with arms, has now agreed to supply anti-tank weaponry and missiles.

Zelenskiy, initially critical of Germany for failing to provide concrete help, particularly in an address to the Bundestag last month, has applauded Berlin's moves.

### **GAS AND OIL IMPORTS**

Scholz said on Friday that Germany could end Russian oil imports this year but stopping gas imports would be tougher because the country would need to build infrastructure to import gas from alternative sources.

Russian oil accounts for 25% of German imports, down from 35% before the Feb. 24 invasion. Gas imports to Germany from Russia have been cut to 40% from 55%, and hard coal imports to 25% from 50%.

A statement from Scholz's office on Sunday on the chancellor's call with Zelenskiy did not mention a discussion of sanctions, saying Zelenskiy had informed Scholz of "the current situation and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia."

Scholz's office said the chancellor condemned what he said were war crimes by Russia's military in Bucha and other parts of Ukraine on the call and that the German government would ensure perpetrators were identified and brought before national and international courts.

Moscow has rejected allegations by Ukraine and Western nations of war crimes. It denies targeting civilians during what the Kremlin calls a "special military operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" its neighbour.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday that Russian forces appeared to have committed war crimes by targeting civilians in Ukraine, but that the matter needed to be investigated by lawyers.

Separately, Zelenskiy's office said in a statement the president had held a conference call with Ukrainian officials during which Kyiv's proposals for a sixth package of European Union sanctions had been developed.

*--Additional reporting by Natalia Zinets and Victoria Waldersee; Writing by Ronald Popeski in Winnipeg*

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## **12. US police agencies are sending protective gear to Ukrainian civilians in what experts call an unprecedented move**

CNN.com, Apr. 10 (1313) | Emma Tucker and Zachary Cohen

The governors of Iowa and Nebraska announced last week interagency initiatives to donate police protective gear, including military-grade equipment such as helmets and vests, to Ukraine to help civilians defend themselves against Russia's invasion.

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts said his state will send 550 pieces of protective gear and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said her state's department of public safety and 18 law enforcement agencies will provide Ukraine with 860 pieces of gear.

The agencies join a growing list of police departments -- from California to Ohio to Vermont -- that are donating non-lethal police gear to aid Ukrainian civilians, according to a CNN review of state-by-state efforts and interviews with some of those involved.

Among the agencies contacted by CNN, and the non-government groups gathering supplies, none have said they're collecting weapons or ammunition.

Many of the police departments involved in these efforts are working with charity organizations and former members of the US military. Some sources with direct knowledge of the varied efforts -- but who are not involved -- spoke to CNN on the condition of anonymity due to concerns about potential legal questions the effort could raise.

It's unprecedented, experts say, for US law enforcement agencies to donate police protective equipment and military-grade gear to a foreign country involved in an ongoing war. The effort also raises questions about the roles of police departments and whether, as domestic law enforcement agencies, they should send equipment to a foreign conflict outside of their jurisdiction.

Because there's no central coordinating group, there's not an easy way to say what's being shipped or whether it's subject to export regulations.

The Ukrainian American Coordinating Council (UACC), a non-profit organization, is at the center of one effort to send regulated, military-grade and police protective items to Ukraine, including ballistic helmets, hard plates, soft armor inserts and vests, the group says.

When Russia's invasion of Ukraine began, the UACC moved quickly to obtain a license from the Department of Commerce to export level III ballistic vests and helmets, as well as a special authorization from the State Department for level IV vests in a limited capacity, according to the organization.

Level III armor is the first level of body armor that provides protection against rifle rounds and level IV is rated by the National Institute of Justice as the highest level of ballistic protection.

In accordance with the UACC's export license, the equipment can only be provided to Ukrainian civilians who have joined territorial defense units to defend their country against Russian troops, according to Mick Safron, an executive member of the board of UACC.

The UACC is partnering with the Ukrainian charitable organization called Come Back Alive, which helps store and distribute the equipment from Lviv warehouses to territorial defenses and "hotspots" across the country, according to the UACC. The foundation has end-user certificates for every territorial defense unit that receives vest and helmet donations, according to Safron.

The UACC acknowledges where Come Back Alive is distributing the donations. However, once the shipments arrive in the country, the UACC does not have control over whether the gear is distributed to the Ukrainian army or police forces, Safron said.

The US Department of Commerce and State Department did not confirm the UACC's claims regarding its export license and special authorization, but the State Department tells CNN that groups seeking to donate military-grade gear and other equipment may be subject to export regulations.

A spokesperson for the Department of Commerce told CNN in a statement that it does not "comment on specific license applications or parties, including whether a party has filed a license application."

The department "has been processing requests for exports to authorized end-users in Ukraine rapidly," according to the statement, which includes applications for licenses to export firearms and ammunition under its "existing processes and authorities."

In an interview with CNN, retired US Army Maj. Gen. Mike Repass -- the former commander of the US Special Operations Command in Europe -- said level IV body armor is "capable of withstanding one or two shots from a Soviet-type round" and the technology is controlled by the State Department for US export.

“However, the provision of Level IV body armor is subject to a lengthy process to get US approval for delivery to Ukraine. It is late-to-need as a result,” Repass added.

Some of the gear being donated by law enforcement departments, including certain types of protective vests, do not qualify as military-grade, meaning they can be sent to Ukraine without approval from the federal government, according to US Army veteran Alex Plitsas, who has been working with several police departments across Connecticut to ship the equipment to Ukraine. A typical vest worn by a police officer, rated to stop most handgun rounds, would not qualify as military-grade.

The State Department is advising groups involved in the donations to consult with the Ukrainian government, “to confirm the items will meet an immediate requirement,” a department spokesperson told CNN. “After that, items must first be assessed to determine how they are controlled for purposes of export ... prospective donors must follow necessary export licensing rules before sending.”

Organizers and police departments involved in this effort tell CNN that their work is legal, and the equipment being donated is reviewed to ensure it meets federal export regulations. But it remains unclear whether federal agencies are fully aware of every item that is being shipped to Ukraine as the US government largely puts the onus on donors to ensure they are following the law.

CNN spoke with several experts about the legality of various efforts to aid Ukraine by sending protective gear and raised the central question of whether the federal government should be authorizing local police departments to intervene in international affairs.

“The answer is, probably not,” said Martin L. Cook, a professor of professional military ethics who taught at US war colleges.

“What gives them the authority to do that? The short answer is nothing,” Cook added. “But do we have a mechanism? I don’t think we do -- to say before a local police department can do such a thing, they have to clear with DOD or state.”

According to Valerie Morkevicius, an associate professor of political science at Colgate University, there might be “really strong and valid ethical reasons for wanting to engage in this type of support.”

Morkevicius emphasized that, generally, people might be more sympathetic to Ukraine due to the circumstances of the war, and their sympathy “might not be misplaced.”

“But we have to think about the broader implications that follow from all this,” she added. “If we want to say it’s OK this time, what are the guideposts we might be shifting for future actions?”

*US police agencies partnering with Ukrainian groups*

When Russia began its military invasion of Ukraine in late February, Pennsylvania police officer Dean Steckclair of Falls Township was approached by his mother-in-law for help.

Steckclair's wife, who is Ukrainian-Lithuanian, had family members stuck in the country and shared stories of civilians who were taking up arms to defend themselves against Russian attacks. She expressed the need for defensive equipment. His mother-in-law asked if the Falls Township police department had any tactical gear such as protective vests and helmets that were not being used to send overseas to Ukraine, he told CNN.

Since then, the agency -- located in Bucks County, which houses a large Ukrainian population -- has collected and donated more than 100 ballistic vests and dozens of helmets as part of its "Operation Urgent Aid" effort and has collaborated with departments in nearby counties to set up drop-off points for donations to send to Ukraine.

It's just one of the many ways that US law enforcement agencies across the country are joining the loosely organized effort at the local and state level. Police departments in Colorado, Connecticut, Vermont, California, New York and Pennsylvania have all announced initiatives to procure and donate protective equipment.

State and police agencies are working with Ukrainian-American groups in the United States and the Ukrainian government, according to Plitsas, the US Army veteran. US agencies, including the State Department, are aware of the ongoing effort involving police departments, he added.

"I believe that we have tapped into something larger than just our desire to help as police officers," Falls Township Police Chief Nelson Whitney told CNN.

"The community, regular citizens of the United States, have come out in large numbers to donate supplies," Whitney said. "This desire to help innocent people who are being killed and injured by an aggressive totalitarian leader like Vladimir Putin is rooted deeply within the American spirit. How could we not help?"

In California, the state's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is working with the National Guard to coordinate donations from state and local law enforcement agencies for "excess/re-sourced ballistic helmets, vests and gloves, as well as safety goggles to provide to Ukrainian citizens in and around the war zone," according to Brian Ferguson, a spokesperson for California OES.

California OES and National Guard have been in "regular communication" with the Ukrainian consular affairs staff on potential humanitarian support, Ferguson said.

The Fairfield Police Department and other agencies in Connecticut, such as Greenwich and Westport, have also collaborated in a joint effort to donate more than 200 previously used ballistic vests and helmets to assist Ukrainian soldiers, the department has announced.

In a letter to the Fairfield Police Department, the Consul General of Ukraine located in Houston specified that “body armor, helmets and other personal protective equipment” was needed for military, police forces, and more than 100,000 civilians that joined “Territorial Defense Forces” since war broke out. That department is among the agencies engaged in this effort.

Colorado’s state government set five locations for police agencies to drop off excess equipment, including in Denver and Colorado Springs. More than 1,000 helmets and 840 sets of body armor were gathered this way from 25 different police agencies.

Police officials in Colorado are increasingly taking interest in helping Ukrainian civilians as an opportunity to “save lives, even if it’s not within our own border,” according to Stan Hilkey, executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety, which launched an effort with the state’s Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to collect equipment.

#### *Four shipments of equipment have arrived in Ukraine*

The first shipment of US protective equipment arrived in a Kyiv warehouse on March 23, according to Safron of UACC. It included thousands of hard body armor plates and vests, he said.

Four shipments in total have been delivered to end-points in Ukraine as of this week, Safron said. Two additional shipments that include thousands of vests and helmets -- weighing 45,000 pounds in total -- are currently being prepared to be exported by early next week.

The UACC is shipping gear to Warsaw, Poland -- where some 2.5 million Ukrainian refugees have arrived since the war began -- in bulk quantities in partnership with international shipping company Meest.

Similarly, the UACC relies on Ukrainian-American human rights group Razom as a social media partner to spread the word about the effort. “Meest” means bridge and “Razom” is translated as “together” in Ukrainian.

Part of the third shipment of equipment arrived at one of the Come Back Alive foundation warehouses on Friday, according to Safron. It included 852 pieces of military-grade body armor, as well as 296 helmets, the organization confirmed on Facebook.

Oksana Tscherepenko, a Ukrainian-American citizen who is the vice president of UACC, told CNN that the organization is receiving an overwhelming number of phone calls from police officials and other individuals who want to contribute humanitarian aid and protective gear.

The UACC is also partnering with organizations to set up fundraisers that have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations, the organization told CNN.

“The more lives we save the more chance that we have to stay free and to continue our fight in Ukraine for democracy,” Tscherepenko said.

--CNN's Peter Nickeas contributed to this report

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### **13. Sweden and Finland consider joining NATO amidst Ukraine-Russia war**

NPR News (Weekend Edition), Apr. 10 (0815) | Ayesha Rascoe

As Russia continues to wage war in Ukraine, Sweden and Finland are considering joining NATO. Ayesha Rascoe asks former U.S. ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder about the implications.

AYESHA RASCOE, HOST:

Europe is looking at a changed security landscape. Sweden and Finland have long avoided joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but are now considering membership in the Western military alliance. Russian President Vladimir Putin has framed NATO expansion as a threat to Russia, and Moscow warns both countries of serious military and political consequences if they become members. Ivo Daalder is a former U.S. ambassador to NATO and is currently the president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He joins us now. Welcome, Ambassador.

IVO DAALDER: Oh, my pleasure.

RASCOE: Why have Sweden and Finland held out against joining NATO? Like, why did they not see - or why did they see not being a member of NATO as being in their best interests?

DAALDER: So both countries were neutral during the Cold War. They didn't want to be part either of the West or of the East, although, of course, they were vibrant democracies and had a capitalist economy. But they had a relationship with Russia that allowed them to say, we don't want to be part of either of these blocs. After the Cold War, of course, the prospect of having a major military confrontation in the middle of Europe had declined significantly. And both decided that they would rather be part of the European Union. And there was really no reason to be part of NATO. They have cooperated with NATO. They have - are very strong partners. They have, in some cases, even led - be part of military operations both in Afghanistan and in other military operations with NATO. But there was really no urgency. There was no need to be part of NATO. All of that changed on February 24, of course.

RASCOE: So how likely do you think it is now that they'll ask to join?

DAALDER: So it looks like that - and particularly Finland, which is a country that shares an 800-mile border with Russia, is moving quite rapidly to take a positive decision and say, listen. We'd like to be part of NATO.

We'd like to have the protection that NATO provides for our country over and beyond the very significant military forces that Finland itself already has. They've seen a Russia walking into - driving into a neighboring country that posed no threat whatsoever to Russia. And as a result, they think that the same may be happening in their country, and they want the protection of NATO. They want the protection of being part of an organization with 30 other countries who would be committed to defending Finland and Sweden if there was an attack.

Sweden is a little different. They haven't quite moved as far as the Finns. Of course, they don't have a border in the same way as Finland has with Russia. At the same time, Russian ships in the Baltic - in the Baltic Seas and submarines have harassed and sometimes even threatened Sweden. So there, too, there is now a change in saying, maybe we need to be part of this organization.

RASCOE: You know, as we said at the start, Russia has warned both countries against this. I mean, does this also pose a risk to them, say, if Finland does move ahead with trying to join NATO?

DAALDER: Well, it does pose a risk. And it poses a risk for NATO, of course, because the NATO countries, by taking Finland and Sweden into the alliance, commit themselves to defending those countries, which today, of course, they're not necessarily committed to doing, just as they weren't committed to defending Ukraine because Ukraine is not a NATO member. On the other hand, Russia now is looking at the situation in which if they wanted to have a military confrontation with Finland, there's at least a chance that NATO doesn't get involved. Once NATO - they are NATO members, Russia has to take the - into consideration the possibility that if there is a military confrontation with Finland, that means a military confrontation with NATO. It means a military confrontation with the United States. And given the state of the Russian armed forces that we're seeing in Ukraine, it's not clear to me what it is they would be particularly doing that would be an ultimate threat to Finland. So yes, a bluster we are likely to see from Moscow. The reality is the Finns, the Swedes and, I think, NATO will be stronger and better off if both countries become member of the alliance.

RASCOE: Very quickly, how would their membership change the security landscape in Europe?

DAALDER: Well, it would just bring two very significant military powers into the alliance that up to this point were neutral. Norway, of course, which is to their west, is a member of NATO. So it would just solidify the overall European security situation.

RASCOE: OK, that's Ivo Daalder, former NATO ambassador, now president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Thank you.

DAALDER: My pleasure.

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## RUSSIA

### 14. U.S. Doubts New Russian War Chief Can End Moscow's Floundering

Associated Press, Apr. 10 (1651) | Robert Burns and Hope Yen

WASHINGTON -- Russia has tapped a new Ukraine war commander to take centralized control of the next phase of battle after its costly failures in the opening campaign and carnage for Ukrainian civilians. U.S. officials don't see one man making a difference in Moscow's prospects.

Russia turned to Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, 60, one of Russia's most experienced military officers and according to U.S. officials a general with a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and other war theaters. Up to now, Russia had no central war commander on the ground.

The general's appointment was confirmed by a senior U.S. official who was not authorized to be identified and spoke on condition of anonymity.

But the White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said "no appointment of any general can erase the fact that Russia has already faced a strategic failure in Ukraine."

"This general will just be another author of crimes and brutality against Ukrainian civilians," Sullivan said. "And the United States, as I said before, is determined to do all that we can to support Ukrainians as they resist him and they resist the forces that he commands."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki echoed that thought. "The reports we're seeing of a change in military leadership and putting a general in charge who was responsible for the brutality and the atrocities we saw in Syria shows that there's going to be a continuation of what we've already seen on the ground in Ukraine and that's what we are expecting," she said.

The decision to establish new battlefield leadership comes as Russia gears up for what is expected to be a large and more focused push to expand Russian control in Ukraine's east and south, including the Donbas, and follows a failed opening bid in the north to conquer Kyiv, the capital.

Dvornikov gained prominence while leading the Russian group of forces in Syria, where Moscow has waged a military campaign to shore up President Bashar Assad's regime during a devastating civil war.

Dvornikov is a career military officer and has steadily risen through the ranks after starting as a platoon commander in 1982. He fought during the second war in Chechnya and took several top positions before being placed in charge of the Russian troops in Syria in 2015.

Under Dvornikov's command, Russian forces in Syria were known for crushing dissent in part by destroying cities, lobbing artillery and dropping what were often crudely made barrel bombs in sustained attacks that have displaced millions of Syrian civilians. The United Nations says the more than decade-long war has killed more than 350,000 people.

In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded Dvornikov the Hero of Russia medal, one of the country's highest awards. Dvornikov has served as the commander of the Southern Military District since 2016.

Lt. Col. Fares al-Bayoush, a Syrian army defector, said Sunday that while the situation in Syria is different than in Ukraine because the Russian military was fighting insurgent groups and not Ukraine's professional army, he expects a similar "scorched-earth" strategy.

Al-Bayoush said he believes the aim of naming Dvornikov as Ukraine war commander is to turn the war into "rapid battles" in several places at the same time.

"I expected him to use the scorched earth policy that was used in Syria," al-Bayoush said, referring to Russian-backed attacks in Syria in which cities and towns were put under long sieges while being subjected to intense bombardment that left many people dead and caused wide destruction to infrastructure and residential areas. "He has very good experience in this policy."

"This commander is a war criminal," al-Bayoush said by telephone from Turkey.

Since Russia joined the war in Syria in September 2015, Assad's forces have taken control of most of the country after being on the verge of collapse. The Russian air force carried out thousands of airstrikes since, helping Russian-backed Syrian troops take areas after fighters were forced to choose between an amnesty in return for dropping their arms or being taken by buses into rebel-held areas.

The last major Russian-backed offensive in Syria lasted several months, until March 2020, when a truce was reached between Russia and Turkey, which supported rival sides.

Sullivan on Sunday said the Russian general has a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and "we can expect more of the same" in Ukraine. But he stressed that the U.S. strategy remains the same in supporting Ukraine and its president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"Our policy is unequivocal that we will do whatever we can to help Ukraine succeed," Sullivan said. "Which means that we need to keep giving them weapons so that they can make progress on the battlefield. And we need to keep giving them military support and strong economic sanctions to improve their position, their posture at the negotiating table."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, meanwhile, spoke by video conference Sunday to a small number of Ukrainian troops in the U.S. who are now returning to their country. The group has been in the U.S. since last fall for military schooling and were given training on new drones the U.S. sent to Ukraine last week for the war with Russia.

Austin thanked the Ukrainian troop members for their courage and service and pledged continued U.S. support and security aid, according to Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. Kirby said the small group was given some advanced tactical training, including on the Switchblade armed kamakazi drones, as well as instruction on patrol craft operations, communications and maintenance.

In an interview Saturday with The Associated Press, Zelenskyy acknowledged that despite his hopes for peace, he must be “realistic” about the prospects for a swift resolution given that negotiations have so far been limited to low-level talks that do not include Putin.

Zelenskyy renewed his plea for more weapons before an expected surge in fighting in the country’s east. He said, with frustration in regards to supplies of weapons from the U.S. and other Western nations, “of course it’s not enough.”

Sullivan spoke on CNN’s “State of the Union” and NBC’s “Meet the Press. Psaki spoke on “Fox News Sunday.”

*--Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue in Beirut and Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **15. Ukraine says Russians stole lethal substances from Chernobyl**

Agence France-Presse, Apr. 10 (0735) | Not Attributed

Russian forces who occupied the Chernobyl nuclear plant stole radioactive substances from research laboratories that could potentially kill them, Ukraine’s State Agency for Managing the Exclusion Zone said on Sunday.

Moscow’s forces seized the defunct power plant on the first day of their invasion of Ukraine on February 24. They occupied the highly radioactive zone for over a month, before retreating on March 31.

The agency said on Facebook that Russian soldiers pillaged two laboratories in the area.

It said the Russians entered a storage area of the Ecocentre research base and stole 133 highly radioactive substances.

“Even a small part of this activity is deadly if handled unprofessionally,” the agency said.

Earlier this week Ukraine’s energy minister German Gulashchenko said Russian soldiers exposed themselves to a “shocking” amount of nuclear radiation, saying some of them may have less than a year to live.

“They dug bare soil contaminated with radiation, collected radioactive sand in bags for fortification, breathed this dust,” Gulashchenko said on Facebook on Friday after visiting the exclusion zone.

“After a month of such exposure, they have a maximum of one year of life. More precisely, not life but a slow death from diseases,” the minister said.

“Every Russian soldier will bring a piece of Chernobyl home. Dead or alive.”

He said Russian military equipment was also contaminated.

“The ignorance of Russian soldiers is shocking.”

The Chernobyl power station was the site in 1986 of the world’s worst nuclear disaster.

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## **CHINA**

### **16. In Russia’s information war, its greatest weapon turns out to be China**

Washington Post, Apr. 11 (0115), Pg. A10 | Elizabeth Dwoskin

Russian propaganda about the war in Ukraine cratered last month after Russian state news channels were blocked in Europe and restricted globally. But in recent weeks, China has emerged as a potent outlet for Kremlin disinformation, researchers say, portraying Ukraine and NATO as the aggressors and sharing false claims about neo-Nazi control of the Ukrainian government.

With over a billion followers on Facebook alone, China’s state-controlled channels offer Russian President Vladimir Putin a powerful megaphone for shaping global understanding of the war - often called a “special operation” in line with Kremlin rhetoric. Since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, researchers say, Chinese channels have touted the false claim that the United States runs bioweapons labs in Ukraine, have asserted that Ukrainian neo-Nazis bombed a children’s hospital which was in fact bombed by Russian troops, and have suggested that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was being manipulated by U.S. billionaire George Soros.

Chinese channels also have given airtime and amplification to high-ranking Russian government officials and to presenters from Russian government channels whose shows have been restricted or blocked. Last month, after a host on Sputnik, the Russian state news outlet, posted a video on his personal YouTube channel discussing how neo-Nazis were on the rise in Ukraine, the clip was tweeted by Frontline, a Chinese government outlet.

“With governments and tech platforms moving to censor or limit the spread of Russian propaganda, pro-Kremlin talking points are now being laundered through influencers and proxies, including Chinese officials and state media outlets that obviously do not face the same restrictions that have been placed on Russian state media outlets,” said Bret Schafer, senior fellow and head of the information manipulation team at the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a nonpartisan initiative housed at the U.S. German Marshall Fund that tracks Chinese and Russian state media. “This has allowed the Kremlin to effectively skirt bans meant to limit the spread of Russian propaganda.”

Putin’s success in seeding some of these misleading narratives through proxies and allies is casting doubt on the ability of Western governments and the tech giants to effectively rein in the most pernicious forms of authoritarian propaganda. With China’s help, experts say, Russia also is regaining its ability to cloud the narrative around Europe’s biggest conflict since World War II.

“While the world’s eyes are still on Ukraine, and the journalists are there, it’s going to be hard for the Russian government to make great progress. But they can make progress on the edges,” said Kate Starbird, an associate professor in the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering at the University of Washington. “And in the long run, if the public is confused enough about what happened, then we might not give our leadership a clear message to take action.”

Since the war’s early days, when the European Commission blocked Russian state channels and Twitter, YouTube and Facebook restricted their reach, Russia has raced to create workarounds. Journalists have uncovered a coordinated campaign to pay TikTok influencers to push pro-Kremlin views, while researchers from the data science company Tremmentum Analytics have documented pro-Russia trolls spamming YouTube videos about Ukraine with pro-Russian comments.

The Russian government also has used its embassies to push out misinformation to tens of thousands of followers on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and the messaging app Telegram. According to the Israeli disinformation research group FakeReporter, Russian embassies have created at least 65 new Telegram channels since the war began. Twitter stopped recommending these accounts last week.

Fox News and other right-leaning American outlets also have picked up Russia’s talking points - notably when Fox host Tucker Carlson last month promoted to his prime time audience the baseless claim that Ukraine was developing biological weapons with the assistance of the U.S. government. According to disinformation researchers and the fact-checking group PolitiFact, that claim, which has been circulating for years, is a misleading reference to a public health research partnership between the United States and Ukraine; the White House has called it “preposterous.”

Two weeks ago, the New York Post wrote an article tying the discredited biolab claim to President Biden’s son Hunter, claiming that the younger Biden had helped secure funds for a start-up that worked on the research biolabs

in Ukraine. The Washington Post has reported that Hunter Biden “was not part of a decision” to invest in the start-up.

Meanwhile, highly active online communities, such as anti-vaccine activists and adherents of the radicalized movement QAnon, have seized on the biolab claim and other Russian narratives. An early, prolific spreader of the theory, according to the Anti-Defamation League, was a Virginia man with ties to QAnon.

China is, by far, the Kremlin’s biggest promoter, however. The top four Chinese outlets - CGTN, Global Times, Xinhua News and T-House - command a massive audience with a combined follower count on Facebook of 283 million, according to research from the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH). All told, Chinese outlets on Facebook have over 1 billion followers, according to the Alliance for Securing Democracy - far more than the roughly 85 million total followers for Russia’s main channels.

Asked how Facebook was addressing China’s emergence as a vector for Russian propaganda, Facebook shared several examples of fact checks applied to misleading pro-Russian content from Chinese state media. The company did not respond to questions about whether it has restricted Chinese state media accounts or has plans to do so.

Twitter spokeswoman Madeline Broas said the company had placed some limits on Chinese state media for several years, and that it had begun putting highly-visible labels on any tweet that contained a link to Chinese state media. (Previously, such labels were shown only to people who searched for the account.)

YouTube declined to answer questions about Chinese state media. Spokeswoman Elena Hernandez said the company does fact-check misinformation and that it prohibits content that minimizes, trivializes, or denies the existence of well-documented, violent historical events.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

China and Russia have long been allies, extending back to the Cold War, and view their alliance as a bulwark against Western power. The two countries strengthened their bond ahead of the Ukraine invasion, issuing a joint statement on Feb. 4 describing their relationship as a “no limits” friendship.

Russia has refused to acknowledge the invasion, referring to its actions in Ukraine as a “special operation.” Chinese state media immediately adopted that term, according to the Alliance for Securing Democracy’s tracker, with Chinese accounts using it 180 times between Feb. 24 and March 12. The term “invasion” was mentioned 145 times, but more than the third were references to the U.S. invasion of Iraq - an attempt to equate Russian and American military actions.

Chinese media also began to take up neo-Nazi storylines, according to ASD. Chinese diplomats and state media have tweeted about Nazis more than 140 times since the start of the war, according to the tracker. In the year

preceding the war, Chinese state-affiliated accounts tracked by the group tweeted about Nazis only twice. The Azov Battalion, a group partially made up of anti-Russian nationalists and neo-Nazis, has been part of Ukraine's military since 2014. But experts say the controversial battalion does not have major influence in the country whose president, Zelensky, is Jewish.

Lately, China has focused more attention on blaming NATO for the conflict, researchers say. A recent Facebook post from T-House, a millennial-focused outlet, compared Ukraine's potential membership in NATO to Hitler's attempt to conquer Ukraine, according to research by the Center for Countering Digital Hate. "The moves by the US-led #NATO have pushed the #Russia-Ukraine tension to the breaking point," said a recent tweet by China's ambassador to the Asia-Pacific region.

In late March, NATO was the tenth most used key phrase in Chinese tweets, according to the ASD tracker. Meanwhile, China's consul general in Belfast recently tweeted a false claim from Russian state media that Zelensky is hiding in Poland, a NATO member.

China also is giving a boost to Russian presenters whose audiences appear to have been limited by Western bans. The personal talk show for U.K. presenter George Galloway, host of the "Mother of All Talk Shows" on Sputnik, been shared numerous times by several large Chinese outlets such as Global Times. Currently, the Sputnik website that hosted Galloway's show appeared to be blocked in the United Kingdom, according to ASD. But his personal YouTube channel, which does not make visible references to his Sputnik backing, continues to stream it.

Galloway did not respond to a request for comment. In a tweet on Wednesday, Galloway tweeted in response to Twitter's decision to label his account "Russian state media," saying, "Dear @TwitterSupport I am not "Russian State Affiliated media". I work for NO #Russian media. I have 400,000 followers. I'm the leader of a British political party and spent nearly 30 years in the British parliament. If you do not remove this designation I will take legal action."

Experts disagree about how the tech companies should police China and other Russian proxies.

The tech companies have cast their crackdowns on Russian media as drastic actions taken under extraordinary circumstances; they largely do not want to impose blanket bans on state outlets. Experts also have noted that if state outlets are banned for disinformation, the tech companies would face increasing pressure to ban nonstate channels that spread misinformation, such as Fox News.

Instead, the tech companies more recently have opted for transparency, such as fact-checking and labeling. In 2018, YouTube began labeling state media outlets. Twitter did so in 2020, as did Facebook.

But labeling is premised on the idea that informed users will make wise decisions about whether to trust content, and that has had mixed results.

In 2020, George Washington University researchers studying the impact of YouTube labels on content from RT found that they were effective at making people more aware of misinformation, but only when the labels were prominently displayed. A separate study from the Election Integrity Partnership, a consortium of prominent disinformation researchers, found that labeling was inconsistent and that tech platforms failed to prominently show the labels in search results.

Since the Ukraine war began, Twitter has added more prominent labels, saying the move has reduced the reach of Russian propaganda by 30 percent. But some advocates said transparency measures are insufficient in the face of China's global disinformation campaign, and called on the tech giants to do more.

“When there is clear disinformation targeted at foreign populations, the tech companies have a perfectly legitimate moral case for limiting or removing that propaganda,” said Imran Ahmed, chief executive of CCDH, which has researched Chinese state media.

Not all companies have embraced the same level of transparency. TikTok, whose parent company ByteDance is Chinese-owned, started its first pilot project to label a few dozen Russian state outlets last month, and the company has plans to start labeling Chinese outlets. Researchers say state propaganda probably has a massive presence on its service - but it is difficult to detect with such limited labels and without providing researchers the ability to review the platform's data. The company says it is still developing a state media policy.

Rather than adopting ad hoc policies during an emergency like the Ukraine war, platforms should have distinguished long ago between media outlets run by authoritarian governments and outlets, such as PBS or the BBC, that receive support from democratic governments, said Alex Stamos, director of the Stanford Internet Observatory, which is a member of the Election Integrity Partnership.

Stamos, who once was Facebook's chief security officer, argued that social media companies should not give a megaphone to state media outlets from countries, such as China, where free speech is suppressed. Russia would now also fall into that category, he said.

“This is the time,” Stamos said, “for the tech platforms to finally create rules about state media run by authoritarian governments.”

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## INDO-PACIFIC

### 17. Keep focus of Ukraine war on issue of sovereignty – PM

#### *Framing it as a conflict between democracies and autocracies complicates the problem*

Straits Times (Singapore), Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A1 | Tham Yuen-C

Seeing the war in Ukraine as a battle between democracies and autocracies complicates the problem and automatically puts Beijing in the wrong camp, making it untenable for China to denounce Russia, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

If the conflict is instead defined as one about sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, “even China would not object to that, and would actually privately strongly support that”, he said in a dialogue with The Wall Street Journal editorial board on April 1.

The transcript of PM Lee’s session, which took place during his visit to the United States, was released by his office yesterday.

China’s refusal to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and its signing of a “no limits” friendship pact with Russia three weeks before the attack, has come under strong criticism from the West.

“America asks why China does not stand with it. You have to be very careful not to define the problem with Ukraine in such a way that automatically, China is already on the wrong side... by making this a battle of democracies against autocracies,” PM Lee said.

“If you say it is democracies versus Putin’s autocracy, I think that already is difficult. If you say democracies versus autocracies - plural - that already defines China into the wrong camp, and makes things even more difficult.”

The fact is that the war in Ukraine is something many countries do not support, PM Lee noted.

“We all have a problem in Ukraine. I think if we talk about sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, a lot of countries can come along,” he added.

Singapore, for one, has stood up for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity every time the subject has come up in the United Nations, he said.

For a small country, it is an existential issue, PM Lee reiterated.

Outlining why Singapore imposed sanctions against Russia unilaterally, he said: “Mostly, we have not acted independently of the UN’s decisions, and we follow whatever sanctions or decisions that UNSC (UN Security Council) comes up with.

“But from time to time, the UNSC is paralysed, like here. And in this case, it is such a big and egregious violation of international norms that we decided we had to act on our own, UNSC or not.”

PM Lee also said that what has happened in Ukraine has implications for the way events develop in Asia, which could reshape the security architecture in the region.

He noted some “rash people” have talked about a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-type situation developing in Asia.

But Asia is different, he said. “How do we handle it so that in Asia we have the right institutions in the long term, that we are able to develop mutual interest and interdependence across potentially hostile lines and prevent a fracture?”

Countries are calculating their own responses and what Ukraine means for them, in terms of who will come to their help, and what the prospects are of something hotting up, for example, on Taiwan.

“My own take is that Ukraine does not influence Taiwan’s prospects greatly, one way or the other; that has its own dynamics and historical frame,” he added.

Turning to Japan and South Korea, he noted that the topic of building their own nuclear capabilities has been broached.

Asked if nuclear proliferation might be a deterrent and a stabilising force, PM Lee said one could argue that, “but in real life, a lot of accidents can happen, and people are not necessarily rational, even on the most existential things”.

He said that as the number of nuclear players proliferates, there was no guarantee that they would all understand the nuances of mutual assured destruction - the doctrine based on the deterrent notion that a nuclear attack would be met with a counterattack that could annihilate both sides.

“So, I really do not think proliferation is a good idea, but it will be very hard to prevent. All you can hope to do is to slow it down.”

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **24. The U.S. has a big stake in how the Ukraine war ends**

*It's likely to be paying a lot of the cost*

Los Angeles Times Online, Apr. 10 (0700) | Doyle McManus

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now in its seventh week, shows no sign of abating. Vladimir Putin's army has abandoned its assault on Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, but is launching a new offensive in the country's east. Ukraine's allies, led by the United States and Britain, have stepped up their supplies of tanks and anti-aircraft weapons.

But every war must end some day, whether in a victory for one side or a split-the-difference cease-fire. In Washington and other Western capitals, debate has begun over what terms Ukraine and its allies should seek for ending this one — or what goals they should hold out for.

At first glance, the question might appear simple: Ukraine and its allies want Putin to end the invasion and withdraw his troops. But the details get complicated quickly.

Some U.S. and European hawks see the unexpected success of Ukraine's armed forces as a golden opportunity to cut Putin down to size and teach a lesson to other autocrats, beginning with China's Xi Jinping.

"The Western objective must be to leave Russia profoundly weakened and militarily crippled ... internally divided until the point that an aging autocrat falls from power," Eliot A. Cohen of Johns Hopkins University, a former official in the George W. Bush administration, wrote recently.

But doves worry about threatening Putin's survival in power to the point that he might consider using nuclear weapons. And some European leaders, led by French President Emmanuel Macron, have searched for a quick end to the war, if only to reduce the damage to their own economies.

In the middle, President Biden and his aides have settled on what sounds like an elegant solution: endorse whatever outcome is acceptable to Ukraine.

"Our job is to support the Ukrainians," Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said last week. "They will set the military objectives. They will set the objectives at the bargaining table.... We are not going to define the outcome of this for the Ukrainians. That is up for them to define and us to support them."

The logic is straightforward: The Ukrainians are doing the fighting and suffering horrendous civilian casualties, so they've earned the right to decide what kind of settlement they're willing to accept.

“As long as the Ukrainians are saying they want to keep fighting, we can’t tell them no,” argued Steven Pifer, a former U.S. ambassador to Kyiv.

Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, offered Putin terms for a cease-fire last month and included several concessions: He asked for a Russian withdrawal to the lines each army occupied before the Feb. 24 invasion, which would leave several chunks of Ukrainian territory in Russian hands. He said Ukraine would accept neutral status and give up its effort to become a member of NATO. In return, he said, Ukraine would need ironclad security guarantees to prevent another invasion.

Putin’s aides dismissed the offer as inadequate.

That was before the discovery of widespread atrocities against civilians by Russian troops north of Kyiv, which may have hardened Ukraine’s resolve to keep fighting. Zelensky has said he would submit the terms of any cease-fire to a referendum.

In any case, deferring to the Ukrainians on terms for ending the war is more complicated than it sounds because the likely terms will require active participation by the United States and its allies.

Take Zelensky’s demand for security guarantees. He wants a reliable, binding pledge that if Russia invades again, the United States and its allies will step in with the kind of sanctions and military aid they are supplying now, or more.

“Whether Russia agrees to a settlement or not, Ukraine is going to need security guarantees,” Ivo H. Daalder, a former U.S. ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, told me.

“There’s already an organization that does that, and it’s called NATO.... How is NATO going to say no to membership for Ukraine after all of this has happened?”

Another thorny issue will involve U.S. economic sanctions. In any talks over ending the war, Russia is certain to demand that sanctions be lifted. U.S. officials have said that sanctions relief will be up for discussion, but only after Russian troops are out of Ukraine.

“But that was before Bucha,” Daalder said. “The atrocities have made it much more difficult to contemplate lifting any sanctions.”

If a cease-fire takes hold, the United States will also be expected to play a leading role in helping Ukraine rebuild its armed forces, its economy and its shattered cities.

U.S. and allied support after the war will be just as important as it is now. Putin has invaded Ukraine three times since 2014; if his current offensive falls short, he can be expected to plan a fourth. One goal for U.S. policy should be to deter him from trying again.

The most damaging outcome for Putin would be a Ukraine that can regain its independence, defend its borders and show Russians that democracy can prosper in their part of the world. For anyone seeking to settle scores, that would be the best revenge.

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## **25. The Pentagon Must ‘Campaign’ Against China, Not Hope for a Goal-Line Stand**

*To dissuade aggression, the U.S. military must continuously persuade its adversaries to doubt their chances of success*

DefenseOne.com, Apr. 10 (0600) | Bryan Clark and Dan Patt

During the lead-up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration released an unprecedented amount of classified intelligence regarding Russian plans, even revealing insider knowledge of Vladimir Putin’s intentions. This attempt at deterrence by detection failed; Putin invaded anyway. But the quality of allied intelligence-gathering and the new National Defense Strategy point toward a potentially better way to dissuade adversaries, through what the Pentagon calls “campaigning.”

Most discussion of the new NDS centers on its approach of Integrated Deterrence, in which all instruments of national power are orchestrated to prevent aggression. But the mixed results, at best, from the West’s combination of sanctions, intelligence revelations, and diplomacy suggests that capable, nuclear-armed adversaries like Russia and, more importantly, China may not be stopped by Integrated Deterrence’s threats of last-minute denial or punishment.

The new defense strategy’s inclusion of campaigning as one of its three main lines of effort provides a way for the Pentagon to break from simply trying to deny or punish aggression. Drawn from Marine Corps doctrine, campaigning refers to the orchestration of military activities alongside economic, diplomatic, and information actions to achieve specific goals. Through campaigning, U.S. forces would attempt to undermine adversary attempts at coercion, complicate enemy planning, and develop U.S. warfighting capabilities.

Campaigning may seem like another word for what the U.S. military does every day but is intended to convey a deliberate and methodical approach to cause specific results in a particular context, rather than generally support U.S. allies or deter opponents.

Russia demonstrated a form of campaigning during the lead-up to its invasion of Ukraine and in the months thereafter. In combination with building up foreign exchange reserves to insulate the country from sanctions, Russian leaders threatened cyber attacks, energy warfare, and nuclear escalation to suppress Western retaliation.

Partly in response, U.S. leaders foreswore putting boots in the ground or conducting large cyber operations to protect Ukraine.

Another relevant example is the Cold War, when strategists devised a plan to undermine Soviet leaders' confidence in their plans and capabilities. Rather than relying solely on forces in the Fulda Gap to stop a Warsaw Pact invasion, U.S. and allied militaries developed new capabilities like the Tomahawk missile to threaten the Soviet periphery, sent submarines to the Barents Sea to hold Soviet nuclear missile subs at risk, pursued "Star Wars" missile defenses, and fielded stealth fighters and precision-guided weapons to imperil Soviet reinforcements.

Many of these new technologies did not reach the field before the Cold War ended, and some—like Star Wars—never achieved their ambitions. But the combination of concepts and capability development with persistent U.S. and allied forward operations arguably kept leaders in Moscow off-balance and less likely to initiate aggression.

China is in most ways a more formidable opponent than the Cold War Soviet Union or today's Russia. If threats of denial or punishment did not stop Putin from invading Ukraine, they are even less likely to deter leaders in Beijing from attacking Taiwan. Instead, the United States and its allies will need to pursue a long-term effort at dissuasion, or an effort to reduce the likelihood of an adversary taking an undesirable action.

Campaigning could operationalize dissuasion by creating a feedback loop between U.S. or allied actions and Chinese decision-making. U.S. military posture changes, experiments or demonstrations, exercises, and new tactics and concepts should sway Chinese leaders' assessments of how easily the People's Liberation Army could defeat China's neighbors and at what cost. A well-orchestrated series of U.S. and allied actions could convince officials in Beijing to defer hostilities until they are more confident of success on acceptable terms.

If the U.S. intelligence community's insight into China's internal decision-making is on par with what it demonstrated with Russia, Pentagon planners could use Chinese assessments of U.S. actions to develop and refine a dissuasion campaign over months or years. And if U.S. intelligence lacks the level of penetration it has in Russia, leaders could still rely on observable responses to build a model of Chinese decision-making that would help shape the campaign.

However, analysis is only half the battle. Whether it depends on direct intelligence, models, or both, campaigning requires sustained action to generate surprise and create measurable responses. Persistent engagement has paid off in cyberspace for U.S. Cyber Command and in the media for Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. The Pentagon could apply persistent engagement across other domains in a campaign against China if U.S. leaders are willing to accept a modest risk of escalation.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command leaders are concerned China could attempt to forcibly reunite with Taiwan during this decade. Moreover, the failure of deterrence against Russia shows threats of denial or punishment may not be credible against peer militaries fighting in their own back yards. The U.S. military should quickly launch a new

approach toward preventing hostilities against allies and partners. With its emphasis on campaigning, the new defense strategy offers a path to dissuading China rather than waiting to mount a goal-line stand that is unlikely to succeed.

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*--Bryan Clark and Dan Patt is Senior Fellows at the Hudson Institute*

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## **26. The great mismatch in America's courtship of South-east Asia**

*There is a fundamental mismatch in what the US and Asean want most from each other, and that gap should concern Washington as it gives rival Beijing the opportunity to gloat and court Asean*

Straits Times (Singapore) (Power Play), Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A17 | Charissa Yong

Compared with how long the special summit between the US and Asean is taking to be arranged, America's security cooperation with the Quad alliance appears to be moving at the speed of light.

The leaders of Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising the United States, Australia, India and Japan, have held multiple virtual meetings since President Joe Biden took office in January last year, and held their first in-person summit in Washington back in September.

In contrast, the in-person summit of Asean, or the Association of South-east Asian Nations, and Mr Biden has been almost 1½ years in the making - and has yet to come to pass.

A meeting planned for end-March was scuppered by scheduling problems. Both sides are still trying to fix a date this spring, but have not agreed on one yet.

The stalled summit is a concern because such meetings are usually an opportune avenue for the US to signal its commitment to the region. They also tend to jump-start deeper cooperation, as the venue where significant announcements are made.

Dr Kurt Campbell of the White House's National Security Council hinted that the US-Asean Special Summit would serve such a purpose.

"I'm confident that once we are able to put this in play, this will help essentially project the future of our relationship with Asean very much in a forward direction," he said at a Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) virtual conference last Tuesday.

At the same conference, US Deputy Secretary of Commerce Pamela Phan called the summit "a key piece to advancing that relationship".

She added that the Biden administration was considering the summit as a potential venue to launch its Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the long-awaited outline for America's economic strategy in the region.

On the same day, the US announced it would work with Australia and the United Kingdom on hypersonic missiles under the Aukus security pact - a concrete outcome in stark contrast to the ifs-and-maybes with Asean.

The contrast highlights how US-Asean engagement lags behind where both sides want it to be right now.

That gap should concern the US because it gives China, its rival for influence in the region, room to gloat and court Asean.

The Chinese state media Global Times last month called the summit scheduling episode a reflection of America's "bossy style" and an example of how "Asean has been put behind other agendas by the US many times".

The newspaper wrote: "Even if the US-Asean summit is held later this year, doubts remain whether it can really help promote the relationship between the US and Asean.

The US will only focus on topics of its own interests, not care about Asean's demands and concerns at all."

The gap should also concern Asean, given its unease of being sidelined by the Quad as a central component of the region's security architecture, even though the two groupings are very different in nature.

"We can talk as much as we like about how the Quad respects Asean centrality. But if you think about what's happened in the last five years across Democratic and Republican administrations here in the US, where has the US put most of its effort? It's into things like the Quad and Aukus," said American Enterprise Institute senior fellow Zack Cooper.

The US should be aware of this mismatch between rhetoric and reality, and back its words of Asean centrality with deeds.

The most important thing to watch for in the near future will be the IPEF, and how much it matches the region's desire for economic engagement.

#### WHY IS ENGAGEMENT SLOWER?

Logistical difficulties and bad timing can be partially blamed for why US-Asean engagement is slower than desired.

Asean is a much bigger bloc of 10 nations compared with the Quad's four, and it is wildly diverse with very different political systems and economies, making reaching an agreement sometimes akin to herding cats.

The war in Ukraine has undoubtedly also thrown a wrench in plans and US availability - even the Quad leaders' meeting in Japan, originally proposed for late this month, has reportedly been postponed to next month.

But there is a deeper reason - a fundamental mismatch in what the US and Asean want most from each other.

At the top of Asean's wish list, broadly, is more market access and trade liberalisation. But that is politically difficult for Washington to grant, and the Biden administration has signalled it is unlikely to do so.

The US is poised to launch its IPEF, which will promote fair and resilient trade, supply chain resilience, infrastructure, clean energy, and decarbonisation, among others.

Mr Biden first announced America's plans for the IPEF in October last year, at the East Asia Summit, and the White House later said it would be released early this year.

So far, no details have been released of which countries might be included in the framework. But last month, the Commerce Department and Office of the US Trade Representative called for public comments on what the IPEF should entail.

They stopped accepting comments today, and could launch the IPEF "in the next month or so", the Commerce Department's Ms Phan said at the CSIS conference last week.

But it will also fall short of a traditional free trade agreement, given the Biden administration's reluctance to enter into new trade deals and offer increased market access.

Republican Senator and free trade advocate John Cornyn said that the IPEF is being viewed in Congress as a "weak substitute for the real thing".

"This is sort of being offered up as an alternative. But it's not what I would hope for in terms of getting new trade agreements," Mr Cornyn, who represents Texas, said at the CSIS conference.

Senators at a hearing on March 31 also criticised the IPEF's lack of market access, saying it missed the mark on what governments in the Indo-Pacific want.

Democratic Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey said that ambassadors of countries that may join the IPEF have told him it is "not sufficiently ambitious."

Republican Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho said: "We've got nations in the Indo-Pacific who are crying out for free trade negotiations with us so that they can strengthen their relationship to us economically, rather than being tied to China."

Hudson Institute Japan Chair deputy director Riley Walters wrote that the framework asked governments in the region to impose a higher standard of rules and regulations, without giving them incentive to do so.

"It's like asking for a trade deal with all the enforcement and no market access. It's all stick and no carrot," he wrote in a commentary in The Hill political website last Friday.

In the realm of security, the opposite dynamic is true - the US wants more security cooperation to counter China, which Asean overall is less interested in providing.

Instead, the US is more on the same page with the other members of the Quad and Aukus, speeding up cooperation there, experts note.

“If you ask Quad leaders what the Quad is about, they’ll often say, ‘Well, this really isn’t about balancing against China. It’s about all these other public goods’,” said Dr Cooper at the CSIS conference.

“But at the base level, what do India, the US, Australia and Japan have in common that other countries don’t? We’re willing to balance against China.”

He added: “At its core, what the four Quad countries have most in common is a willingness to actually carry out some tough balancing efforts on the security side.

That’s why it’s a little bit tricky sometimes to deal with Asean, which is basically not willing to carry out a lot of those tough balancing efforts.”

This highlights a tension within US engagement in the region between depth - doing more with fewer countries, or less with more countries, Dr Cooper said.

“It’s a tension between going for more depth in the coalitions we’re trying to build in Asia, working with the countries that are willing to do the most the fastest... or do we try and broaden out that group of countries that we’re working so closely with? And I think what we’ve seen is that actually broadening is really hard,” he said.

But America can and should do a lot more with Asean, Dr Cooper added.

“At the end of the day, if you think in the long term about the countries that the US can do a lot more with... I think a lot of those countries are in South-east Asia.”

## IMPLICATIONS

Meanwhile, China’s economic dominance in the region is growing, something that should worry Washington if its slow pace of engagement with Asean continues.

China’s bilateral trade with South-east Asia grew 6.7 per cent to hit US\$685 billion (S\$934 billion) in 2020, almost double the US and Asean’s trade of US\$362 billion that year.

China has also heavily invested in the region, and has applied to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade agreement.

America will fall further behind if it does not invest more in building its economic ties in the region, in addition to its security links there.

“I still believe it’s very important for us to continue to build those ties in the region, not just from a security standpoint, but from an economic standpoint, as well,” said Mr Cornyn at the CSIS conference.

“To me, that’s the best way to check China’s march towards consolidating their power, both economic and military, in the region.”

That said, there are other areas of cooperation with Asean that the US is doing well in, beyond its security and economic ties.

The US has a particular edge in soft power, as the Asia Society Policy Institute’s Elina Noor, the deputy director of its Washington DC office, pointed out during the CSIS conference.

The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, a US-sponsored cultural exchange programme, “remains highly, highly popular” among South-east Asian youth, and the US is also involved in a variety of causes that the region’s younger generation is passionate about, such as climate change, she added.

Nonetheless, its economic engagement is still lacking, and the US stepping up on that front is one way it can reassure Asean that it is not just paying lip service to Asean centrality, but also genuinely interested in deepening its commitment to the region.

In contrast, if the US under-investment in Asean continues, both sides will be poorer for it.

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## **27. U.S. Should Show India It’s Better Partner Than Putin**

Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 10 (2200) | Editorial

India has surprised and disappointed many of its fellow democracies by refusing to directly condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Some U.S. officials have even let their frustrations spill out in public. Although understandable, such criticisms are mostly unproductive. The U.S. and its allies should instead concentrate on showing India that the country’s interests are better served through partnership with the West, not Vladimir Putin.

Russia and China seem to see India’s loyalty as up for grabs. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently dropped by New Delhi unannounced to discuss a border dispute. His Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov followed within days. According to Bloomberg News, Russia is offering to sell crude oil to India at a steep discount and to set up a rupees-for-rubles payment system to avoid restrictions on Russian banks.

Allied officials are right to want to push back on this apparent charm offensive. Allowing India to undermine sanctions would send the wrong signal to the many other countries who haven't yet joined Western efforts to isolate Russia. Having the world's biggest democracy soft-pedal the blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty also undercuts the effort to defend vital rules of global conduct. But overtly pressuring India to pick sides would be unwise on two levels.

For one, it would draw charges of hypocrisy. Indian leaders rightly bristle at criticism for buying Russian oil when European countries haven't ceased their own purchases. Second and more important, taking umbrage at India's fence-sitting isn't practical. An estimated 85% of India's major weapons systems rely on Russian equipment. India flies more than 250 Russian-made fighter jets, fields more than 1,200 Russian tanks, and sails seven Kilo-class submarines. With another \$10 billion worth of weapons systems in the pipeline, the country will depend on Russian parts and maintenance for years.

India's long-standing ties with Russia can't be severed overnight. Nor can the U.S. realistically expect India to abandon the strategic autonomy its foreign-policy elite has jealously guarded since independence.

For now, the Biden administration should focus on what it can fix. The first step is to accelerate efforts to help India diversify its weapons purchases. India's dependence on Russia has been compounded by the U.S.'s struggle to offer affordable alternatives: the missile-defense systems the U.S. proposed selling to India, for instance, cost nearly three times as much as the sophisticated Russian S-400 batteries the Indian military ultimately purchased. Even so, the situation is improving. Indian imports of Russian arms fell nearly 50% between 2017 and 2021, while defense trade with the U.S. grew from nearly zero in 2008 to more than \$20 billion in 2020. At talks this week, the U.S. should propose more concrete ways to increase cooperation, including by finding ways to share technology and set up co-production facilities to reduce costs. In the meantime, the administration should issue a waiver for India's S-400 purchase, which would otherwise be subject to sanctions.

Over the longer term, the U.S. and its partners in Europe and Asia must show India that they can address its interests far better than Russia can. However the war in Ukraine ends, the Russian economy and arms industry will struggle for years. Putin's Russia will be unstable, isolated and increasingly dependent on China. By contrast, the European Union and India's partners in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which includes the U.S., Japan and Australia, have the technology, finance and markets India needs not just to modernize its military but to develop its economy: Their total trade with India is nearly 20 times bigger than Russia's. The U.S. should be willing to discuss concessions to expand trade even further.

Indian leaders shouldn't require so much convincing, of course. Russia's despicable invasion of a peaceful neighbor should've crystallized for them the difference between the two sides in this dispute. Few countries have benefited more from the peace, stability and open markets that the West has enabled. The world's democracies should remind India where its true interests lie — and that global leadership carries responsibilities.

*--Editors: Nisid Hajari, Timothy Lavin*

## **28. Don't allow Navy to sidestep orders**

Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Apr. 10 (N/A), Pg. E2 | Editorial

Very little about the Red Hill saga has been straightforward, so it's only logical for Oahu residents to be skeptical about the Navy's dismissal of a captain in charge.

Few could take that action at face value, especially not after the last several months of a water contamination crisis that forced the displacement of many families. At issue is the disposition of an aging fuel-storage facility that has put the nearby public water aquifer at risk for years, so attention to this controversy is intense.

Following a relatively small spill at the Red Hill underground fuel facility several days prior, the Navy on Monday announced that Capt. Albert Lee Hornyak, the commanding officer of NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center, had been fired. The official reason was described as "a series of leadership and oversight failures" with the spill specifically cited.

But the public was already made wary by previous mammoth spills, most notably a leak of 27,000 gallons eight years ago, and then the water-contamination crisis linked to spills in May and November of last year.

People now also know that in October, Hornyak had been the one to raise concerns about operator error being the cause of the May fuel spill. This finding had followed an investigation by the Navy and came to light only because the contents of the email were leaked — not because the Navy has been forthcoming with this information.

It's clear that disclosure with details about everything that's happened — and will happen, going forward — will have to be driven by local officials, those elected to key offices as well as the state Department of Health (DOH). Even the extent of the most recent spill this month, initially described as a 30-gallon mix of fuel and water, remains murky: a Pacific Fleet official told state lawmakers in a separate email that the spill amounted to 50 gallons. Which was it?

The public should get an accounting of even this small detail and should not be satisfied simply by personnel being relieved of duties. Given that Hornyak had been ringing alarm bells, that dismissal silenced him and, if anything, that adds further to the unease and public suspicions.

The Department of Defense already has decided to defuel the facility, and the manner in which that's done needs to comply with a DOH emergency order, issued Dec. 6.

That state agency already is on record asserting its oversight authority. Most recently, on Friday, it issued a joint release with the state Commission on Water Resource Management, part of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, indicating approval of the Navy's plan to install eight additional monitoring wells at Red Hill.

Things aren't moving along so swimmingly on other aspects of naval compliance, however. Last month, the Health Department announced that the Navy's hiring of a contractor to assess the Red Hill facility for safely defueling the tanks did not align with the DOH emergency order.

That contractor, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc., was hired Jan. 11, with state health officials saying they were notified only hours before the Navy executed the contract. The department said it was concerned the work wouldn't be done independently.

The reason: Surely it was the same lack of trust that local authorities have felt for some time, starting with the halting way information came to light about the water contamination late last year.

The Health Department, along with the federal Environmental Protection Agency, had partnered with the Navy under a memorandum of agreement stemming from the 2014 spill, aimed at finding the best way to safeguard the aquifer.

But that accord soon weakened as the story about the fuel contaminants, largely detected in wells serving military residential areas, played out. An investigation into the incident was conducted, but the full report delivered to military brass in December was never released.

Even if a more comprehensive study is underway, the public still deserves to see the facts that this command report contained.

After the November water contamination, the Navy halted Red Hill operations — and later, pressed by a concerned public, local officials and Hawaii's congressional delegation, the DOD ultimately agreed the fuel needs to be taken out. U.S. Rep. Mazie Hirono on Thursday pressed Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to restate his commitment to funding the process of defueling the tanks.

It is critical to get the secretary on the record about this. Having the top brass attuned to the situation will provide leverage to keep the Navy on task.

But this must be a sustained effort on the local front, with all hands on deck, to borrow a fitting naval expression. Gov. David Ige is on board, last week telling Hawaii News Now he could issue an emergency order to speed the development of additional wells, underscoring the ongoing worry about the security of Oahu's water supply.

This pointed messaging must continue. State, county and congressional leaders, as well as the public, have to keep up the pressure on the Navy to work with transparency, and to move without delay toward a permanent solution.

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## TWEETS

"U.S. aircraft carrier deploys off Korean peninsula amid tensions with North official," according to a tweet from Reuters. Separately, "Ukraine says checking unverified information that Russia used chemical weapons in Mariupol," Reuters tweeted on Tuesday. And Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) wrote: "America's submarine fleet is critical to our national security and one of the strongest deterrents in the U.S. military arsenal. I am grateful to [the Southeastern New England Defense Industry Alliance] for continuing to bolster RI's submarine manufacturing workforce."

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New York Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A1 | Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski

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Reuters, Apr. 12 Not Attributed

President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Tuesday that attempts to isolate Moscow would fail, citing the success of the Soviet space programme as evidence that Russia could achieve spectacular leaps forward in tough conditions. Russia says it will never again depend on the West after the United States and its allies imposed crippling sanctions on it to punish Putin for his Feb. 24 order for what he called a "special military operation" in Ukraine.

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New York Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A10 | Rick Gladstone

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comes against the backdrop of the Kremlin's veiled threats to use some of its vast stockpile if the war in Ukraine escalates.

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Reuters, Apr. 12 | Idrees Ali and Christopher Gallagher

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Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A1 | Matthew Dalton, Yaroslav Trofimov and Mauro Orru

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine launched a fresh appeal for military aid as the country prepared for some of the heaviest fighting so far in the conflict, while France sent a police unit from its armed forces to Ukraine to investigate possible war crimes, the first disclosed deployment of military personnel from a NATO country in Ukraine.

7. Ukraine says checking unverified information that Russia used chemical weapons in Mariupol  
Reuters, Apr. 12 | Pavel Polityuk and Guy Faulconbridge

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8. Russian General Tapped to Lead Invasion  
Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A6 | Evan Gershkovich and Jared Malsin

Russian Army Gen. Aleksandr Dvornikov, the man chosen to lead the next phase of Moscow's war in Ukraine, wrote in a military newspaper in 2018 that in modern warfare, "the main task is not the physical destruction of the enemy, but the complete subordination of him to one's will."

9. U.S. Weighs Future Ties to Kremlin  
Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A6 | Sabrina Siddiqui and William Mauldin

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New York Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A9 | Motoko Rich

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Kyodo News Online (Japan), Apr. 12 Not Attributed

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## IRAN

19. Defense Minister Gantz: Regional alliance needed against Iran  
Jerusalem Post Online (Israel), Apr. 12 Anna Ahronheim

Defense Minister Benny Gantz called for a regional alliance and an expansion of intelligence cooperation in order to make up for a lack of inspections on Iran's nuclear project. Speaking at a Washington Institute Policy Forum, Gantz said that Iran is continuing its uranium enrichment and is close to 90% enrichment that is suitable for nuclear weapons "once they decide to reach it."

20. Politics, not substance, seen guiding U.S. and Iran on terror listing  
Reuters (Analysis), Apr. 11 Arshad Mohammed and Parisa Hafezi

One of the last obstacles to reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal - Tehran's demand to remove its Revolutionary Guards from a U.S. terrorism list - is more an issue of politics than substance, analysts said.

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS

21. 'Battlefield nukes' in Ukraine? A low but complex threat.  
Christian Science Monitor Online, Apr. 11 Anna Mulrine Grobe

In her experience running war games for the U.S. military, Stacie Pettyjohn found that whenever scenarios involved nuclear weapons, participants tended to be flummoxed. "Normally folks playing the U.S. side are at a loss as to what to do," she says. It was not uncommon for teams to unnecessarily escalate hostilities and stumble into the nightmare of nuclear war. "It's one of those things that's terrifying," she said.

## NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

22. Dr. Marvin L. Adams sworn in as Deputy Administrator for NNSA's Office of Defense Programs  
National Nuclear Security Administration, Apr. 11 | Press Release

Dr. Marvin L. Adams was sworn in today as the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration.

## AIR FORCE

23. Why Missouri has a target on its back for cyberattacks  
KTVI FOX 2 News (St. Louis, MO), Apr. 11 | Emily Manley

Could Missouri's electric power grid be at risk of a cyberattack? It's not commonly discussed inside the Missouri Capitol, but an expert from Washington D.C. is warning lawmakers about the protection the state needs. Dr. Peter Pry is the executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security. He told members of the House Special Committee on Government Accountability that because of Whiteman Air Force Base near Sedalia, Missouri has a target on its back.

## ARMY

24. Units train for nuclear forensics mission during Exercise Prominent Hunt in Delaware

20th CBRNE Command, Apr. 11 | Walter Ham

Highly specialized American Army units from the U.S. Department of Defense's premier all hazards command trained for interagency nuclear forensics missions during Exercise Prominent Hunt at Bethany Beach, Delaware, April 4-7.

#### COMMENTARY

25. Time to relearn nuclear escalation management for the 21st century  
BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 | Robbin Laird

No pure conventional warfighting doctrine against 21st century authoritarian powers will work when those powers have the threat of nuclear fire in their pocket. That was always true, but the Ukraine situation has laid it bare and this should have a profound impact on US and allied thinking about dealing with those powers going forward.

26. Biden's Nuclear Strike Policy Is the Same as Russia's  
TheIntercept.com, Apr. 11 | Sara Sirota

During his campaign for president, Joe Biden penned an article in Foreign Affairs titled "Why America Must Lead Again." In it, he laid out his thoughts on the most dangerous arms in the U.S. stockpile. "I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack," the then-candidate wrote. "As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies."

27. The space weapons race is here  
Washington Times Online, Apr. 11 | Brandon J. Weichert

Americans rarely think about space as a real place where humans and their important equipment go to work. They don't usually think of it as a place that is not only home to the vital satellites that allow for our advanced society to exist but a zone of strategic competition between the great powers of Earth. As the ultimate strategic high ground in modern warfare, space provides unprecedented military advantages for the nation that dominates this zone.

28. A clear U.S. defense of Taiwan  
Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A11 | Shinzo Abe

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reminded many people of the fraught relationship between China and Taiwan. But while there are three similarities between the situation in Ukraine and Taiwan, there are also significant differences. The first similarity is that there is a very large military power gap between Taiwan and China, just as there was between Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, that gap is growing larger every year.

#### STATE-RUN MEDIA

29. US claims of China's nukes 'excuse for own expansion'  
Global Times (China), Apr. 12, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun and Guo Yuandan

US military leaders, politicians and media have been repeatedly hyping the so-called China nuclear arsenal expansion, highlighted recently again by a report by the Wall Street Journal, and these speculations are an excuse for the US to expand its own nuclear arsenal and push the "China threat" theory, Chinese experts said on Monday.

30. Russian army uses Kinzhal hypersonic system to destroy Ukrainian command station in Donetsk region –  
Defense Ministry  
Interfax (Russia), Apr. 11 | Not Attributed

The Russian Armed Forces used a hypersonic weapon - a Kinzhal airborne missile system - to destroy the Ukrainian army's command and control station in Donbas.

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TWEETS OF NOTE  
Twitter, Apr. 11-12



# U.S. Strategic Command News Briefs

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AS OF 0600 HOURS, APRIL 12

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Defense Minister Benny Gantz called for a regional alliance and an expansion of intelligence cooperation in order to make up for a lack of inspections on Iran's nuclear project. Speaking at a Washington Institute Policy Forum, Gantz said that Iran is continuing its uranium enrichment and is close to 90% enrichment that is suitable for nuclear weapons "once they decide to reach it."

### **20. Politics, not substance, seen guiding U.S. and Iran on terror listing**

*Reuters (Analysis), Apr. 11 | Arshad Mohammed and Parisa Hafezi*

One of the last obstacles to reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal - Tehran's demand to remove its Revolutionary Guards from a U.S. terrorism list - is more an issue of politics than substance, analysts said.

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS

### **21. 'Battlefield nukes' in Ukraine? A low but complex threat.**

*Christian Science Monitor Online, Apr. 11 | Anna Mulrine Grobe*

In her experience running war games for the U.S. military, Stacie Pettyjohn found that whenever scenarios involved nuclear weapons, participants tended to be flummoxed. "Normally folks playing the U.S. side are at a loss as to what to do," she says. It was not uncommon for teams to unnecessarily escalate hostilities – and stumble into the nightmare of nuclear war. "It's one of those things that's terrifying," she said.

## NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

### **22. Dr. Marvin L. Adams sworn in as Deputy Administrator for NNSA's Office of Defense Programs**

*National Nuclear Security Administration, Apr. 11 | Press Release*

Dr. Marvin L. Adams was sworn in today as the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration.

## AIR FORCE

### **23. Why Missouri has a target on its back for cyberattacks**

*KTVI FOX 2 News (St. Louis, MO), Apr. 11 | Emily Manley*

Could Missouri's electric power grid be at risk of a cyberattack? It's not commonly discussed inside the Missouri Capitol, but an expert from Washington D.C. is warning lawmakers about the protection the state needs. Dr. Peter Pry is the executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security. He told members of the House Special Committee on Government Accountability that because of Whiteman Air Force Base near Sedalia, Missouri has a target on its back.

## ARMY

### **24. Units train for nuclear forensics mission during Exercise Prominent Hunt in Delaware**

*20th CBRNE Command, Apr. 11 | Walter Ham*

Highly specialized American Army units from the U.S. Department of Defense's premier all hazards command trained for interagency nuclear forensics missions during Exercise Prominent Hunt at Bethany Beach, Delaware, April 4-7.

## COMMENTARY

### **25. Time to relearn nuclear escalation management for the 21st century**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 | Robbin Laird*

No pure conventional warfighting doctrine against 21st century authoritarian powers will work when those powers have the threat of nuclear fire in their pocket. That was always true, but the Ukraine situation has laid it bare — and this should have a profound impact on US and allied thinking about dealing with those powers going forward.

### **26. Biden's Nuclear Strike Policy Is the Same as Russia's**

*TheIntercept.com, Apr. 11 | Sara Sirota*

During his campaign for president, Joe Biden penned an article in Foreign Affairs titled "Why America Must Lead Again." In it, he laid out his thoughts on the most dangerous arms in the U.S. stockpile. "I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack," the then-candidate wrote. "As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies."

### **27. The space weapons race is here**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 11 | Brandon J. Weichert*

Americans rarely think about space as a real place where humans and their important equipment go to work. They don't usually think of it as a place that is not only home to the vital satellites that allow for our advanced society to exist but a zone of strategic competition between the great powers of Earth. As the ultimate strategic high ground in modern warfare, space provides unprecedented military advantages for the nation that dominates this zone.

### **28. A clear U.S. defense of Taiwan**

*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A11 | Shinzo Abe*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reminded many people of the fraught relationship between China and Taiwan. But while there are three similarities between the situation in Ukraine and Taiwan, there are also significant differences. The first similarity is that there is a very large military power gap between Taiwan and China, just as there was between Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, that gap is growing larger every year.

## STATE-RUN MEDIA

### 29. US claims of China's nukes 'excuse for own expansion'

*Global Times (China), Apr. 12, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun and Guo Yuandan*

US military leaders, politicians and media have been repeatedly hyping the so-called China nuclear arsenal expansion, highlighted recently again by a report by the Wall Street Journal, and these speculations are an excuse for the US to expand its own nuclear arsenal and push the "China threat" theory, Chinese experts said on Monday.

### 30. Russian army uses Kinzhal hypersonic system to destroy Ukrainian command station in Donetsk region – Defense Ministry

*Interfax (Russia), Apr. 11 | Not Attributed*

The Russian Armed Forces used a hypersonic weapon - a Kinzhal airborne missile system - to destroy the Ukrainian army's command and control station in Donbas.

## TWEETS OF NOTE

*Twitter, Apr. 11-12*

## TOP STORIES

### **1. A Talk With Putin Deepens the Fear of Worse Attacks**

New York Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A1 | Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski

Austria's chancellor visited President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday -- the first Western leader to see him in person since the Ukraine invasion -- and said he came away feeling not only pessimistic about peace prospects but fearing that Mr. Putin intended to drastically intensify the brutality of the war.

Describing Mr. Putin as dismissive of atrocities in Ukraine, the visiting chancellor, Karl Nehammer, said it was clear that Russian forces were mobilizing for a large-scale assault in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, the next phase of a war now in its seventh week.

"The battle being threatened cannot be underestimated in its violence," Mr. Nehammer said in a news conference after the 75-minute meeting at Mr. Putin's residence outside Moscow that the visitor described as blunt and direct.

The Austrian chancellor said he had told the Russian president that as long as people were dying in Ukraine, "the sanctions against Russia will stay in place and will be toughened further."

The Kremlin, playing down the meeting's significance in a terse statement, said only that it was "not long by the standards of recent times."

Even as Mr. Nehammer was visiting, Russian forces were bombarding Ukrainian cities and towns, and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said "tens of thousands are dead" in Mariupol, the besieged southern city that has been the scene of the most intense destruction of the war.

And Mr. Putin, despite Russia's military blunders in the war, and for all the Western efforts to ostracize him, still appeared in control of the crisis. He has severely repressed any dissent and benefited from widespread domestic support, continuing revenues from oil and gas sales to Europe, the implicit backing of China and the refusal of much of the world to join sanctions against Russia.

Many commentators in the West had criticized the Austrian chancellor -- his country is a member of the European Union but not of NATO -- for having visited Moscow at all, seemingly playing into Mr. Putin's narrative that American-led efforts to isolate Russia would necessarily end in failure.

Mr. Nehammer told reporters afterward that he had tried to confront Mr. Putin with the horrors of war and of the war crimes that Russian troops are accused of having committed in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha and elsewhere. He said he also had told Mr. Putin about the destroyed Russian tanks he saw on a recent visit to Ukraine, to make clear the enormous loss of life that Russia was suffering.

Mr. Nehammer said that Mr. Putin had brushed aside the accusations of war crimes as having been staged by Ukraine.

At the end, Mr. Putin told him: "It would be better if it" -- the war -- "ended soon," Mr. Nehammer said, but the meaning of those words was unclear, since they could either signal that Mr. Putin was prepared for further peace talks or that he could be readying a quick and brutal assault in the Donbas, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting Ukraine's military since 2014.

"We can have no illusions: President Putin has totally adopted the logic of war, and is acting accordingly," Mr. Nehammer said. "This is why I believe it is so important to permanently confront him with the facts of the war."

How much more brutal the war could become was signaled in an interview with Eduard Basurin, a separatist commander, aired on Russian state television. Mr. Basurin said that with Ukrainian forces ensconced in underground fortifications at a steel plant in Mariupol, storming the redoubt did not make sense. Instead, he said, Russian forces needed to first block the exits and then "turn to the chemical troops who will find a way to smoke the moles out of their holes."

Mr. Putin was silent on Monday but was expected to speak publicly on Tuesday, when he will travel to the Vostochny spaceport in Russia's far east with President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus, his ally, to mark the annual Cosmonauts' Day.

The Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has increasingly been framed by Mr. Putin as not against that country, but against the West -- specifically, the United States, as the supposed patron of Mr. Zelensky's government and its aspirations to escape Russia's sphere of influence as a former Soviet republic.

Sergey V. Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, said in a Russian television interview that aired on Monday that what the Kremlin calls its "special operation" in Ukraine is aimed at rolling back American influence -- which the Russian government characterizes as the root of the world's ills.

"Our special military operation is designed to put an end to the reckless expansion, and the reckless course toward complete dominance, of the United States," Mr. Lavrov said.

The United States and European Union have imposed increasingly severe economic sanctions on Russia over the invasion and are sending weapons to Ukraine's military. But they do not want to get drawn into a war with Russia. And the European Union remains reluctant to ban Russian oil and natural gas, which remain critical to the bloc's own economic health.

E.U. foreign ministers met on Monday in Luxembourg and the bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell Fontelles, said that "nothing is off the table, including sanctions on oil and gas."

While ministers discussed a possible phaseout of Russian oil, more easily replaceable from other suppliers than gas, the meeting also laid bare the bloc's divisions. Austria, Hungary and Germany opposed any effort, for now, to restrict Russian gas imports.

Still, European Union leaders were expected to approve another 500 million euros in funds to repay member states for sending weapons to Ukraine, which would mean a total of 1.5 billion euros so far -- nearly equivalent to the \$1.7 billion in weapons that the United States has authorized.

Russian troops, having retreated from northern Ukraine after a failed effort last month to reach the capital, Kyiv, have been resupplying and regrouping in Russia and Belarus so they can join the battle in eastern Ukraine. But Western officials said on Monday that effort may still take some time.

Ukrainian officials have been warning since last week that civilians in east Ukraine should flee while they can. Mr. Zelensky warned that tens of thousands of Russian troops were preparing a renewed assault there.

If and when the southern port city of Mariupol finally falls, Russian troops can move north to meet up with Russian troops attempting to move south from Izyum and try to encircle the bulk of Ukraine's army, which is concentrated further east, said Mathieu Boulègue, an expert on the Russian military at Chatham House, the London research institution.

That is easier said than done, Mr. Boulègue said, as the battered Russian troops await reinforcements. The Ukrainians, he said, were trying to block the Russians and organize a counterattack that would be more complicated than the fighting around Kyiv, which had forced the Russians to retreat.

Given the reports of Russian atrocities at Bucha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol and other cities, negotiations between the Ukrainian and Russian governments are on hold.

But few believe that the antagonists are ready for real talks, because Mr. Putin needs to show more military gains and because the Ukrainians believe that they can still repel the Russians, said Ivo Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO.

"The Ukrainians think they have an opportunity not just to prevent Russia from gaining more ground in the east but expelling them from there, while Putin needs to find something he can sell as a victory," Mr. Daalder said. "So diplomacy is not going anywhere."

If and when talks on a settlement finally occur, Mr. Putin will inevitably be part of them, said François Heisbourg, a French defense expert. Diplomats deal with leaders of governments, no matter how distasteful, he said.

The West also hopes that increasing economic pain will encourage Mr. Putin to scale down the war and end it. Russia is already in "deep recession" and its economy is expected to shrink by 11 percent this year, the World Bank reported.

But the impact is severe on Ukraine, too. The bank forecast that Ukraine's economy would shrink by about 45 percent this year because of the Russian invasion and the impact of a "deep humanitarian crisis."

Mr. Putin originally named one goal of the war as the "denazification" of Ukraine, falsely labeling as Nazis those who resist Russian domination. An article on Monday in a Russian state newspaper, *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, written by an adviser to the chairman of Russia's lower house of Parliament, expanded on that concept to define the enemy as "Ukrainian-American neo-Nazism."

The fight also included a "cold war" against enemies of the state inside Russia, the article said, adding: "The denazification of Ukraine is impossible without a parallel denazification of Russia."

It was the latest sign that, even as the war in Ukraine rages, Mr. Putin is priming his security apparatus for an ever-widening intolerance for dissent. The crackdown has accelerated in recent weeks, with pro-war Russians turning in teachers and neighbors who speak out against the war.

Last Friday, Russia closed some of the last remaining independent institutions of civil society, including the Carnegie Moscow Center and the Moscow offices of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. It expanded the practice of naming government critics as "foreign agents," for the first time adding a popular musician to the list: the rapper Ivan Dryomin, 25, who goes by the name Face.

*--Steven Erlanger reported from Brussels and Anton Troianovski from Istanbul. Reporting was contributed by Monika Pronczuk in Brussels*

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## **2. Putin warns the West: Russia cannot be isolated - or held back**

Reuters, Apr. 12 | Not Attributed

President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Tuesday that attempts to isolate Moscow would fail, citing the success of the Soviet space programme as evidence that Russia could achieve spectacular leaps forward in tough conditions.

Russia says it will never again depend on the West after the United States and its allies imposed crippling sanctions on it to punish Putin for his Feb. 24 order for what he called a "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Sixty one years to the day since the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin blasted off into the history books by becoming the first man in space, Putin travelled to the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East, 3,450 miles (5550 km) east of Moscow.

"The sanctions were total, the isolation was complete but the Soviet Union was still first in space," Putin said, according to Russian state television.

"We don't intend to be isolated," Putin said. "It is impossible to severely isolate anyone in the modern world - especially such a vast country as Russia."

Russia's Cold War space successes such as Gagarin's flight and the 1957 launch of Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite from earth, have a particular pertinence for Russia: both events shocked the United States. The launch of Sputnik 1 prompted the United States to create NASA in a bid to catch up with Moscow.

Putin says the "special military operation" in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia - including via the NATO military alliance - and that Moscow had to defend Russian-speaking people in Ukraine from persecution.

He said on Tuesday that he had no doubts Russia would achieve all of its objectives in Ukraine - a conflict he cast as both inevitable and essential to defend Russia in the long term.

"Its goals are absolutely clear and noble," Putin said. "It's clear that we didn't have a choice. It was the right decision."

Ukrainian forces have mounted stiff resistance and the West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia in an effort to force it to withdraw its forces.

Russia's economy is on track to contract by more than 10% in 2022, the biggest fall in gross domestic product since the years following the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, former finance minister Alexei Kudrin said on Tuesday.

Putin toured the space port in Russia's far east with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

"Why an earth are we getting so worried about these sanctions?" Lukashenko said, according to Russian state television.

Lukashenko, who has a track record of sometimes saying things that appear to jar with his closest ally's stated positions on a range of issues, has insisted that Belarus must be involved in negotiations to resolve the conflict in Ukraine and has said that Belarus had been unfairly labelled "an accomplice of the aggressor".

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### **3. A Rising Tally Of Warheads In Arsenals**

New York Times, Apr. 12, Pg. A10 | Rick Gladstone

The global number of nuclear-armed warheads is increasing, according to a watchdog report released Monday that comes against the backdrop of the Kremlin's veiled threats to use some of its vast stockpile if the war in Ukraine escalates.

The report released by the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor said the world's nine nuclear-armed states had a combined arsenal of 12,705 nuclear warheads at the beginning of 2022. It said that of those warheads, 9,440 -- or the equivalent to 138,000 Hiroshima bombs -- constituted usable stockpiles for use by aircraft, missiles, ships and submarines. The usable-stockpiles figure was up from a low point of 9,227 warheads in 2017, the report said.

"The war in Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's nuclear threats are yet another stark reminder of the profound dangers of living in a world where some states insist their security must rest on capacity for massive and indiscriminate nuclear violence," Henriette Westhrin, secretary-general of Norwegian People's Aid, which produces and publishes the report, said in a statement.

"We have ended up trusting luck rather than the supposed stabilizing effects of nuclear deterrence."

President Vladimir V. Putin's possible use of nuclear weapons has been a concern for the United States and NATO members as they consider how to defend Ukraine without escalating the conflict with Russia.

Days after the Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, Mr. Putin announced that he was putting his nuclear forces into "special combat readiness," which is a heightened alert status reminiscent of some of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War.

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## **RUSSIA**

### **4. Russia Unleashes New Attacks Overnight on Ukraine's Eastern Region**

***Ukrainian authorities are still investigating allegations of a Russian chemical attack in Mariupol***

Wall Street Journal Online, Apr. 12 | Thomas Grove and Brett Forrest

Russian forces fired on Ukrainian positions and residential areas in the country's east overnight and unleashed new rocket attacks, while fortifying positions there with new deployments of air-defense systems, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday.

Ukrainian authorities are still investigating allegations by Ukrainian forces that they came under a Russian chemical attack in Mariupol, where Russia is still fighting to consolidate gains in the city, which Moscow sees as crucial to its efforts in taking over eastern Ukraine and pushing westward.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it was launching air and artillery strikes on Ukrainian positions in Mariupol.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said fighting was continuing in Ukraine's south near the cities of Kherson and Mykolayiv and that Russia is continuing to emphasize the eastern Donbas region in a shifting war effort. British intelligence said

Russia would continue to redeploy its troops from Belarus to the Ukrainian east and likely try to take the eastern city of Kramatorsk, the site of a deadly missile attack last week.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Tuesday that high-precision air- and sea-based missiles overnight destroyed an ammunition depot and a hangar with Ukrainian aircraft at the Starokostiantyniv military airfield in the western Khmelnytskyi region, as well as an ammunition depot near Havrylivka in the Kyiv region.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russians were boosting air-defense capabilities near Melitopol and Ilovaisk and added that it had repulsed six enemy attacks in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, destroying four Russian tanks and eight artillery systems. The Ukrainian Air Force said it had downed a Russian plane, two helicopters and four drones.

Ukrainian authorities said they are investigating a claim by their troops in the port city of Mariupol that they came under a Russian chemical weapons attack Monday.

The Ukrainian unit deployed in Mariupol, the Azov regiment, said Russian forces dropped an unknown chemical substance from a drone, causing respiratory and nervous-system symptoms among its troops and civilians. No independent evidence of the attack has emerged from Mariupol.

Railway connections were disrupted overnight in the Russian town of Shebekino, near the Ukrainian border northeast of Kharkiv, the regional governor told Russia's RIA news agency. There were no casualties, he said, and the cause of the disruption was being investigated.

Russia heavily uses the railways to reinforce and resupply its troops preparing the Donbas offensive, and Shebekino, in Russia's Belgorod region, sits on one of its main rail connections to the area. Russia last month said two Ukrainian helicopters launched an airstrike on a fuel depot in Belgorod, a claim Kyiv didn't confirm or deny.

*--Mauro Orru contributed to this article*

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## **5. Russia starting to reinforce positions in eastern Ukraine – U.S. official**

Reuters, Apr. 12 | Idrees Ali and Christopher Gallagher

WASHINGTON -- The United States believes that Russia has started reinforcing and resupplying its troops in Donbas in eastern Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official said on Monday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Monday thousands of Russian troops were massing for a new offensive in the east, and Russia said it would not halt its military operation in Ukraine for any further peace talks.

Despite the resupply efforts in Donbas, the United States did not believe this was the start of a new offensive in the region, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We believe that this is an effort to reinforce and resupply their forces in the Donbas, they're still north of Izyum," the official told reporters, referring to a town about 180 km (112 miles) north of the city of Donetsk.

Russian vehicles being sent to the region included command and control elements and support personnel for aircraft and infantry units, the official said.

Last week, Russia completed its withdrawal from around Kyiv and had sent some troops to Belarus to be refit and resupplied.

The official said there was evidence that some of those troops in Belarus were moving east.

Russia still had the vast majority of its battalion tactical groups in Ukraine, including more than 55 groups in the south.

Russia's defense ministry said Russian sea-launched missiles had on Sunday destroyed S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems which had been supplied to Ukraine by a European country.

The official said the United States had seen an airstrike at the Dnipro airfield that destroyed some infrastructure but did not have evidence that any S-300 missile defense system had been destroyed by Russia.

At the weekend, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with a small number of Ukrainian troops who had been in the United States for military education when Russia's invasion started.

The troops were trained on Switchblade drones while they were in the United States and were scheduled to go back to Ukraine on Sunday.

The official was not aware of any current plans to bring Ukrainian forces into the United States for training, but Washington was looking at different options on how Ukrainians could be trained to use those type of drones.

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## **6. Ukraine Calls for More Aid Ahead of Battles in the East**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A1 | Matthew Dalton, Yaroslav Trofimov and Mauro Orru

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine launched a fresh appeal for military aid as the country prepared for some of the heaviest fighting so far in the conflict, while France sent a police unit from its armed forces to Ukraine to investigate possible war crimes, the first disclosed deployment of military personnel from a NATO country in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government said it was investigating a claim by its troops in the besieged city of Mariupol that they came under a Russian chemical weapons attack Monday. The Russian government hasn't commented publicly about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Mariupol.

In a virtual address to South Korean lawmakers Monday, Mr. Zelensky pressed Seoul to deliver more than the humanitarian assistance and nonlethal aid it has given so far, stating a need for heavier equipment to fight Russian tanks and missiles. "We thank South Korea for the help you have provided, but to survive from the war with Russia we need more help," he said.

Ukraine has stepped up its pleas for heavy military equipment to fight the conventional tank and artillery battles that are expected in the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine. Having failed to capture the capital, Kyiv, Russia has shifted its objective to seizing the parts of the eastern Donbas area it doesn't yet control. Both Ukraine and Russia are moving troops and equipment into the region, with Ukraine redeploying combat units from northern areas that it recovered.

Skirmishes along the contact line in Donbas and nearby regions continue daily, and Russia has continued its long-range missile campaign on Ukrainian infrastructure. The Russian Defense Ministry said Monday that missiles destroyed a weapons and military equipment repair base of the Ukrainian air-defense forces overnight, as well as two ammunition depots. Those claims couldn't be independently verified.

The Ukrainian unit deployed in Mariupol, the Azov regiment, said Russian forces dropped an unknown chemical substance from a drone, causing respiratory and nervous-system symptoms among its defenders and civilians.

No independent evidence of the attack emerged Monday from Mariupol. Oleksiy Arestovych, a senior adviser to the Ukrainian president, said in a social-media post that the government is "checking the information about a possible chemical attack against the defenders of Mariupol."

The Azov regiment, a unit of the Ukrainian military formed from a far-right volunteer force that was created in 2014, has been resisting Russia's military in Mariupol alongside Ukrainian marines and other forces for more than a month, despite being surrounded and cut off from resupply.

Azov's commander, Andriy Biletskiy, said in a video recording that the chemical substance affected three people in the Azovstal industrial area of Mariupol, his unit's stronghold, but didn't cause "catastrophic consequences."

Western officials have warned for weeks that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine, and Russian forces were supporting the regime of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria when its military was credibly accused of using chemical weapons.

Just hours before Monday's alleged attack, Eduard Basurin, military spokesman for the pro-Russian statelet in Donetsk, was quoted by Russia's RIA state news agency as calling for the use of "chemical troops, which will find a way how to smoke the moles out" in Mariupol.

In his nightly address, Mr. Zelensky said the government is preparing "for a new stage of terror against Ukraine," noting Mr. Basurin's comments. "We take this as seriously as possible," Mr. Zelensky said.

Mr. Basurin's Donetsk People's Republic, formed in 2014 and recognized by Moscow as an independent state in February, claims Mariupol as part of its territory and has sent its own fighters there alongside regular Russian troops.

Ukrainian authorities said as many as 10,000 people died in Mariupol in weeks of fighting that leveled much of the city. Some 400,000 people lived in Mariupol before the war.

Officials in the U.S. and U.K. said they were aware of the reports of a potential chemical munition used in Mariupol, but hadn't confirmed their authenticity.

"These reports, if true, are deeply concerning and reflective of concerns that we have had about Russia's potential to use a variety of riot control agents, including tear gas mixed with chemical agents, in Ukraine," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement.

Ukrainian and Western authorities separately pushed ahead with investigations into alleged war crimes committed in formerly Russian-held towns in northern Ukraine before Moscow's withdrawal at the end of March. The French government said its gendarmes, a police force that is part of the French army, would assist local authorities in probing any war crimes around Kyiv.

French prosecutors said last week they were probing whether war crimes had been committed in Ukraine following accounts of rape and killings of hundreds of civilians in Bucha and other formerly Russian-occupied towns.

Prosecutors also launched a separate probe on March 16 following the killing two days earlier of a Franco-Irish journalist and his research consultant near Kyiv.

Russia has denied targeting civilians and called the video and photos from Bucha staged.

In Moscow, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with President Vladimir Putin of Russia in what was the first meeting between a European leader and Mr. Putin since the start of Russia's invasion.

Austria, which is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas, has been blocking sanctions against Russian energy imports to Europe together with Germany and other nations.

European Union foreign ministers discussed the bloc's efforts to pressure Russia's economy with sanctions at a meeting on Monday, including the possibility of further energy sanctions. "Nothing is off the table, including sanctions

on oil and gas," EU foreign-policy chief Josep Borrell said after the meeting, which was held in Luxembourg. "But today no decision was taken."

The EU approved a fifth package of sanctions on Friday that included the first significant ban on imports of Russian energy -- coal. However, the bloc remains deeply divided over whether to advance with further energy import bans, starting with oil.

--Dasl Yoon, Bojan Pancevski, Yuka Hayashi and Patricia Kowsmann contributed to this article

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## **7. Ukraine says checking unverified information that Russia used chemical weapons in Mariupol**

Reuters, Apr. 12 | Pavel Polityuk and Guy Faulconbridge

KYIV -- Ukraine is checking unverified information that Russia may have used chemical weapons while besieging the southern Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar said on Tuesday.

"There is a theory that these could be phosphorous munitions," Malyar said in televised comments, adding: "Official information will come later."

Russia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russia-backed separatist forces trying to wrest complete control of Mariupol denied using chemical weapons in comments carried by Russian news agency Interfax.

Mariupol's city council wrote on the Telegram messaging service that it was not yet possible to examine the area where the poisonous substance had allegedly been used because of enemy fire. It added that the city's civilian population had minimal contact with the unspecified poison but that Ukrainian soldiers had come into closer contact with it and were now being observed for possible symptoms.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned on Monday that Russia could use chemical weapons in Ukraine.

Britain and the United States have said they are aware of reports that Russia may have already used chemical agents in Mariupol. Britain said it was working with partners to verify the reports.

Russia has previously accused Ukraine of preparing to use chemical weapons, without providing evidence.

Last month the Kremlin said U.S. talk of Russia using such weapons was a tactic to divert attention away from awkward questions for Washington.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands and displaced millions. Moscow calls its actions in Ukraine a "special operation" to destroy Ukraine's military capabilities and capture what it views as dangerous nationalists, but Ukraine and the West say Russia launched an unprovoked war of aggression.

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## **8. Russian General Tapped to Lead Invasion**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A6 | Evan Gershkovich and Jared Malsin

Russian Army Gen. Aleksandr Dvornikov, the man chosen to lead the next phase of Moscow's war in Ukraine, wrote in a military newspaper in 2018 that in modern warfare, "the main task is not the physical destruction of the enemy, but the complete subordination of him to one's will."

An architect of Russia's military intervention in Syria, where Russian airstrikes hit civilian targets including hospitals, Gen. Dvornikov has since the start of the invasion in February led the troops that have pushed northward from Crimea and captured a swath of territory in southern Ukraine.

He now will become the overall commander, Western officials say, as Russia refocuses on the south and eastern Ukraine's Donbas region after failing to capture Kyiv, the capital, and Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, in the north, in the face of fierce resistance that inflicted heavy casualties.

Military analysts blame the stalled Russian offensive in part on a divided command structure that led to poor coordination. Now Russia has shifted its forces to the east and unified them under Gen. Dvornikov's command, focusing its goals on seizing territory in the Donbas area it doesn't control, Western officials said.

Moscow hasn't issued an official announcement about his role. Russia's Defense Ministry didn't respond to a request for comment.

Military analysts say Gen. Dvornikov, 60 years old, is a logical choice to lead the new phase of Russia's campaign. In addition to being the most senior officer and tipped to eventually succeed Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov, the military analysts said, he has, since 2016, led the Southern Military District, which is responsible for Russia's operations in the Donbas. Moscow first fomented a rebellion there in 2014 -- a claim the Kremlin denies -- and the conflict dragged on for eight years before Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February.

"Dvornikov knows the geography and the theater of military operations best," said Pavel Luzin, an independent Russian military analyst.

The Kremlin might also view him as best-placed to fix the problems the offensive has seen in terms of coordinating its forces, Mr. Luzin said. During military drills in 2020, Gen. Dvornikov oversaw Russia's much-hyped first use of automated systems for coordinating among various wings of the military, Mr. Luzin said.

In his 2018 essay published in the Military-Industrial Courier, Gen. Dvornikov urged the deployment of coordinated operations -- precisely what Russia didn't do.

"Modern military art and the experience of conducting combat operations in local conflicts of the last quarter of a century show that the creation and use of integrated groupings is becoming increasingly important," he wrote.

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## **9. U.S. Weighs Future Ties to Kremlin**

### ***Putin's grip on power and alleged atrocities complicate Biden administration's goals***

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12, Pg. A6 | Sabrina Siddiqui and William Mauldin

WASHINGTON -- In the six weeks since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration has imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow, armed the Ukrainians, mobilized Western allies in opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin and sought to make him an international pariah.

The response has brought U.S.-Russia relations to their lowest point since the Cold War. Left unclear is the impact on Washington's posture toward Russia in the long term and how permanent the U.S. government's actions would be, should Moscow change its trajectory in Ukraine.

So far, the Biden administration has focused on using sanctions to inflict pain on Russia's energy and financial sectors, its wealthy oligarchs and military complex, in a bid to force Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and end hostilities.

Yet President Biden has also labeled Mr. Putin a war criminal whose actions merit a trial and suggested the Russian president can't remain in power, a remark that prompted a swift White House follow-up that regime change wasn't U.S. policy.

That rhetoric has raised questions about whether the U.S. hopes to see Mr. Putin ousted and put on trial, or would look for a way to resume diplomatic and commercial relations should a cease-fire be achieved between Russia and Ukraine -- or would chart a path somewhere in between.

A return to anything approaching normal while Mr. Putin remains in charge appears unlikely, some former officials and Russia experts say, and Mr. Biden himself has reaffirmed his view that the world would be better off without the current Russian president.

"Once this war is over -- and of course, it may not be over for some time -- it's very hard to see U.S.-Russia relations recovering as long as Vladimir Putin is in power," said Angela Stent, a professor at Georgetown University and a Russia specialist.

National-security officials acknowledge that the Biden administration failed in its goal to have a "stable and predictable" relationship with Russia because of Mr. Putin's invasion, and that ties are unlikely to return to where they stood before the war. But it is too soon to draw up a new overarching approach toward Moscow, they say.

"There will be no relief from sanctions or other costs we have and will continue to impose on Russia until President Putin reverses course and relents in his brutal aggression," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in March, a refrain repeated by top White House officials in recent days.

Maintaining flexibility over the longer term to allow Mr. Putin to seek a diplomatic exit or to respond to changes on the battlefield could have its advantages.

So far, Ukraine and Russia have engaged in several rounds of cease-fire talks to no avail. Should Moscow and Kyiv reach a peace deal, the U.S. and European countries would likely be willing to lift some but not all sanctions on Moscow as part of the arrangement, assuming Ukraine supported the move, former administration officials said. The U.S. and its allies have avoided telegraphing what it would take to lift sanctions.

John Herbst, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine during the George W. Bush administration, said some kind of thaw could be possible with the Russian leader retaining power.

"I despise Putin, but if he tomorrow were to recognize that he can't win in Ukraine, he's stopping the war. . . then our relationship will get better," said Mr. Herbst, who is now at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington.

After failing to seize Kyiv quickly and oust the government, Russian forces are now regrouping and are expected to launch a new offensive in the Donbas region of Ukraine in coming weeks.

Elsewhere, Russia and the U.S. are expected to continue cooperating on some strategic and security objectives. Biden administration officials point to negotiations with Iran over reviving the Obama-era nuclear accord, in which Russia is a key participant; talks about the reconstruction of Afghanistan following the U.S. withdrawal last summer; and arms control and involvement in the International Space Station.

A State Department spokeswoman said the U.S. government has no intention of suspending diplomatic relations with the Kremlin, despite Moscow's threats to sever such ties. Diplomats with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, whose numbers have been reduced dramatically, continue to engage with Russian officials.

Still, alleged Russian war crimes are an issue that could complicate relations between the U.S. and Russia.

Officials in the Biden administration and other allied countries have pointed to killings of civilians blamed on Russian forces in the town of Bucha and the city of Mariupol as potential evidence of wartime atrocities for which Russia should be held accountable. The U.S. Justice Department on Wednesday said it was helping foreign prosecutors gather evidence of possible war crimes in Ukraine.

"With the pounding of Mariupol that is happening in front of our eyes and the latest events in Bucha -- that really puts Putin beyond the pale," said Eugene Rumer, a former intelligence officer who leads the Russia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "I don't know what leader can sit down with Putin -- even at that long table where world leaders meet with him -- and negotiate something and shake hands on it."

Negotiations to end the war are likely to become more difficult as more allegations of civilian killings emerge, said Michael McFaul, U.S. ambassador to Russia in the Obama administration. "There can be no return to business as usual with Putin as a leader," said Mr. McFaul, now a professor at Stanford University.

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## **EUROPE**

### **10. Two US B-52H nuclear bombers take off in West Country**

***One of the bombers flew very near Bristol***

Bristol Post Online (UK), Apr. 11 | Louisa Streeting

Two nuclear bombers have taken off from the West Country today (April 11) both with outbound journeys towards France.

The first B52 Boeing B-52H Stratofortress took off from the RAF base in Fairford, Gloucestershire, shortly after 8am on Monday heading towards the south of France just below Bordeaux to aviation website adsbexchange.com. A second aircraft of the same model departed from the same location later the same day just before 12pm flying slightly further south towards Marseille.

There have been a number of US military aircrafts reported to have departed from the same area in the West Country over the past few weeks. On Thursday, another US nuclear bomber took off from the Fairford base heading towards Denmark.

The Boeing B-52 Stratofortress is an American long-range, subsonic, jet-powered strategic bomber. It is capable of carrying up to 32,000 kg of weapons and has a typical combat range of around 8,800 miles without aerial refuelling.

They were used extensively during the Vietnam War and have seen more recent service in the Gulf Wars and last year during the aerial bombardment of Syria. The jets have been used for heavy bombing missions but also are capable of carrying nuclear payloads. They have been coming in and out of the Oxfordshire base, helping refuel Typhoon jets over eastern Europe as the Ukraine crisis continues.

Since the conflict started in Ukraine, there have been numerous sightings of military jets passing over Bristol.

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## **CHINA**

### **11. Panel: Beijing Closely Tracking Global Reaction to Ukraine Invasion**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 11 | John Grady

China's Xi Jinping is closely monitoring what is happening to Russian President Vladimir Putin's reputation following the invasion of Ukraine, retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones said Monday.

Xi is looking at how the world views Putin as a gauge of global reaction he might face should Xi move against Taiwan, Jones argued.

Jones, who also served as the national security adviser and top commander in Europe, said the reaction could range from hailing Putin as a world leader who is “welcomed once again to the Munich Security Conference” to condemning him as a war criminal.

“I think the Taiwanese are as willing to defend their homeland” as the Ukrainians have been, he said.

Xi and Putin “have concluded the U.S. commitment to our regional relationships are not what they used to be” when they signed a cooperative agreement package during this year’s Olympics in Beijing, prior to the invasion. With Russian forces stalled, Xi is “walking a tightrope” in his relationship with Putin, said Michelle Flournoy, former civilian policy chief at the Pentagon.

At the Atlantic Council online forum, Jones and Flournoy said in both cases – Ukraine and Taiwan – it is a struggle between democracies and authoritarian rule. The implications of the outcomes in that struggle will be felt in the Middle East, Africa, the Western Hemisphere and in India, which is a United States partner in the Indo-Pacific. Many of those nations chose not to back the U.S. in its United Nations condemnation of the Kremlin’s unprovoked attack on Kyiv. Multiple abstained although the condemnation resolution passed.

Jones said the U.S. is not helping itself with countries – like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and others – by not having permanent ambassadors in place to show American engagement with them on economic, security and diplomatic fronts. To them, the lack of ambassadorial presence demonstrates “a void of commitment” by Washington. Flournoy added the lack of U.S. presence at meetings of regional organizations like the Association of South East Asian Nations [ASEAN] allows Chinese influence to grow unchecked.

Looking specifically at Taiwan, Flournoy said, “we really need to help with an asymmetric defense” like Ukraine has used to so far to stall the Russian advance. This would be a shift away from selling Taipei large platforms like F-16 fighters to having them build-up their anti-ship, anti-aircraft and anti-tank missile defenses and maritime defenses. The island would become “a little porcupine” to overcome and slow down an invasion across the Taiwan strait. If others, like the U.S., are to help, “they need time to arrive.”

Flournoy, who recently returned from a trip to Taiwan, said president Tsai Ing-wen has emphasized the readiness of its active forces and is paying new attention to improved reserve forces. At the same time, Taipei has created a mobilization agency to use civilians and their skills in the case of natural disasters and a possible invasion from the mainland. She noted the success the Taiwanese have had in relying on volunteerism to augment its police and fire services.

Both said there was no need to abandon “strategic ambiguity” when it comes to the defense of Taiwan. But, “frankly Beijing is going to pay a lot more attention to our actions than our words,” Flournoy added, like helping Taipei build strong invasion defenses.

“I put the responsibility of de-escalation [of tensions over Taiwan and in the South China Sea] on Beijing.” The message being sent is: “We’re going to do [Freedom of Navigation operations] when you threaten Taiwan” with air and maritime incursions, said Flournoy.

Xi’s “preferred approach is to create so much economic leverage” over Taiwan that there would be no resistance to its total alignment with Beijing. She cited China’s increased economic ties with the island in key industries there like investing in semi-conductors, encouraging Taiwanese businesses to operate across the strait and the increased recruiting of young Taiwanese to work on the mainland for higher pay and more career opportunities.

Taiwan is not the only entity or nation seeing increased Chinese business interest in its activities.

China's economic influence, especially through its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative and regional trade pact, is widely felt across the Indo-Pacific. Washington needs to create a "counter-vortex" of economic investment across the region, Jones said. He noted 25 percent of South Korea's gross domestic product is tied to China and the percentage is growing yearly. "That can affect South Korea's politics at some point," he said.

Likewise, China is Japan's and Australia's largest trading partner.

"We want to keep putting meat on the bones of the Quad," the informal security and economic arrangement between the U.S., Australia, Japan and India, Flournoy said. She called for near-term technology wins in the Australia-United Kingdom-United States [AUKUS] agreement. "We can help with that" in New Delhi's case in wooing India away from its reliance on Russian military systems that date back to the Cold War and still require spare parts to keep the Chinese at bay in the Himalayas.

The military sales relationship, in part, explains India's abstention in condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Flournoy said citing new reports.

Both agreed applying sanctions to Beijing in the case of an invasion of Taiwan would be far more difficult than with Russia because China's economy is much bigger, more diverse and globally engaged, including with the U.S., than Moscow's reliance on energy exports to boost its GDP.

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## **12. China launches three space missions, debuts new rocket configuration**

SpaceflightNow.com, Apr. 11 | Stephen Clark

China launched three more space missions in recent weeks, debuting the country's first rocket to be fitted with strap-on solid-fueled boosters and deploying satellites to image planet Earth and calibrate orbit prediction models, according to Chinese state media.

A new version of China's Long March rocket family, the Long March 6A, launched for the first time March 29 with two satellites. The Long March 6A is China's first satellite launcher to feature solid rocket boosters, a thrust configuration commonly used on U.S., European, and Japanese rockets.

The new rocket variant is designed to haul payloads up to 4 metric tons, or 8,800 pounds, into a polar sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 700 kilometers, or 435 miles.

The first Long March 6A lifted off at 0950 GMT (5:50 a.m. EDT) on March 29 from the Taiyuan launch base, located in Shanxi province of northern China. Liftoff occurred at 5:50 p.m. Beijing time.

The 164-foot-tall (50-meter) rocket headed south to place its two payloads into a polar orbit. U.S. military tracking data indicated the Long March 6A deployed two satellites into an orbit around 373 miles (600 kilometers) above Earth, at an inclination of 97.8 degrees to the equator, according to publicly-available U.S. military tracking data.

The Long March 6A is a modified version of China's Long March 6 booster, which flies without any strap-on boosters. The Long March 6A debuted a stretched first stage structure, and adds a second kerosene-fueled YF-100 main engine. With the four boosters and two main engines, the Long March 6A generates more than 1.6 million pounds of thrust at liftoff.

The basic Long March 6 rocket configuration flies with a single YF-100 engine. Chinese engineers also introduced a wider second stage for the Long March 6A, supplying additional propellant for the second stage's YF-115 engine.

In a recent analysis, Levitt said Iran would use a removal to argue that it does not engage in terrorism, and that dropping the label would undermine the credibility of U.S. sanctions.

"The IRGC should not be removed from the FTO list until there is evidence it has ceased terrorist activities," he wrote.

*--Additional reporting by Patricia Zengerle and Nandita Bose in Washington*

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## **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

### **21. 'Battlefield nukes' in Ukraine? A low but complex threat.**

Christian Science Monitor Online, Apr. 11 | Anna Mulrine Grobe

In her experience running war games for the U.S. military, Stacie Pettyjohn found that whenever scenarios involved nuclear weapons, participants tended to be flummoxed.

"Normally folks playing the U.S. side are at a loss as to what to do," she says. It was not uncommon for teams to unnecessarily escalate hostilities – and stumble into the nightmare of nuclear war. "It's one of those things that's terrifying," she said.

Time and again, though, the prospect of "mutual assured destruction" served as a powerful enough deterrent during the real world of the Cold War, and in subsequent decades fears of a nuclear armageddon began, rightly or not, to decline considerably.

Today, however, speculation surrounding Russian President Vladimir Putin's potential use of so-called low-yield, or tactical nuclear weapons in his war on Ukraine is sounding atomic alarms for a new generation.

The prospect of Mr. Putin dipping into his arsenal of battlefield nuclear arms raises the specter of disastrous escalation should NATO retaliate in kind – or the possibility of ushering in a new era in which aggressors can get away with their limited use if it doesn't.

Mr. Putin could also gain concessions through the mere threat to go nuclear, implicit though it has been. "His standard operating procedure is to inject nuclear weapons into nonnuclear crises – hypothetically to induce restraint in his adversaries and raise anxiety, which might make it easier for him to accomplish his objectives," says Adam Mount, director of the Defense Posture Project at the Federation of American Scientists.

Particularly given the Biden administration's efforts to de-escalate when it comes to nuclear rhetoric, analysts stress that the use of such weapons in Ukraine is highly unlikely; keeping it that way will be the challenge in the days and months to come.

"The risk of Russia using a nuclear weapon in Ukraine is very low, and the public concern over nuclear use has far outstripped the nuclear risk," Dr. Mount says.

And that is in keeping with Mr. Putin's "escalate to de-escalate" strategy. "In some ways," Dr. Mount adds, "it's the threat that's meant to do more work than the weapon itself."

### *Davy Crockett and other "small" atomic weapons*

The United States was cavalier about its own development of "small" atomic weapons shortly after the dawn of the nuclear era in the 1950s, when it produced an array of battlefield nuclear land mines, artillery, and warheads.

"It was this idea that 'radiation's not good, but we'll figure it out later,'" says Viktor Sokov, senior fellow at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in Austria.

Among the most infamous in this arsenal was the Davy Crockett Tactical Nuclear Weapon, which weighed about 75 pounds and was designed to be launched by a rocket or a gun, giving it a range of less than 3 miles.

Owing in large part to its "finned watermelon" shape, it was, U.S. military developers learned in Nevada tests, highly inaccurate. Still, the Pentagon built some 2,100 of them before phasing it out of service in 1967.

*Should U.S. revive focus on "low-yield" nuclear weapons?*

By 1991, the U.S. had eliminated thousands of these weapons from its nuclear arsenal. Today, the U.S. has some 230 tactical nukes, with roughly 100 deployed to Europe, according to a Congressional Research Service report released in February. Russia has an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 tactical warheads.

Former President Donald Trump's administration argued that America's reserves of these weapons should once again grow. Gen. John Hyten, then head of U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom), argued in their favor. "If an adversary employs low-yield nuclear weapons on the battlefield, the only option that we have should not just be go big," he said.

"Low yield" is a bit misleading, however, as many of these weapons are between 8 and 10 kilotons. The bomb that the U.S. used in Hiroshima was roughly 15 kilotons – and killed 80,000 people initially, with thousands more dying later of radiation exposure. "There's this idea that, 'Oh, it's under 10 [kilotons] so it's not that bad.' That is definitely a misnomer," says Shannon Bugos, senior policy analyst at the Arms Control Association.

While some of these tactical nuclear weapons received renewed congressional funding under the Trump administration, the Biden administration has not appeared to be interested in moving forward with the program, analysts say.

*Avoiding an escalation in rhetoric*

The administration has certainly declined to amp up any rhetoric around tactical nuclear weapons deployment. In response to news reports last month that Mr. Putin put his nuclear forces on "high alert," Pentagon officials downplayed the tough talk.

When asked about Russia's potential use of tactical nuclear weapons, a senior defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity in a March 31 background briefing, said that there were "no indications at this time that they're preparing to use those kinds of weapons." Pentagon officials have emphasized this point repeatedly.

Indeed, ultimately reports of the "high alert" status of Russian nuclear forces more accurately translated to a "special regime of combat duty," suggesting Mr. Putin was staffing up facilities rather than preparing to launch weapons, says Ms. Bugos.

"There was this breathless nuclear-war-is-right-around-the-corner talk that we saw after Putin's statement," she notes. In the arms control community, however, "We were like, 'Yes, it's concerning,' but things we were monitoring, like Russia rolling out its nuclear-armed ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] – we weren't seeing that. Those are the signs that to us would be a lot stronger marker of Putin contemplating nuclear use."

This clarity on the part of the Biden administration is a vital U.S. de-escalation strategy, adds Dr. Pettyjohn, now director of the Defense Program at the Center for a New American Security. "One thing you see time and again in war games is how easy it is to misunderstand an opponent."

### *When signals go wrong*

A nuclear near-catastrophe in the midst of a 1983 NATO exercise known as Able Archer offers a case in point. Its purpose was to simulate nuclear escalation as allied defense forces moved from DEFCON 5 to DEFCON 1, which signals the outbreak of nuclear war.

The problem was that exercise was highly realistic and included new codes and the participation of heads of government, leading some Soviet officials to believe it was a ruse for an actual first strike.

In response, the USSR began loading nuclear warheads onto its combat planes. The threat abated when the U.S. military advised against responding in kind or putting NATO forces on a similar state of high alert, and the exercise ended.

Perhaps with this bit of military history in mind, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin recently ordered the postponement of a scheduled Minuteman III ICBM test.

“Part of our test planning includes over-communicating what we’re doing,” Vice Adm. Jon Hill, director of the Missile Defense Agency, said in a March 28 Pentagon briefing. “If I’m told to back off or delay or change [weapons tests], we will do that,” he said. “We have to be concerned about political-military concerns all the time.”

### *Response “would have to be asymmetric”*

That’s in large part because, though Mr. Putin does not appear to be preparing to use it, Russia’s nuclear arsenal is, like America’s, well-maintained and ready to go.

The final steps rather simply involve moving the warheads from their storage facilities to “mate” them with their “nuclear delivery vehicles,” as the process is known in Pentagon parlance. This does, however, offer a small window for de-escalation.

“It’s reassuring in the sense that you can actually see warheads being moved, and then you have a couple of hours to contact the other side,” says Dr. Sokov.

Still, U.S. military planners are working around the clock to offer responses for a worst-case scenario, such as “if Putin uses a nuke – or nukes plural,” says retired Col. Robert Killebrew, a former instructor in strategy at the U.S. Army War College who wrote a book about the relationship between nuclear and nonnuclear warfare.

Mr. Killebrew estimates that NATO forces “wouldn’t respond in kind” in Ukraine since it would grievously harm civilians and cause the U.S. to lose the support “of about half of NATO right away.”

As a result, “The response would have to be asymmetric,” he says. “And it would have to be devastating.”

The Pentagon is likely “looking for pressure points outside the immediate theater, like the Russian Navy,” Mr. Killebrew adds. We might sink their Black Sea fleet. We have ships in the Black Sea also. The Russian Navy against the U.S. would last about 30 minutes.”

### *Envisioning a new treaty*

Averting any such scenarios is the challenge for the short term. In the long run, arms control experts express hope that these nuclear scares for a new generation could inspire the world to begin limiting such weapons of mass destruction, particularly since low-yield nuclear weapons haven’t been addressed in past nonproliferation treaties.

While the U.S. tended to support slashing their stockpiles, the Russians long relied on low-yield nukes to compensate for their own lack of conventional weapons relative to the U.S., says Dr. Mount of the Federation of American Scientists.

Russia would like the U.S. to reduce its stockpile of conventional arms in exchange, which so far the U.S. has been unwilling to do.

These mutual interests – and the war in Ukraine – could ultimately serve as impetuses to bring the superpowers back to the negotiating table.

Simply getting discussions underway would improve international stability, says Dr. Sokov, particularly with New START nuclear nonproliferation set to expire in 2026.

He worked on negotiations for the START 1 treaty, which went into effect in 1994. In those days, the political atmosphere was “very favorable” and it still took them four years to hammer out the details, even as Russian and U.S. negotiators “worked in complete harmony, really.”

This is not likely to be the case in the years to come, but it would be “a very good development,” he says, “if we could just see these negotiations begin.”

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## **NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE**

### **22. Dr. Marvin L. Adams sworn in as Deputy Administrator for NNSA’s Office of Defense Programs**

National Nuclear Security Administration, Apr. 11 | Press Release

WASHINGTON -- Dr. Marvin L. Adams was sworn in today as the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs of the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration.

Confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 7, Adams now leads NNSA’s mission to maintain a nuclear deterrent that is safe, secure, reliable, and effective. He was sworn in by Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm.

“We are excited to have Marv and his creative thinking at NNSA HQ,” said Jill Hruby, DOE Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and NNSA Administrator. “NNSA’s science-based stockpile stewardship activities are an immense responsibility and span a wide range of expertise, from the design and engineering of warhead life extensions to supercomputing for weapons simulations to reinvigorating infrastructure. I’m confident Marv will help us deliver on our mission with the urgency we need.”

“I am honored to be part of NNSA Defense Programs once again, and I will do my best to justify the confidence that President Biden, Secretary Granholm, and Administrator Hruby have placed in me,” said Adams. “This is a critical time for NNSA, as the organization strives to deliver on important commitments while rebuilding infrastructure, restoring lost capabilities, and developing the expertise and technologies needed to meet future challenges.”

Adams is a Fellow of the American Nuclear Society and a Regent’s Fellow of the Texas A&M University System. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in nuclear engineering from the University of Michigan and his B.S. degree in nuclear engineering from Mississippi State University.

Prior to his confirmation, Dr. Adams served as the HTRI Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Director of National Laboratories Mission Support at the Texas A&M University System, where he was on the faculty since 1992. He was a physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory from 1986 to 1992, and has remained extensively engaged with the DOE and NNSA national security laboratories since that time. Until his confirmation, he served on the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology; the Stockpile Assessment Team of the Strategic

Advisory Group for U.S. Strategic Command; the National Academies Committee on International Security and Arms Control; and the Predictive Science Panel for Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratory. For LANL, he also chaired the Mission Committee and served on the Science, Technology, and Engineering Committee. He has led and contributed to numerous studies for the U.S. government on matters related to national security.

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## **AIR FORCE**

### **23. Why Missouri has a target on its back for cyberattacks**

KTVI FOX 2 News (St. Louis, MO), Apr. 11 | Emily Manley

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. -- Could Missouri's electric power grid be at risk of a cyberattack? It's not commonly discussed inside the Missouri Capitol, but an expert from Washington D.C. is warning lawmakers about the protection the state needs.

Dr. Peter Pry is the executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security. He told members of the House Special Committee on Government Accountability that because of Whiteman Air Force Base near Sedalia, Missouri has a target on its back.

Pry oversees a congressional advisory board to protect the U.S. from cyberattacks and electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks.

"Think of EMP as an anti-technology threat," Pry said. "If you take away the electric grid, that's the basis for everything."

His warning: the state needs to come up with a protection plan.

"Missouri needs to worry about this particular one, especially because of the presence of Whiteman Air Force Base here in the state which hosts the B-2 bomber," Pry said.

The B-2 bomber fleet has been at Whiteman AFB since 1993 and has the ability to deliver both conventional and nuclear munitions.

"The first and most important thing they are going to go after is the one weapon system that can threaten their lives and those are B-2s," Pry said.

Pry said that it's not the state's job to protect the entire nation but to also protect the electric grid in Missouri.

"What we are talking about here are catastrophic black-out scenarios that can basically last not just for ten days, or weeks or months, but forever if the grid is not protected," Pry said.

His recommendation of a protection plan could cost tens of millions of dollars, and if that's too much for the state, he says to start with places like hospitals and police stations.

"It has not been mandated to provide for protection again EMP and cyber, it isn't happening," Pry said. "Government has got to come in and not make it optional for the utilities. Most of the utilities and most of the corporations, if they are not required by government to do it, they're not going to do it."

Rep. Donna Baringer (D-St. Louis) said water and food systems also need to be protected.

"Most of our food comes from farms," Baringer said. "The state of Missouri is very agriculture centered and they have no protection right now if they were to filtrate our food and processing systems."

She recommends the country and even the state spend more money on teaching coding in schools.

“Information technology expertise is the number one critical source that we have to come up with within this country,” Baringer said.

Back in October, Auditor Nicole Galloway released the most common cybersecurity risks of local governments. The top issues were former employees didn't have their access to the computer system removed and passwords weren't changed enough, they were shared by users, and weren't complex enough.

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## **ARMY**

### **24. Units train for nuclear forensics mission during Exercise Prominent Hunt in Delaware**

20th CBRNE Command, Apr. 11 | Walter Ham

BETHANY BEACH, Del. -- Highly specialized American Army units from the U.S. Department of Defense's premier all hazards command trained for interagency nuclear forensics missions during Exercise Prominent Hunt at Bethany Beach, Delaware, April 4-7.

The 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Command's Nuclear Disablement Team 2 and 3rd CBRNE Response Team, 9th Chemical Company, qualified to serve as a part of the National Technical Nuclear Forensics Ground Collection Task Force.

The Air Force Technical Applications Center also qualified to support the task force during the exercise. NTNF members who have recently served on prepare-to-deploy orders for the task force, including members of NDT 3, 2nd CRT from the 46th Chemical Company, Army Public Health Center and AFTAC, served as observers and controllers during the exercise.

As a part of an interagency task force lead by the FBI, the NTNF Ground Collection Task Force gathers and packages samples of radioactive fallout that enable partner agencies to determine the source.

The NDT 2 and CRT 3 are both part of the 20th CBRNE Command, the U.S. Department of Defense's premier all hazards formation.

Headquartered on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, the 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the Active Duty U.S. Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear specialists, as well as the 1st Area Medical Laboratory, CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity, five Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Teams and three Nuclear Disablement Teams.

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command deploy to confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards during joint, interagency and allied operations around the world.

Soldiers from the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington-based 3rd CBRNE Response Team, 9th Chemical Company, trained for their NTNF mission of collecting ground samples through crawl, walk and run phases.

“Prominent Hunt promotes tactical and operational readiness to react in a nuclear emergency to meet the Army's current demands,” said 1st Lt. Samantha K. Roberson, the team leader for CRT 3. “This mission specifically gives our Soldiers a further understanding on the radiation and nuclear portion of our mission-essential tasks. These lessons they can internalize and apply to future missions and carry on to their future Soldiers.”

According to Roberson, CRTs have to stay ready for all four weapons of mass destruction threats: chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear.

"This task force gives us a rare opportunity to exercise our radiological and nuclear capabilities. In this particular mission, we stress our ground sampling and escort tasks alongside the FBI and Department of Energy to create a joint task force," said Roberson.

A former enlisted Soldier from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Roberson was commissioned into the U.S. Army Chemical Corps in August 2019 after earning a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Toxicity from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana.

"I felt drawn to the Chemical Corps as it naturally pairs with my degree," said Roberson. "The Chemical Corps has provided me with the opportunity to learn more of what I'm passionate about, while protecting my fellow Soldiers from any CBRN threats."

NDTs directly contribute to the nation's strategic deterrence by staying ready to exploit and disable nuclear and radiological WMD infrastructure and components to deny near-term capability to adversaries. They also facilitate follow-on WMD elimination operations.

As the U.S. Department of Defense's nuclear subject matter experts, Nuclear Disablement Teams serve as an informed interface between the CBRNE Response Team and the Department of Energy technical experts. The U.S. Army's three Nuclear Disablement Teams — NDT 1 "Manhattan," NDT 2 "Iron Maiden" and NDT 3 "Vandals" — are all stationed on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

Maj. Stacey M. Yarborough, the deputy team leader for the Nuclear Disablement 3, served as an observer during the exercise.

"The NDTs are the DoD component lead," said Yarborough. "We exercise mission command over elements from a CBRNE Reconnaissance Team, the Air Force Technical Applications Center and augmentations from the 20th CBRNE Headquarters."

Yarborough said NDTs plan and battle track ground collection missions through a variety of Department of Defense communication systems.

"Our Medical Science Officer and Health Physics Technician noncommissioned officers monitor all members of the ground collection team for radiation exposure forward of the DoE hotline," said Yarborough, a Nuclear and Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction officer from Felton, Delaware.

Lt. Col. Ronald C. Lenker, the team leader for NDT 2, served as the task force leader during exercise, a role usually reserved for an FBI Special Agent.

"The Ground Collection Task Force is led by the FBI as the task force leader and the Department of Energy also provides a deputy task force leader," said Lenker. "In this particular scenario, no FBI agent was available, so I'm the acting task force leader for this exercise."

An 18-year Army veteran from Wiconisco, Pennsylvania, who has deployed to Kuwait and Iraq, Lenker has participated in Exercise Prominent Hunt six times, including three exercises as a player and three as an observer and controller.

"Prominent Hunt is extremely important to the NTNF GCTF," said Lenker. "This exercise demonstrates several agencies from the federal government can come together, swiftly form a cohesive task force and accomplish the mission. In this case, attribution for the detonation of a terrorist initiated improvised nuclear device."

Lenker said the task force came together to navigate around obstacles during the exercise. When one system went down, the operations team used a joint mapping tool in Humvee to track the plume of a simulated detonation.

"The highlight for me is seeing my Soldier and Airman teammates overcoming challenges as they arise," said Lenker. "It's this type of problem solving skills that set our military personnel apart from any other military in the world in my opinion."

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## **COMMENTARY**

### **25. Time to relearn nuclear escalation management for the 21st century**

***"The US has spent the last three decades siloing nuclear capabilities off into their own box, and hence we are behind the ball on thinking of how to deal with an increasingly desperate foe who sees nuclear weapons not as a final instrument, but as part of the broader orchestra," writes Robbin Laird***

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 | Robbin Laird

*This is the latest in a series of regular columns by Robbin Laird, where he will tackle current defense issues through the lens of more than 45 years of defense expertise in both the US and abroad. The goal of these columns: to look back at how questions and perspectives of the past should inform decisions being made today.*

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No pure conventional warfighting doctrine against 21st century authoritarian powers will work when those powers have the threat of nuclear fire in their pocket. That was always true, but the Ukraine situation has laid it bare — and this should have a profound impact on US and allied thinking about dealing with those powers going forward.

I recently discussed this situation with Paul Bracken, my colleague whom I met when he was working for military strategist Herman Kahn and myself for future National Security Advisor Zbig Brzezinski, where we first started discussing together "thinking about the unthinkable" as a key to deterrence. We represent a legacy of those who dealt with the blending of nuclear and conventional forces in an overall warfighting strategy. Unfortunately, while that discussion ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has sadly returned with the loose alliance of 21st century authoritarian powers.

Let there be no question: with the war in Ukraine, the nuclear weapons issue has returned as a central one in terms of warfighting, deterrence, and escalation management. The problem is, the US has spent the last three decades siloing nuclear capabilities off into their own box, and hence we are behind the ball on thinking of how to deal with an increasingly desperate foe who sees nuclear weapons not as a final instrument, but as part of the broader orchestra.

President Joe Biden has declared that Russia leader Vladimir Putin is a war criminal and must go. The general narrative is that Putin is delusional and will lose in Ukraine, and we should blow past any threats from what is, essentially, a madman. After all, nuclear weapons were never used in the Cold War, despite all the tensions and rhetoric of the time.

But we forget how we navigated the near-nuclear war in 1983, where rhetoric needed to be contained, and how back channels managed the crisis. Those type of structures are in short supply today, which is why I have emphasized over the past few years that the missing piece of the puzzle for dealing with 21st century authoritarian powers are crisis management skills designed not for peer competitors but powers who seek ascendancy over the liberal democracies.

As Bracken put it: "The kinds of capabilities you are referring to, which existed in the 1980s, are simply gone today. The Biden Administration is in a hysteria to convince the public that Vladimir Putin is an evil person. End of story, end of paragraph, that's all you need to know."

What we have now is a new situation which we have not imagined or thought about: urban warfare and threats to use nuclear weapons to stop any NATO attacks on Russian forces and territory. As Bracken noted, "Putin is creating new doctrine here, but he is clearly winging it — and that is dangerous."

Which is to say, the idea of Putin using a nuclear weapon — especially a lower-yield, "tactical" nuclear weapon — as part of an otherwise conventional war cannot be ruled out, especially if Ukrainian forces continue to take back territory and fight off the Russian military. How the US and its allies would respond is incredibly unclear.

The President has said that we would respond in kind to the Russian use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). I simply don't think we have anything like proportionate deterrence, and really doubt that NATO has a strategic or operational consensus on any proportionate response to Russia using WMD.

I spent a significant amount of time in Western Europe in the 1980s dealing with the Euromissiles crisis, where there was clearly no consensus among the allies on such weapons, and indeed there was concern on the US side that even if there was a mobilization towards activating the tactical nuclear force, some allies would forcibly stop us. I have spent a great deal of time in Europe since that time, and there clearly is no consensus on how to attack Russia if Russia were to invade NATO territory.

President Donald Trump questioned the usefulness of Article V several times, and in my view, it's better for a president not to raise that question publicly and cast doubts about American commitments. But the reality is if you look at Europe today, there are some states very serious about defense, and more who are not. So, no matter what one claims, the question of who would fight, how they would fight, and actually what the U.S. capabilities and approach are to a nuclear-capable opponent is a key question. That counter terrorism and counter insurgency have dominated operations for the past twenty years has allowed the US defense establishment to not think about this question.

Bracken underscored how he sees this challenge. "I know that people say that it's the threat of World War III that stops the Russians. But it's like Stalin used to say, the NATO treaty is a piece of paper. It does not require that the US go to war to defend Montenegro or France or Britain. It only says that an attack on one is an attack on all. I really wonder if the NATO alliance would hold together if the threat of going nuclear was imminent. [French strategist] Raymond Aron used to come to Hudson meetings and say 'there are no true alliances in the nuclear age.'"

The crisis management elements of this loom especially large. How do you negotiate an end to hostilities? And how do you prepare the ground after a successful negotiation for the new conflict?

Putin has seized the energy and rare earth mineral parts of Ukraine, and is leveling ports on the Black Sea to secure a land bridge in that area. Will anyone really be able to dislodge him without a significant attack on Russia's warfighting capacities on Russia itself? Bracken highlighted this challenge as follows: "There's the whole topic of an armistice, versus a ceasefire, versus an agreed treaty to end the war. It sounds hard at the moment, but I haven't even seen anyone distinguish among these things. It's only a handful of people that are even proposing to consider shifting our policy to getting the war to terminate. What is the future of Ukraine from a US perspective? Finlandization?"

In short, rethinking how to deal with various forms of conflict and warfare with the 21st century authoritarian states, notably because they either are allied with one another or certainly play off of one another, is being driven by the return of the nuclear weapons dimension.

*--Robbin Laird is a military and security analyst*

## 26. Biden's Nuclear Strike Policy Is the Same as Russia's

TheIntercept.com, Apr. 11 | Sara Sirota

During his campaign for president, Joe Biden penned an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “Why America Must Lead Again.” In it, he laid out his thoughts on the most dangerous arms in the U.S. stockpile. “I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack,” the then-candidate wrote. “As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies.”

The declaration gave arms control advocates hope that the president would adopt a no-first-use policy — meaning that the U.S. would commit to never initiating a nuclear conflict. Current policy allows the president to strike first in an extreme circumstance, like in response to a devastating chemical attack, which can lower the threshold for nuclear war to break out. But now, at a time when the world is closer to a nuclear exchange than ever, thanks to Russian President Vladimir Putin's devastating war against Ukraine, Biden has gone back on his word.

On March 29, the White House released a short summary of Biden's upcoming strategy on nuclear forces indicating his decision: “The United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.”

This effectively makes the U.S. stance on nuclear employment indistinguishable from Russia's. According to its military doctrine, Russia may use a nuclear weapon if it faces an “existential” threat — a fact of which Putin has reminded observers around the world in recent weeks as he pummels Ukraine.

Biden's decision to keep U.S. policy so similar to Russia's amounts to a missed opportunity to build an international coalition against nuclear conflict, disarmament advocates say.

Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., co-chair of the Nuclear Weapon and Arms Control Working Group, took to the Senate floor on March 31 to indict the policy: “Unfortunately, our American democracy and Russia's autocracy do share one major thing in common: Both our systems give the United States and Russian presidents the godlike powers known as sole authority to end life on the planet as we know it by ordering a nuclear first strike.”

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, which first reported Biden's decision to maintain first-strike authority on March 25, the president faced pressure from allies to renege on his campaign pledge. He met with European partners late last month amid apparent concerns that Russia may use a nuclear or chemical weapon as part of its war against Ukraine. (NBC reported last week that three U.S. officials admitted there is no evidence that Russia brought chemical weapons near Ukraine.)

Tom Collina, policy director at the nuclear arms control group Ploughshares Fund, argued that rolling back the strike authority could have benefited international efforts against Russia. “Putin is threatening the first use of nuclear weapons to hold Ukraine hostage and keep the US and NATO out,” he wrote to *The Intercept*. “This is nuclear blackmail, and its a dangerous precedent that we must oppose. Its therefore deeply disappointing that the Biden administration just missed a key opportunity to reject first use. Instead, Biden's policy also allows first use and is essentially the same as Russia's, and this undermines Biden's ability to build international opposition to what Putin is doing.”

That may be the case for lawmakers of at least one ally. On April 1, dozens of members of the Progressive Caucus of Japan, a minority coalition to the left of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party fronted by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, joined American lawmakers in the Congressional Progressive Caucus to call on Biden to commit to a no-first-use policy. “A U.S. declaration stating that it would never start a nuclear war, supported by Japan, would breathe new life into international efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate the danger of nuclear war,” the

letter, led by CPC Chair Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., said. The lawmakers cited the importance of such a policy as tensions between the U.S. and China, also a nuclear power, continue to worsen. (China owns significantly fewer nuclear weapons than the U.S. or Russia, but the Defense Department says it's engaging in a buildup.)

Other Democrats have remained quiet or indicated tacit support of the status quo. Republicans took advantage of a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing with the head of U.S. Strategic Command, Adm. Charles Richard, last month to defend the logic of first-strike authority. When Richard said that changes to declaratory policy would harm relationships with allies, the panel's chair, Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., did not question the argument, and no other Democrats broached the subject.

Despite the dangers that nuclear weapons pose, Democrats are allowing their fear of appearing weak amid Russia's war on Ukraine to triumph over meaningful reform that could make the world safer. "I'm certainly in favor of making it clear that the United States is not going to be the first to use nuclear weapons," Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., told *The Intercept*. "I'd have to think a little bit more about whether this is the right time or what the mechanism would be to make that policy."

He downplayed the idea, though, that the U.S.'s strike policy is indistinguishable from Russia's: "Russia's policy is whatever is in Vladimir Putin's head at the moment."

While maintaining first-strike authority, Biden's nuclear policy is slated to roll back certain nuclear weapon programs started under the Trump administration. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, he's planning to get rid of the B83 gravity bomb, the largest in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, which was on track for retirement until the previous White House decided to keep it around. Biden's also planning to get rid of a nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile that the Trump administration had greenlighted.

"If media reports are true, President Biden has missed an historic opportunity to reduce the role of existential nuclear weapons in U.S. military strategy."

Biden has, however, reportedly decided to stick with the Trump administration's plan to deploy the "low-yield" W76-2 warhead on nuclear submarines. This class of weapons has lower explosive power compared with the most destructive nuclear weapons, like intercontinental ballistic missiles, potentially lowering the threshold for nuclear war.

Russia notoriously has more low-yield nuclear weapons than the U.S., which has raised concerns about their potential use in the war against Ukraine, especially if Putin believes that he has no other way to defeat the resistance. Murphy called for the U.S. to take action to prevent their proliferation worldwide.

"I think it's time for us to lead a global conversation around the proliferation of these smaller tactical nuclear weapons, because they will ultimately allow a madman to justify using it and believing they can ultimately get away with it," he said.

In the meantime, Biden has foregone his primary chance to rally allies around the push for a no-first-use policy. "If media reports are true, President Biden has missed an historic opportunity to reduce the role of existential nuclear weapons in U.S. military strategy," said Markey in a statement following the *Wall Street Journal* report. "Retaining a warfighting role for U.S. nuclear weapons is a triumph for the trillion-dollar defense industry, but it is a tragedy for everyone counting on the President to keep his campaign promise to make deterrence the sole purpose of nuclear weapons."

*--Sara Sirota is a Politics Reporter at The Intercept. She was previously an Air Force reporter at Inside Defense. She has a master's in security studies from Georgetown University and bachelor's in political science from Colgate University. She hails from New York and is now based in Washington, D.C.*

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China is the only major nuclear power in the world to announce the no-first-use policy, and it maintains the minimum level of nuclear capability required to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Zhang said, noting that facing the current needs in national defense, China needs to continue to develop its nuclear arsenal, and the US is exaggerating it.

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### **30. Russian army uses Kinzhal hypersonic system to destroy Ukrainian command station in Donetsk region – Defense Ministry**

Interfax (Russia), Apr. 11 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- The Russian Armed Forces used a hypersonic weapon - a Kinzhal airborne missile system - to destroy the Ukrainian army's command and control station in Donbas.

"A dug-in, well-protected command and control station of the Ukrainian group of forces in Donbas was destroyed with a Kinzhal airborne missile system in the vicinity of the locality of Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region on the afternoon on April 11," Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said on Monday.

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## **TWEETS OF NOTE**

Twitter, Apr. 11-12

**U.S. Strategic Command, @US\_Stratcom:** [*Replying to @HQUSAFEAF tweet from 4/11*] "Starting the week off strong with some #Airpower[.] #BTF missions demonstrate we are #AlwaysReady to detect & deter threats against the U.S. & our #FriendsPartnersAllies. The strategic bomber force is the most flexible, visible attribute of America's nuclear triad. #Deterrence [[Link to photos](#)]" (4/11, 1409)

**Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), @SenJackReed:** "America's submarine fleet is critical to our national security and one of the strongest deterrents in the U.S. military arsenal. I am grateful to @SENEDIA for continuing to bolster RI's submarine manufacturing workforce. #NationalSubmarineDay" (4/11, 1244)

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**Reuters, @Reuters:** "Ukraine says checking unverified information that Russia used chemical weapons in Mariupol [[Link to article](#)]" (4/12, 0400)

**Reuters, @Reuters:** "U.S. aircraft carrier deploys off Korean peninsula amid tensions with North – official [[Link to article](#)]" (4/11, 2140)

**Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft Distinguished Fellow Joe Cirincione, @Cirincione:** "The dynamics of an arms race: China sees US nuclear weapons as a threat they must respond to by building more weapons; the US sees China's new weapons as a threat they must respond to by building more weapons. Repeat. [[Link to article](#)]" (4/11, 1246)

**Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft Distinguished Fellow Joe Cirincione, @Cirincione:** "The nuclear arms race is back. This represents a two fold failure over the past 12 years: (1) The failure of governments to get rid of these weapons when we had the chance. (2) The failure of experts and advocates to persuade the governments to do so. [[Link to article](#)]" (4/11, 1217)

**Center for a New American Security Adjunct Senior Fellow Thomas Shugart, @tshugart3:** "Some fresh imagery (3/2022) from the new PLAN nuclear submarine shipyard at Huludao. It looks like they're just about done building the

last big building (at bottom). This is a big facility - for comparison see the Electric Boat final assembly facility at Groton, CT, 2nd image. [\[Link to imagery\]](#)" (4/11, 0942)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "China is boosting its nuclear arsenal to deter the U.S. from entering a conflict over Taiwan, people close to the Beijing leadership say. A Don our weekend exclusive. 1/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0625)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "While China's nuclear build-up is known, Beijing has said almost nothing publicly about the reasons for it or even acknowledged it. My colleagues and I sought to add some clarity. 2/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0627)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "We spoke to Chinese officials in agencies involved in security issues. They said Beijing now assesses the U.S. is more willing to intervene to block China's rise, including its aim to take control of Taiwan. 3/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0629)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "Beijing believes the U.S. might be willing to use nuclear weapons first, these people say. China also worries the U.S. might go as far as seeking regime change, according to these officials. 4/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0629)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "There are also fresh signs of nuclear development. In January all remaining covers on suspected 120 missile silos near Yumen were removed, suggesting the most sensitive work at the sites has been completed, said @mattkorda 5/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0630)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "The major news here, though, is the strategic thinking behind these silos and other nuclear progress. Our sources are not setting nuclear policy, but they are well connected to the people who are. 6/7" (4/11, 0631)

**Wall Street Journal Asia Security Correspondent Alastair Gale, @AlastairGale:** "Caution is needed over what China says, including its claim of a no-first-use policy, note experts like @C\_P\_Twomey and @ProfTalmadge. But hopefully this adds to our understanding (and it was, like many WSJ stories, the work of several people.) 7/7 [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/11, 0633)

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# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, April 12

## OVERVIEW

President Biden held a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with their Indian counterparts to highlight a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, according to the *Associated Press*. Separately, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said the U.S. was monitoring, but could not confirm, claims by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Russia intended to unleash chemical weapons on Ukrainian units in Mariupol as part of an impending assault in the east, the *Washington Post* reported. Also of note, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to reaffirm Europe's commitment to toughening sanctions against Russia as long as the war persisted, while warning that Russia likely intended to intensify the violence, the *New York Times* wrote.

## TOP STORIES

### **1. Biden Urges Modi Not to Step Up Indian Use of Russian Oil**

*Associated Press, Apr. 11 (2245) | Josh Boak, Fatima Hussein and Ashok Sharma*

President Joe Biden asked India's Narendra Modi on Monday not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other nations try to cut off Moscow's energy income following the invasion of Ukraine. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to refrain from Russian oil, a source of tension with the U.S. Meeting by video call, Biden told Modi that the U.S. could help India diversify its sources of energy, according to press secretary Jen Psaki. Even though India receives little of its oil from Russia, it stepped up recently with a major purchase as other democracies are trying to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

### **2. New assault in east Ukraine expected**

*Washington Post, Apr. 12 (0115), Pg. A1 | Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina*

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

### **3. A Talk With Putin Deepens the Fear of Worse Attacks**

*New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski*

Austria's chancellor visited President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday -- the first Western leader to see him in person since the Ukraine invasion -- and said he came away feeling not only pessimistic about peace prospects but fearing that Mr. Putin intended to drastically intensify the brutality of the war.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. After hearing Silicon Valley complaints, Hicks says no ‘magical’ fix to acquisition**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 (1450) | Valerie Insinna*

When more than 15 space- and software-related startups gathered at the Space Force’s SpaceWERX innovation hub to speak with Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks, it meant an opportunity to share horror stories about bureaucratic red tape they’d encountered while working with the Defense Department — a near universal experience among attendees.

## **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

### **5. U.S. Debates Using Hague Court To Investigate Russian Atrocities**

*New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Charlie Savage*

The Biden administration is vigorously debating how much the United States can or should assist an investigation into Russian atrocities in Ukraine by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, according to officials familiar with internal deliberations. But laws from 1999 and 2002, enacted by a Congress wary that the court might investigate Americans, limit the government’s ability to provide support. And the United States has long objected to any exercise of jurisdiction by the court over citizens of countries that are not part of the treaty that created it - like the United States, but also Russia.

### **6. For America’s security aid programs, who will run the show?**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (0900) | Joe Gould*

With the world transfixed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and debates breaking out on Twitter over whether the U.S. should send the country fighter aircraft and missile defense systems, security assistance — usually a wonky topic — is having a moment. But it’s not just about public attention. With Democrats holding the reins in Washington, State Department officials have recommended a list of reforms to America’s globe-spanning security aid programs.

### **7. New Head Of Europe Command Expected**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12 (0200), Pg. A6 | Nancy A. Youssef and Gordon Lubold*

A top American Army general in Europe is expected to be elevated to lead all U.S. and allied forces on the continent, U.S. officials said, marking the biggest change to NATO military leadership since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The Pentagon is also set to name a new general to lead Special Operation forces, the officials said. Both would succeed commanders who are expected to retire this year as part of a normal rotation of commanders.

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**8. Despite Russia tensions, U.S. and India deepen defense ties**

*Defense News Online, Apr. 11 (1932) | Joe Gould*

Eyeing China, U.S. and India committed to deeper defense ties in space and cyberspace as well as an expansion of their joint military exercises, officials from both countries announced Monday. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in Washington with their Indian counterparts — Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar — amid rising tensions between the allies over India’s muted criticism of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

**9. India, US to hold dialogue on artificial intelligence**

*Press Trust of India, Apr. 12 (0137) | Lalit K Jha*

India and the US have agreed to hold a dialogue on artificial intelligence to harness opportunities for joint innovation and cooperation in new domains, the two countries announced after the 2+2 ministerial.

**10. US has not yet made determination on potential sanctions or waivers to India under CATSAA law – Blinken**

*Press Trust of India, Apr. 12 (0209) | Lalit K Jha*

The US has not yet made any decision on potential sanctions or waivers to India under CATSAA law for its purchase of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said. The US administration is required under its domestic law, Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) to impose sanctions on any country that has significant transactions with Iran, North Korea or Russia.

**11. Australia to Fund \$1.1 Billion Darwin Port to Stem China Threat**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 12 (0022) | Ben Westcott*

Australia will build a new A\$1.5 billion (\$1.1 billion) port in Darwin to boost the export of gas and critical minerals, in competition with the city’s main port which was controversially leased to a Chinese-owned company in 2015.

**12. With Threats All Around, Japan Moves to Shed Its Pacifist Constraints**

*New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A9 | Motoko Rich*

Late in February, just days after the Russian invasion, Ukraine asked Japan to ship an assortment of military equipment, from antitank weapons and ammunition to electronic radar and bulletproof vests. Although it could not compare with the airlift of arms sent by American and European officials, the military aid marked a decisive moment in Japan’s evolution away from the pacifist identity it has embraced since the United States pushed to insert a clause renouncing war into Japan’s postwar Constitution.

**13. U.S. Carrier Group Arrives as North Korea Ramps Up Threats**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 12 (0415) | Jon Herskovitz*

A U.S. aircraft carrier group was in international waters east of the Korean Peninsula for the first time in nearly five years, reports said, as Pyongyang is poised for provocations that could include its first nuclear test since 2017.

## **EUROPE**

### **14. Europe Moves to Arm Ukraine as Sanctions Fail to Sway Putin**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (1141) | Kevin Whitelaw, Marc Champion and John Follain*

Ukraine's allies in Europe are moving beyond their usual emphasis on diplomacy and sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with a new focus on urgently arming Kyiv as the best chance at changing Vladimir Putin's decision-making.

### **15. NATO Anti-Aircraft Weapon Donations Aren't Covering Ukraine Losses**

*Newsweek Online, Apr. 11 (1237) | David Brennan*

Slovakia last week became the first country to donate a sophisticated Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft system to Ukraine, as leaders in Kyiv stress the need for more and better anti-aircraft weapons to blunt Russia's punishing aerial bombardment. But the Slovakian system alone is not enough to replenish Ukraine's mauled anti-aircraft network. As Kyiv prepares to face Russian President Vladimir Putin's renewed offensive in the eastern Donbas region, Ukrainian leaders are still stressing the need to defend their airspace and the importance of Western support in doing this.

### **16. Russian forces left bombs, death and destruction around Kyiv. Now, a painstaking demining operation is underway**

*CNN.com, Apr. 11 (2008) | Frederik Pleitgen and Vasco Cotovio*

As Russian forces retreated, they left behind scores of unexploded shells and bombs in addition to mines they planted to slow down the Ukrainian advance, to protect their withdrawal, or perhaps, simply to scorch the earth. Russian forces have been accused of regularly using cluster munitions against civilian targets in Ukraine. Earlier this month, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said it received credible allegations that Russian armed forces have used cluster munitions in populated areas at least 24 times.

### **17. U.S. Army chief of staff on hand as ally Lithuania announces training for Ukrainians**

*Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 11 (0934) | John Vandiver*

Lithuania will host a mission to train Ukrainian soldiers to use new weaponry that the Baltic country's fellow NATO allies are sending Kyiv to assist in its war against invading Russian forces. Lithuanian defense officials announced the plan Sunday, the same day U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. James McConville was in the country for security talks.

**18. Albania's former 'Stalin City' looks West with NATO airbase**

*Reuters, Apr. 12 (0139) | Not Attributed*

In an Albanian city once named for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, dozens of Soviet- and Chinese-made planes rust in the open air on a former communist airbase, some with flat tyres, others covered with dust. The site in the central city now called Kucova is being transformed into a modern NATO airbase, a symbol of Albania's westward shift -- and a key military buffer in Europe as Russia wages war in Ukraine. The base, due to be completed in 2023, will give the "alliance an important strategic facility in the Western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Black Sea region", the NATO official said.

**RUSSIA**

**19. Russian Navy Taking on Resupply Role Nearly 50 Days Into Ukrainian Invasion**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 11 (1829) | Heather Mongilio*

Russian Navy ships in the Black Sea are currently resupplying troops in Ukraine instead of playing an offensive role, a senior defense official said Monday. Day 47 into the Ukrainian invasion, and the Russian Navy continues to mostly support the invasion. The country has a couple dozen ships in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the senior defense official told reporters.

**20. Russia's invasion has escalated a brewing battle over space**

*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A5 | Noah Bierman*

A 57-second video posted by the Russian government last month caught the attention of scientists and diplomats, but not in a way that inspired optimism about the future of global cooperation in outer space. The dark yet jaunty satirical video, depicting what would be the certain demise of the station, presaged more serious threats to an endeavor that has come to symbolize post-Cold War cooperation in space.

**MIDDLE EAST**

**21. Iran Says Nuclear Deal in 'E.R.' Hanging on U.S. Decision**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (0500) | Arsalan Shahla*

Iran said the 2015 nuclear deal is alive but lingering in the "emergency room," with its fate resting on a decision by the U.S. that could lift sanctions on Tehran's economy and oil exports. Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, told reporters the Islamic Republic had finalized all the details needed to revive the landmark accord with other world powers involved in stalled negotiations in Vienna.

**AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN**

**22. Pakistan Picks Interim Prime Minister Whose Family Is Dogged by Graft Accusations**

*New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A6 | Salman Masood and Christina Goldbaum*

The Pakistani Parliament selected the opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif to become the country's prime minister on Monday, ushering in a new government after the ouster of Imran Khan and capping a week of political turmoil that pushed the fragile democracy to the brink. Mr. Sharif is the younger brother of Nawaz Sharif, who served as prime minister three times, and like other family members, he has been dogged by accusations of graft and malfeasance that were the focus of several corruption investigations. Now, Shehbaz Sharif's rise to prime minister is seen in some circles as an implicit rebuke of Mr. Khan's professed mission of dismantling Pakistan's political dynasties and rooting out corruption in politics.

## **AFRICA**

### **23. A Purple Heart reminds us that U.S. troops are still fighting in Northern Africa**

*Task & Purpose, Apr. 11 (1315) | Max Hauptman*

Last week, Master Sgt. Steven Corley, an intelligence noncommissioned officer with 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was awarded the Purple Heart during a ceremony in Stuttgart, Germany. Corley was wounded in January "while serving as the leader of a six-person team in northwest Africa where he was responsible for intelligence exploitation and integration with partners and allies." As Gen. Steven Townsend, the AFRICOM commander, said during the ceremony on Friday, "Wherever you look in Africa, when it's somewhere tough or dangerous, SOCAFRICA is there."

### **24. EU halting military training in Mali but staying in Sahel**

*Agence France-Presse, Apr. 11 (1505) | Not Attributed*

The EU on Monday decided to halt its military training missions in Mali but will keep a presence in the Sahel, the bloc's top diplomat said on Monday. "We are halting the training missions for the (Malian) armed forces and national guard," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told a media conference, but added: "The Sahel remains a priority. We're not giving up on the Sahel, far from it. We want to commit even more to that region."

## **ARMY**

### **25. The Army's transformation begins with these new units**

*Army Times Online, Apr. 11 (1135) | Todd South*

Major changes to the Army's doctrine, equipment and operations have arrived in upgraded gear, future-focused technology and new ways to do battle. But where these elements converge is in units filled with soldiers. And the Army isn't letting its soldiers sit around and wait for new gear before figuring out how to fight a peer threat in large scale combat. They're making major shifts in how big formations contribute while also tinkering with the look, function and capabilities of smaller, subordinate units.

### **26. Electronic warfare and drone swarms: Here's the Army's plan for EDGE 22**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 11 (0745) | Andrew Eversden*

The US Army will be “working heavily” with electronic warfare and experimenting with large drone swarms as part of an upcoming sensor-to-shooter experiment in the Utah desert, according to a senior Army aviation official. “We’ll basically be scrimmaging with our partners and allies,” Maj. Gen. Walter Rugen, director of the Future Vertical Lift Cross-Functional Team, said during his presentation at the Army Aviation Association of America conference in Nashville, Tenn.

## **MARINE CORPS**

### **27. Four Sikhs Sue Marines Over Ban on Wearing Beards While Deployed**

*New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A20 | Dave Philipps*

A Marine artillery captain named Sukhbir Singh Toor has been on a mission over the past year to become the first Sikh in the United States Marine Corps allowed to openly practice his religion while in uniform. During that time he has won a string of victories against the strict dress standards of the Marine Corps, and he can now wear the beard, long hair and turban required of a faithful Sikh while on duty. But recently, the Marine Corps dug in, refusing to allow him or any other Sikh to wear a beard on a combat deployment or during boot camp, saying that beards would hinder the corps’s ability to function and put lives at risk. On Monday, Captain Toor and three other Sikhs sued the Marine Corps in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, saying the corps’s refusal to grant a religious waiver is arbitrary and discriminatory, and violates the constitutional right to free exercise of their religion.

## **NAVY**

### **28. Surface Navy tackling diversity as part of push for better retention, leadership**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (1756) | Megan Eckstein*

As the U.S. Navy tries to boost the warfighting performance of all its units, the surface force is looking at diversity and leadership as ways to get after that. Commander of Naval Surface Forces Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener said the surface force is the most diverse of all the Navy’s major warfare areas, but he’s not satisfied and thinks that focusing on diversity and inclusion can help the force gain further advantage over potential adversaries in multiple ways.

### **29. A Sailor With Diagnosed Mental Health Issues Says He’s Being Targeted for Seeking Help**

*Military.com, Apr. 11 (1923) | Konstantin Toropin*

Jatzael Alvarado Perez began struggling with life aboard the destroyer USS Farragut last year. The ship was in the process of getting ready to deploy, and a combination of the conditions aboard the Mayport, Florida-based ship and long stretches at sea were taking a toll on the 23-year-old sailor. After a couple of false starts, Perez would take the advice of a chaplain and seek help for the growing strains on his mental health, eventually receiving a diagnosis of a mood disorder. Instead of getting that help, though, he’s faced repeated disciplinary actions, a

positive drug test that suddenly wasn't, allegations of making it all up and, finally, confinement to the ship and a reduction in rank. Eventually, the situation drove his wife to spill everything in a post on Facebook.

## **NATIONAL GUARD**

### **30. Space National Guard put on indefinite hold**

*SpaceNews Online, Apr. 11 (1206) | Sandra Erwin*

Instead of having a dedicated reserve force, the U.S. Space Force would have a regular active-duty force with full-time and part-time members, according to a proposal the Department of the Air Force submitted to Congress April 1. The proposal approved by Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall would establish in law “a new approach to managing reserve component forces by merging what has traditionally been called active-duty forces and reserve forces into a new component that provides full-time and part-time service options to Guardians,” Kendall’s spokesman Lt. Col. Justin Brockhoff, said in a statement to SpaceNews.

## **INSTALLATIONS**

### **31. Students, staff remain wary of tap water**

*Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Apr. 11 (N/A), Pg. A1 | Esme M. Infante*

At the 13 Oahu schools affected by the Navy’s water contamination crisis, now that their water supply has been declared safe, the faucets are finally flowing. However, trust in the reported safety of the water still is not.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

### **32. Putin’s War Roils U.S.-India Ties**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12 (0200), Pg. A15 | Walter Russell Mead*

The headlines focused on Europe last week as Russia regrouped for another brutal assault on Ukraine, but the Indo-Pacific is also heating up. Kurt Campbell, senior Asia policy maker at the National Security Council, planned a trip to the Solomon Islands to stave off a potential Chinese diplomatic coup, while President Biden added a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi even as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin prepared for in-person meetings with their Indian counterparts. In the long run, both sets of meetings could change world politics more than the struggle in Ukraine.

### **33. A clear U.S. defense of Taiwan**

*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A11 | Shinzo Abe*

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has reminded many people of the fraught relationship between China and Taiwan. But while there are three similarities between the situation in Ukraine and Taiwan, there are also significant differences.

### **34. Deadliest Weapon in Ukraine Is a Cell Phone**

*Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 12 (0200) | James Stavridis*

As the war in Ukraine pushes well into its second month, much of the outcome thus far — including Russian failures in executing their battle plans — is the result of logistics. Moscow has struggled abysmally to get gasoline, ammunition and food to its frontline troops. On the Ukrainian side, the flow of weapons and other materiel from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the U.S. has been breathtaking. But one area of warfare hangs in the balance: information. Despite ample video evidence of widespread war crimes by Russian troops, provided by Ukrainian forces and international journalists, the Kremlin is still managing the information war with energy, imagination and fairly effective counternarratives.

**35. The U.S. military should be prepared for a humanitarian assistance role in the Ukraine crisis**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (2100) | Louis C. Tripoli*

At the most recent NATO summit, President Biden announced \$1 billion in new funding for food, clean water, shelter, and medical care for those in Ukraine and those who have fled to neighboring countries, but there may be a role for more direct assistance if requested by the countries that are affected. In addition to these efforts, it is worth considering the U.S. military's humanitarian assistance and disaster response, or HADR, core capabilities for this crisis. U.S. forces have responded to a myriad of global disasters. No matter the disaster, whether a tsunami, earthquake, or epidemic, the U.S. military provided essential resources, transportation, medical supplies and treatment centers, and logistical support in exigent circumstances. Of course, host nations (or NATO) must first request humanitarian assistance from the U.S. before the processes of invoking U.S. military HADR can go forward.

## TOP STORIES

### **1. Biden Urges Modi Not to Step Up Indian Use of Russian Oil**

Associated Press, Apr. 11 (2245) | Josh Boak, Fatima Hussein and Ashok Sharma

WASHINGTON -- President Joe Biden asked India's Narendra Modi on Monday not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other nations try to cut off Moscow's energy income following the invasion of Ukraine. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to refrain from Russian oil, a source of tension with the U.S.

Meeting by video call, Biden told Modi that the U.S. could help India diversify its sources of energy, according to press secretary Jen Psaki. Even though India receives little of its oil from Russia, it stepped up recently with a major purchase as other democracies are trying to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The president also made clear that he doesn't believe it's in India's interest to accelerate or increase imports of Russian energy or other commodities," Psaki said.

At a separate State Department news conference with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar pointedly suggested that Europe, not India, be the focus of Washington's concern about energy purchases from Russia.

"I suspect, looking at the figures, probably our total purchases for the month would be less than what Europe does in an afternoon," he said.

While Biden and Modi ended their session with Biden saying they committed to strengthening their relationship, White House officials could not say if India stood with them in fully condemning Putin, saying the choice ultimately rested with Modi's government. The two leaders will meet in person May 24 in Tokyo for a summit of the Quad, a coalition that also includes Australia and Japan.

At the State Department news conference, Blinken appeared to seek to cajole India into taking a stronger stance on the conflict in Ukraine, appealing to the country's interest in upholding the international rules-based order and pointing out that resource-stretched Indians may be affected by both energy and food shortages caused by the war.

"Russia's aggression stands in stark contrast to the vision that the United States and India share for a free and open Indo-Pacific, and Russia's actions are having a profound impact not just in Europe and Ukraine, but around the world, for example, causing food insecurity and rising prices," Blinken told reporters after the meetings concluded.

India's neutral stance in the war has raised concerns in Washington and earned praise from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who lauded India this month for judging "the situation in its entirety, not just in a one-sided way."

Biden opened the video conversation by emphasizing the defense partnership between the two countries and by saying the U.S. and India are going to "continue our close consultation on how to manage the destabilizing effects of this Russian war" on food and other commodities.

"The root of our partnership is a deep connection between our people, ties of family, of friendship and of shared values," the U.S. president said.

Modi on Monday called the situation in Ukraine "very worrying," and he noted that an Indian student lost his life during the war. He said he has spoken with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, appealing to both of them for peace. India has condemned the killings uncovered in the city of Bucha and has called for an independent investigation.

A senior U.S. official described the Biden-Modi exchange as warm and productive, though the official stressed that India would make its own decisions on how to respond to Putin. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss the meeting.

Biden and Modi discussed how to manage the risks of global instability regarding food, humanitarian relief and climate change, and Modi candidly shared his views about some of the tight links between Russia and China that raise concerns, the official said.

Also Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met in person with Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Austin appealed to India to act together with fellow democracies, a form of government based on the popular consent of the people that stands in contrast to autocracies such as China and Russia.

“Now more than ever, democracies must stand together to defend the values that we all share,” Austin said.

India has refrained from some efforts to hold Russia accountable for its invasion. India abstained when the U.N. General Assembly voted Thursday to suspend Russia from its seat on the 47-member Human Rights Council over allegations that Russian soldiers in Ukraine engaged in rights violations that the U.S. and Ukraine have called war crimes.

The vote was 93-24 with 58 abstentions.

India continues to purchase Russian energy supplies, despite pressure from Western countries to avoid buying Russian oil and gas. The U.S. has also considered sanctions on India for its recent purchase of advanced Russian air defense systems.

Last month, the state-run Indian Oil Corp. bought 3 million barrels of crude from Russia to secure its needs, resisting entreaties from the West to avoid such purchases. India isn't alone in buying Russian energy, however. Several European allies such as Germany have continued to do so, despite public pressure to end these contracts.

Indian media reports said Russia was offering a discount on oil purchases of 20% below global benchmark prices.

Iraq is India's top supplier, with a 27% share. Saudi Arabia is second at around 17%, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 13% and the U.S. at 9%, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

--Sharma reported from New Delhi. AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report

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## **2. New assault in east Ukraine expected**

Washington Post, Apr. 12 (0115), Pg. A1 | Dan Lamothe, Kim Bellware and Mary Ilyushina

Ukraine and its international partners are bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive, with the Pentagon on Monday saying there are signs that the Kremlin has begun reinforcing and resupplying its forces in the eastern Donbas region as a top official in Moscow vowed there would be no letup in hostilities before the next round of peace talks.

U.S. intelligence has observed a massive Russian military convoy making its way south toward Izyum, a strategically important town in northeast Ukraine that Russia seized earlier this month and may use now as a staging point to carry out assaults on larger cities to the south, said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby. The expectation, Kirby added, is that the “same brutal tactics, that same disregard for civilian life and civilian infrastructure, will probably continue” as Russian military commanders concentrate on the Donbas.

The bleak U.S. assessment came amid renewed concerns over the potential for a chemical weapons attack, and as Austria’s chancellor, Karl Nehammer, became the first Western leader to meet face to face with Russian President Vladimir Putin since the incursion began in late February. Nehammer’s trip, according to officials in Vienna, was intended to convey to the Russian leader that, morally, Putin had already lost the war.

“This is not a friendly visit,” the chancellor said in a statement. “I have just come from Ukraine and have seen with my own eyes the immeasurable suffering caused by the Russian war of aggression.”

Amid the global outrage over accusations that Russian troops committed atrocities targeting civilians in areas around the capital, Kyiv, French law enforcement officials prepared to start working on related investigations after arriving in Ukraine on Monday. Prosecutors in France have opened multiple probes into potential war crimes committed against French nationals there.

President Biden, meanwhile, met virtually with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and urged him not to increase Russian energy imports, as the international community seeks to impose greater financial pressure on Moscow to call off its war. Biden said after the meeting that the United States and India are in “close consultation” in managing the “destabilizing” effects of Russia’s actions.

While Russia has pulled back from the suburbs of Kyiv and other parts of northern Ukraine, Putin’s forces continue to attack elsewhere.

Russia has continued to fire artillery, rockets and mortars at the northern city of Kharkiv, Ukrainian military officials said. Russian forces, they said, attempted on Monday to storm the city of Sievierodonetsk in the Donbas region but were unsuccessful.

In a speech relayed via video to South Korean lawmakers, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday said the Russian buildup in eastern Ukraine includes “tens of thousands of soldiers and a huge amount of equipment.” With its new offensive, he said, Russia aims to “break our national resistance.”

Zelensky highlighted the destruction in Mariupol, a port city in the south that has been bombarded for weeks.

“There are tens of thousands of dead,” the Ukrainian leader said in his address. “But even despite this, the Russians do not stop the offensive. They want to make Mariupol a demonstratively destroyed city.”

The mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boychenko, said in an interview with the Associated Press that 10,000 civilians there have been killed. He estimated that the death toll could double amid the Russians’ unrelenting assault, which has made it difficult for rescue workers to reach the dead and the wounded.

The Pentagon also assessed that the number of people killed in Mariupol could be as high as Zelensky described.

“I don’t think anybody’s really going to know until Ukrainian authorities are able to get in there and look and see,” Kirby said. “But if you just look at the imagery, and you see how much the Russians have pounded Mariupol from the air, it’s inconceivable to imagine that there aren’t going to be civilian casualties and that it could be a significant number.”

Zelensky said in a separate video address released late Monday that the government in Kyiv takes “as seriously as possible” an apparent threat to unleash chemical weapons on the Ukrainian units remaining in Mariupol, which earlier in the day claimed on social media that such an attack had already occurred there.

Kirby acknowledged that U.S. officials were aware of those claims but were unable to confirm their veracity, saying that the Pentagon would closely monitor the situation. “These reports, if true, are deeply concerning and reflective of concerns that we have had about Russia’s potential to use a variety of riot control agents, including tear gas mixed with chemical agents, in Ukraine.”

The Russian Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Rescuers on Monday pulled seven more bodies from ruins in Borodyanka, an area northwest of Kyiv that was devastated by airstrikes. The dead there were found in the rubble of two apartment buildings, Ukraine’s emergency services agency said in a Telegram post. Nineteen victims have been removed from the rubble, according to the update, and rescue efforts continue.

A senior European Union official, Josep Borrell, said that he “witnessed the brutal, brutal aggression of the Russian troops against the civilian population” during an official visit to Kyiv with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and that the E.U. would support the work of prosecutors from Ukraine and the International Criminal Court to collect evidence of possible war crimes committed by Russian forces.

Borrell, the E.U.'s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, predicted that more bloodshed is in store as Russia masses forces in the east and prepares to intensify operations in the next days.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under terms set by the Pentagon, said that it was unclear when Russia may launch the new assault but that there were signs it was preparing to do so. So far, this official said, Russia has reinforced its military posture around the city of Donetsk, where Ukrainian forces have battled Russian separatists for several years, by adding artillery units to the southwest.

The convoy now pressing south from the Russian border includes a command element, a support battalion, helicopter support and infantrymen for security, the U.S. official said, calling it "clear evidence" that Russia already is pursuing its goal to seize the Donbas after failing to take Kyiv. Russia has focused the majority of its airstrikes in recent days on the Donbas region, the official said.

Moscow's decision to name Gen. Alexander Dvornikov as its top commander in Ukraine is unlikely to alter Russia's tactics, U.S. officials said. Dvornikov has been dubbed the "butcher of Syria" for the violence his forces inflicted during Russia's military campaign there in the last few years.

"We're probably turning another page in the same book of Russian brutality," Kirby told reporters Monday.

Russia will not pause its military operations in Ukraine before the next rounds of peace talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday in an interview with state TV channel Rossiya 24. He added that while Putin had ordered a temporary halt in military action during an early round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegates, Moscow has since changed its stance.

"After we became convinced that the Ukrainians were not planning to reciprocate, a decision was made that during the next rounds of talks, there would be no pause until a final agreement is reached and signed," Lavrov said.

In the interview, Lavrov also appeared to recast Moscow's goals, saying its operations in Ukraine are meant to end a course by the United States "towards world domination." Russian officials previously justified their invasion by calling it an effort to "denazify" Ukraine.

Amid the bloodshed, the U.N. Development Program announced a new initiative to support Ukraine over the next two years as it seeks to deal with the devastation and rebuild its institutions for a possible postwar future.

The program will provide on-the-ground services including infrastructure repair, debris removal and new ways to generate income for those who have lost their jobs, U.N. officials said. They cited earlier research finding that the war could wipe out 18 years of socioeconomic progress in Ukraine if it is not resolved decisively, and soon.

--Lamothe reported from Washington, Bellware from Chicago and Ilyushina from Riga, Latvia. David L. Stern in Mukachevo, Ukraine, Anabelle Timsit in London, and Karoun Demirjian, Felicia Sonmez, Reis Thebault and Paulina Firozi in Washington contributed to this report

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### **3. A Talk With Putin Deepens the Fear of Worse Attacks**

*Austria's chancellor said after meeting with Mr. Putin that the Russian president had 'totally adopted the logic of war'*

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski

Austria's chancellor visited President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday -- the first Western leader to see him in person since the Ukraine invasion -- and said he came away feeling not only pessimistic about peace prospects but fearing that Mr. Putin intended to drastically intensify the brutality of the war.

Describing Mr. Putin as dismissive of atrocities in Ukraine, the visiting chancellor, Karl Nehammer, said it was clear that Russian forces were mobilizing for a large-scale assault in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, the next phase of a war now in its seventh week.

"The battle being threatened cannot be underestimated in its violence," Mr. Nehammer said in a news conference after the 75-minute meeting at Mr. Putin's residence outside Moscow that the visitor described as blunt and direct.

The Austrian chancellor said he had told the Russian president that as long as people were dying in Ukraine, "the sanctions against Russia will stay in place and will be toughened further."

The Kremlin, playing down the meeting's significance in a terse statement, said only that it was "not long by the standards of recent times."

Even as Mr. Nehammer was visiting, Russian forces were bombarding Ukrainian cities and towns, and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said "tens of thousands are dead" in Mariupol, the besieged southern city that has been the scene of the most intense destruction of the war.

And Mr. Putin, despite Russia's military blunders in the war, and for all the Western efforts to ostracize him, still appeared in control of the crisis. He has severely repressed any dissent and benefited from widespread domestic support, continuing revenues from oil and gas sales to Europe, the implicit backing of China and the refusal of much of the world to join sanctions against Russia.

Many commentators in the West had criticized the Austrian chancellor -- his country is a member of the European Union but not of NATO -- for having visited Moscow at all, seemingly playing into Mr. Putin's narrative that American-led efforts to isolate Russia would necessarily end in failure.

Mr. Nehammer told reporters afterward that he had tried to confront Mr. Putin with the horrors of war and of the war crimes that Russian troops are accused of having committed in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha and elsewhere. He said he also had told Mr. Putin about the destroyed Russian tanks he saw on a recent visit to Ukraine, to make clear the enormous loss of life that Russia was suffering.

Mr. Nehammer said that Mr. Putin had brushed aside the accusations of war crimes as having been staged by Ukraine.

At the end, Mr. Putin told him: "It would be better if it" -- the war -- "ended soon," Mr. Nehammer said, but the meaning of those words was unclear, since they could either signal that Mr. Putin was prepared for further peace talks or that he could be readying a quick and brutal assault in the Donbas, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting Ukraine's military since 2014.

"We can have no illusions: President Putin has totally adopted the logic of war, and is acting accordingly," Mr. Nehammer said. "This is why I believe it is so important to permanently confront him with the facts of the war."

How much more brutal the war could become was signaled in an interview with Eduard Basurin, a separatist commander, aired on Russian state television. Mr. Basurin said that with Ukrainian forces ensconced in underground fortifications at a steel plant in Mariupol, storming the redoubt did not make sense. Instead, he said, Russian forces needed to first block the exits and then "turn to the chemical troops who will find a way to smoke the moles out of their holes."

Mr. Putin was silent on Monday but was expected to speak publicly on Tuesday, when he will travel to the Vostochny spaceport in Russia's far east with President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus, his ally, to mark the annual Cosmonauts' Day.

The Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has increasingly been framed by Mr. Putin as not against that country, but against the West -- specifically, the United States, as the supposed patron of Mr. Zelensky's government and its aspirations to escape Russia's sphere of influence as a former Soviet republic.

Sergey V. Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, said in a Russian television interview that aired on Monday that what the Kremlin calls its "special operation" in Ukraine is aimed at rolling back American influence -- which the Russian government characterizes as the root of the world's ills.

"Our special military operation is designed to put an end to the reckless expansion, and the reckless course toward complete dominance, of the United States," Mr. Lavrov said.

The United States and European Union have imposed increasingly severe economic sanctions on Russia over the invasion and are sending weapons to Ukraine's military. But they do not want to get drawn into a war with Russia.

And the European Union remains reluctant to ban Russian oil and natural gas, which remain critical to the bloc's own economic health.

E.U. foreign ministers met on Monday in Luxembourg and the bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell Fontelles, said that "nothing is off the table, including sanctions on oil and gas."

While ministers discussed a possible phaseout of Russian oil, more easily replaceable from other suppliers than gas, the meeting also laid bare the bloc's divisions. Austria, Hungary and Germany opposed any effort, for now, to restrict Russian gas imports.

Still, European Union leaders were expected to approve another 500 million euros in funds to repay member states for sending weapons to Ukraine, which would mean a total of 1.5 billion euros so far -- nearly equivalent to the \$1.7 billion in weapons that the United States has authorized.

Russian troops, having retreated from northern Ukraine after a failed effort last month to reach the capital, Kyiv, have been resupplying and regrouping in Russia and Belarus so they can join the battle in eastern Ukraine. But Western officials said on Monday that effort may still take some time.

Ukrainian officials have been warning since last week that civilians in east Ukraine should flee while they can. Mr. Zelensky warned that tens of thousands of Russian troops were preparing a renewed assault there.

If and when the southern port city of Mariupol finally falls, Russian troops can move north to meet up with Russian troops attempting to move south from Izyum and try to encircle the bulk of Ukraine's army, which is concentrated further east, said Mathieu Boulègue, an expert on the Russian military at Chatham House, the London research institution.

That is easier said than done, Mr. Boulègue said, as the battered Russian troops await reinforcements. The Ukrainians, he said, were trying to block the Russians and organize a counterattack that would be more complicated than the fighting around Kyiv, which had forced the Russians to retreat.

Given the reports of Russian atrocities at Bucha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol and other cities, negotiations between the Ukrainian and Russian governments are on hold.

But few believe that the antagonists are ready for real talks, because Mr. Putin needs to show more military gains and because the Ukrainians believe that they can still repel the Russians, said Ivo Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO.

"The Ukrainians think they have an opportunity not just to prevent Russia from gaining more ground in the east but expelling them from there, while Putin needs to find something he can sell as a victory," Mr. Daalder said. "So diplomacy is not going anywhere."

If and when talks on a settlement finally occur, Mr. Putin will inevitably be part of them, said François Heisbourg, a French defense expert. Diplomats deal with leaders of governments, no matter how distasteful, he said.

The West also hopes that increasing economic pain will encourage Mr. Putin to scale down the war and end it. Russia is already in “deep recession” and its economy is expected to shrink by 11 percent this year, the World Bank reported.

But the impact is severe on Ukraine, too. The bank forecast that Ukraine’s economy would shrink by about 45 percent this year because of the Russian invasion and the impact of a “deep humanitarian crisis.”

Mr. Putin originally named one goal of the war as the “denazification” of Ukraine, falsely labeling as Nazis those who resist Russian domination. An article on Monday in a Russian state newspaper, *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, written by an adviser to the chairman of Russia’s lower house of Parliament, expanded on that concept to define the enemy as “Ukrainian-American neo-Nazism.”

The fight also included a “cold war” against enemies of the state inside Russia, the article said, adding: “The denazification of Ukraine is impossible without a parallel denazification of Russia.”

It was the latest sign that, even as the war in Ukraine rages, Mr. Putin is priming his security apparatus for an ever-widening intolerance for dissent. The crackdown has accelerated in recent weeks, with pro-war Russians turning in teachers and neighbors who speak out against the war.

Last Friday, Russia closed some of the last remaining independent institutions of civil society, including the Carnegie Moscow Center and the Moscow offices of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. It expanded the practice of naming government critics as “foreign agents,” for the first time adding a popular musician to the list: the rapper Ivan Dryomin, 25, who goes by the name Face.

*--Steven Erlanger reported from Brussels and Anton Troianovski from Istanbul. Reporting was contributed by Monika Pronczuk in Brussels*

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## EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

### 5. U.S. Debates Using Hague Court To Investigate Russian Atrocities

*The government is hamstrung from helping the world's war-crimes court by two laws and a policy aimed at barring it from charging Americans*

New York Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A1 | Charlie Savage

WASHINGTON -- The Biden administration is vigorously debating how much the United States can or should assist an investigation into Russian atrocities in Ukraine by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, according to officials familiar with internal deliberations.

The Biden team strongly wants to see President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and others in his military chain of command held to account. And many are said to consider the court -- which was created by a global treaty two decades ago as a venue for prosecuting war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide -- the body most capable of achieving that.

But laws from 1999 and 2002, enacted by a Congress wary that the court might investigate Americans, limit the government's ability to provide support. And the United States has long objected to any exercise of jurisdiction by the court over citizens of countries that are not part of the treaty that created it -- like the United States, but also Russia.

The internal debate, described by senior administration officials and others familiar with the matter on the condition of anonymity, has been partly shaped by a previously undisclosed 2010 memo by the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Obtained by The New York Times, the memo interprets the scope and limits of permissible cooperation with the court.

The discussions have also been marked by Pentagon opposition to softening the U.S. stance, even as congressional Republicans, long skeptics of the court, have signaled openness to finding a way to help it bring Russian officials to justice.

For now, officials said, the primary focus has been on compiling evidence of apparent war crimes that are still unfolding -- both the details of particular killings and intelligence that President Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, asserted on Sunday indicates a high-level plan to brutalize the civilian population into terrorized subjugation.

"This was something that was planned," he said on ABC's "This Week," adding, "Make no mistake, the larger issue of broad-scale war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine lies at the feet of the Kremlin and lies at the feet of the Russian president."

But the unresolved deliberations about where to channel such intelligence explain why administration officials have been hazy about where efforts to prosecute Russian war crimes should center -- even as evidence of large-scale atrocities has mounted, prompting Mr. Biden to label Mr. Putin a "war criminal" and to call for a "war crimes trial."

Mr. Sullivan, was vague, for example, at a news briefing last week when a reporter asked whether the president envisioned such a prosecution playing out at the International Criminal Court or some other tribunal.

"We have to consult with our allies and partners on what makes most sense as a mechanism moving forward," he said. "Obviously, the I.C.C. is one venue where war crimes have been tried in the past, but there have been other examples in other conflicts of other mechanisms being set up."

But setting up other venues would raise its own obstacles. Among them, while the United Nations Security Council in the past helped establish special international courts to handle conflicts in places like Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, Russia can veto any Council resolution seeking to establish a tribunal for Ukraine.

There are reasons to doubt that Mr. Putin and other senior Kremlin officials responsible for the war may ever stand trial, so long as they remain in power and ensconced in Russia. Still, war-crimes indictments, human rights specialists say, serve a "naming and shaming" function even without trials -- and can inhibit defendants' ability to travel abroad.

Another possibility is a nation's court with jurisdiction over war crimes on Ukrainian soil. Germany, for example, has war-crimes and crimes-against-humanity laws that cover the world. Prosecutors there said in March that they had started gathering evidence of deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and two former ministers filed a complaint there last week asking prosecutors to charge Russian officials.

Ukraine's own prosecutor general has asked for international help in gathering evidence. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in recent days that administration officials were working on a multinational effort to shore up Ukraine's efforts, while also holding discussions with European counterparts.

Still, with Ukraine under continuing assault, the capacity of its justice system may be limited. The International Criminal Court, by contrast, is already set up -- and it specializes in conducting this very kind of investigation and prosecution.

Against that backdrop, the State Department has said that the United States "welcomed the fact" that the court has opened an investigation into the war in Ukraine, and Biden administration officials are weighing what the United States can do to help it.

One set of issues is primarily legal. A group of top national security lawyers across the administration has been wrestling with how to navigate the limits imposed by a pair of laws that Congress enacted a generation ago. Those laws curtail the aid the American government may provide to the court, but are ambiguous in places.

The deliberations have centered on a 26-page opinion by the Office of Legal Counsel that interpreted those laws for the executive branch.

The memo looked at the kinds of assistance that the United States had offered to the tribunals for war crimes and genocide in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which proved crucial to making them work -- like sending dozens of experienced Justice Department prosecutors and contributing more than \$500 million to cover operational costs.

But a 1999 appropriations law bars the government from spending funds to support the International Criminal Court. The memo concludes that Congress banned both donating money to the court directly and donating material items, like supplying a computer system or building a courthouse -- and that the law permits no exceptions.

The memo also analyzes a 2002 law, the American Servicemembers Protection Act. It bars giving the court other kinds of support -- like sharing intelligence, training its staff or lending it personnel. The memo concludes that the United States cannot offer general institutional support, but can provide such help for "particular cases."

Unlike the funding ban, the 2002 law permits "rendering assistance to international efforts to bring to justice" a list of offenders from that era, like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, along with any other foreign citizens who are accused of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Even as administration lawyers struggle with how much wiggle room the government has as it tries to hold Russia accountable, there are signs of bipartisan interest in Congress in potentially rescinding or modifying those laws so the United States can more broadly help the court.

Last month, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution by Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, backing any investigation into war crimes committed by Russian forces and proxies. It praised the International Criminal Court and encouraged "member states to petition the I.C.C." to investigate and prosecute Russian atrocities -- as at least 41 nations have done.

Mr. Graham has since been working with Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat in the Senate, on what they hope will be fast-track, bipartisan legislation responding to outrage over events in Ukraine.

Their initial focus, Mr. Graham said in an interview, has been on developing legislative language to expand the domestic War Crimes Act so that American courts would have jurisdiction over such crimes by noncitizens abroad.

But Mr. Graham said that the International Criminal Court appeared “to be the only venue that works” for investigating Mr. Putin. He said Congress would also “look at the laws on the books and see if they need to be changed to make sure these investigations can be supported, either financially or to provide any intelligence or manpower.”

A related issue under discussion among administration officials is whether the United States should soften its longstanding objection to the court exercising jurisdiction over citizens from a country that is not a party to its treaty, according to officials.

On the table is whether those decisions should instead depend on whether a particular country has a functioning justice system that can handle allegations of war crimes. The rationale is that it would be legitimate for the court to investigate Russian war crimes because Mr. Putin and his commanders appear to be committing them with domestic impunity.

Pentagon officials, however, are said to be balking. They contended that moving to a case-by-case approach would be shortsighted because it would make it harder for the United States to argue against court investigations into potential war crimes by American forces, officials said.

Some opponents of changing the American position are also said to have pointed to Israel -- an ally that is also not a party to the treaty. The United States has objected to an investigation by the court of potential war crimes by Israeli forces.

But calls for shifting the U.S. position are growing louder.

Mr. Graham asserted that the court was set up to deal with situations only where the rule of law has collapsed -- unlike the court systems in the United States or Israel, he said. By contrast, he argued, “there is no rule of law in Russia any more than there would be in certain parts of Africa” where the court has prosecuted warlords for atrocities.

And in a Washington Post opinion column last week, John Bellinger, a national security lawyer in the George W. Bush administration, and Christopher J. Dodd, a former Democratic senator who was responsible for adding the exception to the 2002 law, argued that “U.S. support for an I.C.C. investigation of Russian war crimes would not constitute a double standard or be inconsistent with U.S. objections to the court’s claimed jurisdiction over U.S. personnel.”

While most of the world’s democracies joined the court a generation ago -- including close U.S. allies like Britain -- many American leaders were wary, fearing that it could be used or misused someday to prosecute American forces.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed the 1998 treaty creating the court, known as the Rome Statute, but he also called it flawed and never submitted it to the Senate for ratification. Two years later, Mr. Bush essentially withdrew that signature.

Still, by 2008, Mr. Bellinger -- then the top State Department lawyer -- declared that the United States accepted the “reality” of the court, acknowledging that it “enjoys a large body of international support.” The Obama administration bolstered its efforts to prosecute warlords in Africa, offering rewards for the capture of fugitives indicted by the court.

Relations plunged during the Trump administration, when a top prosecutor for the court tried to investigate the torture of terrorism detainees during the Bush administration. The government imposed sanctions on court personnel, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced it as corrupt.

But in 2021, the Biden administration revoked those sanctions and a new top prosecutor dropped the investigation.

In light of that history, the unanimous vote for the Senate resolution supporting the International Criminal Court represented a striking change. Mr. Graham attributed that shift to the “war crimes spree” by Mr. Putin.

“I would say this is one of Putin’s bigger accomplishments,” Mr. Graham said. “I didn’t think it was possible but he did it -- and that’s for him to rehabilitate the I.C.C. in the eyes of the Republican Party and the American people.”

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## **6. For America’s security aid programs, who will run the show?**

Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (0900) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- With the world transfixed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and debates breaking out on Twitter over whether the U.S. should send the country fighter aircraft and missile defense systems, security assistance — usually a wonky topic — is having a moment.

But it’s not just about public attention. With Democrats holding the reins in Washington, State Department officials have recommended a list of reforms to America’s globe-spanning security aid programs.

These programs provide billions of dollars in training, equipment and assistance directly to foreign governments, militaries, and international organizations and groups. They tilted in favor of the Pentagon after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks; now, the State Department and allies on Capitol Hill say they need to be tilted back.

“It’s time for a reckoning,” Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez, D-N.J., said at a recent hearing, where the State Department offered its reform ideas. Powerful lawmakers indicated they were

supportive, and Menendez said he will spearhead legislation in the coming months with the panel's top Republican, Sen. Jim Risch of Idaho.

The State Department's proposals range from elevating human rights concerns to offering countries more attractive financing for weapons purchases.

The potential for a shakeup comes as the Biden administration rushes aid to Ukraine following Russia's invasion. The administration had already committed about \$2 billion in weapons and other aid to Kyiv, when Congress recently enacted a \$13.6 billion package for the region, with \$3.5 billion for Ukraine.

The U.S. government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars over the last two decades for programs that provide security assistance and cooperation to foreign countries, according to the Congressional Research Service. In particular, this work has become a core mission for the Pentagon since 9/11.

As building up foreign forces in Iraq and Afghanistan became key to post-9/11 national security plans, Congress gave the Defense Department new authorities and funding. From 2001 to 2022, the budgets for those programs tripled to \$18 billion. The proportion managed by the Pentagon grew from 20% to slightly more than half.

Critics of the tilt toward the Pentagon say it relies too much on the military to solve foreign policy problems better handled by, or at least coordinated with, trained diplomats.

And at the center of the current conversation are some high-profile failures of recent years. Despite billions of dollars spent on the Iraqi security forces, for instance, many of them collapsed in the face of attacks from the Islamic State group in 2014. And \$125 billion spent to bolster Afghan security forces didn't stop the same from happening under Taliban pressure last year.

At the recent hearing, Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said the \$87 billion in U.S. security assistance to Afghanistan "went up in smoke overnight" when the Afghan military collapsed, calling it "an extraordinary waste of money.

"Clearly there is something very wrong with the way in which we are flowing military assistance to partner countries, especially in complicated war zones," Murphy said.

#### *A diplomatic wish list*

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's recent hearing aired a long-running debate over the State-DoD divide. The assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, Jessica Lewis, who previously worked for Menendez as his panel's staff director, detailed the department's suggestions for change.

The State Department is asking for more money to improve its workforce, but is primarily seeking process-oriented reforms.

Ever since the Pentagon's resources mushroomed after 9/11, the State Department says it has lacked flexibility. Because of the way aid has historically been structured, Lewis said, nearly all of the \$7 billion in assistance her bureau gets annually is bound by congressional directives; after Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Iraq are accounted for, only \$1.8 billion is left for the rest of the world.

State is now asking for flexibility in peacekeeping operations, and for the funding of some foreign military financing loans to be appropriated by region rather than country.

Lewis also wants to break countries of the "latent expectancy" they'll receive aid in the U.S. budget every year. That could have a trickle-down effect on which countries get to buy their equipment of choice with American dollars.

Another recommendation is to elevate the goal — in Washington's dealings with allies over aid — of making foreign forces more effective, transparent and accountable, and building their capacity. That aligns with Lewis' argument that while security assistance is an important alliance-building tool in America's competition with authoritarian Russia and China, that contest is fundamentally about democratic values and norms.

"We must keep the importance of security sector governance and respect for universal human rights front and center as we consider where to provide security assistance, and as we engage partner nations' security institutions and empower them toward modernization, accountability and reform," she said.

When it comes to acquisition, the DoD needs to better manage requests from allies for equipment outside existing departmental programs, and foreign military financing must provide more competitive loan options, Lewis said. She also said the State Department needs an improved contracting process to expedite urgent arms transfers.

The State Department is asking for more money to also retain and hire experts to better collaborate with the DoD. The State Department has a "political-military workforce that numbers in the low hundreds," in contrast with the Pentagon's security cooperation workforce of 20,000, Lewis said.

"While State actively supports many DoD security sector assistance activities, the Department currently lacks sufficient staff and bandwidth to fully participate in DoD planning processes and to thoroughly review proposed programs, including when some authorities include 'joint formulation' requirements," Lewis said in a statement.

The State Department hasn't framed its proposals as a competition with the Pentagon, but it is asking — in the name of efficiency and coordination — to expand requirements that the DoD get State Department "concurrence" or approval before it executes security assistance programs.

Concurrence requirements already apply to 25 such DoD efforts, but not all in existence, as the State Department would like.

While Lewis did not name specific programs as targets, one that offers the Pentagon broad latitude and could see scrutiny is the 127 Echo program, which funds surrogate forces in counterterrorism missions, often in Africa. The fund has quadrupled to \$25 million since its inception in 2005.

### *Bipartisan support*

Any effort to uproot authorities and funding, to then shift them toward the State Department, would likely face an uphill fight with the Pentagon and potentially with the Senate Armed Services Committee. The committee has on its side the only reliable annual legislative vehicle in the National Defense Authorization Act.

Max Bergmann, a former State Department official who authored security assistance reform recommendations last year, said efforts to shift greater authority to the State Department will succeed only if the White House prioritizes them. In a high-stakes competition with China, the U.S. can't afford for parallel security-assistance bureaucracies to undermine statecraft, he said.

"What is critical is that we have full control over that lever, and not have it be a bureaucratic mess where one hand doesn't know what the other is doing and it's difficult for any senior policymaker in the White House to know what the hell's going on," said Bergmann, now a senior fellow at Center for American Progress.

Meanwhile, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on both sides of the aisle are generally supportive of shifts, arguing for an overhaul of the current setup.

"As the Defense Department continues efforts to cut the State Department out of security cooperation, we've seen a greater focus on short-term tactical capabilities than on sustainable forces aligned with strategic foreign policy," Risch said. "We must address governance challenges like corruption in all our activities, and we need to professionalize our security assistance workforce."

Likewise, a congressional source familiar with Menendez's thinking said the chairman wants an integrated approach to foreign assistance that spans the U.S. government, but is led by the State Department. The idea is to help countries holistically and not measure success in the numbers of units trained or rifles sent.

"You could do these short-term, tactical things for years and the overall security situation in a country doesn't improve because you have governance problems, corruption problems, and all the other things that alienate a populace from its government and [fosters] a terrorist group," said the source, who was not authorized to speak on the record.

Some concerns have surfaced in the House as well. After a series of coups in Mali and other Sahel countries, which were carried out by American- and French-trained and -equipped personnel, House Foreign Affairs

Committee Chairman Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., and other lawmakers wrote to President Joe Biden on Feb. 4 to express alarm.

“We strongly recommend your administration focus on identifying and addressing the complex challenges surrounding conflict and violence, improve the efficacy of assistance designed to reform national security sectors and institutions, and — given the anti-democratic trends in the region — strengthen governance, civil society, and accountability based on rigorous conflict analysis and diplomacy,” said the letter, led by Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-Calif.

In an exchange with Jacobs at a recent House Armed Services Committee hearing, the deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, Sasha Baker, said the U.S. has restricted security assistance as a result of the coups.

“We work closely with the State Department to ensure that we are vetting all security assistance partners in compliance with U.S. law, with local screening of biometrics as it’s required,” Baker said. “There’s always more that we can do in this space.”

#### *The Pentagon’s efforts*

In an interview with Defense News, the assistant secretary of defense for strategy, plans and capabilities, Mara Karlin, said the Pentagon is already undertaking significant organizational reforms aimed at better coordinating and scrutinizing security assistance programs.

The changes, spearheaded by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl and executed in December, moved the Defense Security Cooperation Agency — which manages foreign military sales as well as international military education and training — under Karlin’s office. What had been the DoD’s security cooperation programs were combined with elements of the Office of Stability and Humanitarian Affairs.

“Hopefully that helps us take a more strategic approach to security cooperation more broadly,” Karlin said several weeks after she and Lewis testified together before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As required by the 2017 defense authorization act, the Pentagon is critically reviewing its own efforts, Karlin said, noting several studies are underway to evaluate whether its security assistance programs were successful.

“The U.S. military, has worked with partner militaries quite robustly since World War II in particular,” she said. “There was a bit of a sea change in the post-9/11 era, and I think that now as we move forward into a different era, we see the urgent need to look at how and in what ways we’re achieving our goals.”

Beyond the 2022 defense policy bill’s mandate for a commission to study U.S. involvement in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021, the Pentagon is contracting with an outside agency for a comprehensive assessment of the strategic and operational lessons collected from the war there, Karlin said.

It has other efforts afoot to find and disseminate the lessons from its security cooperation efforts.

“We’re developing a learning and evaluation agenda for partnerships that focus on evidence-based policymaking, which will include the most critical learning questions for security cooperation, and prioritize a range of evidence-building activities, including evaluations, monitoring, research studies and tabletop exercises,” Karlin said. “These are hard issues to figure out, and you need to make some kind of a quantitative and qualitative approach.”

For example, the DoD made public a seven-page internal study of U.S. Africa Command’s maritime security cooperation activities in the Gulf of Guinea from 2007 to 2018. It found those efforts managed to spur Ghana and Senegal to an increased interest in policing their waters. But on the flip side, maintenance and parts issues plagued the effort, which included riverine patrols and offshore interdiction of illegal fishing and human trafficking.

Among the programs up for review is the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund, budgeted at \$500 million for FY23, which supports a range of Syrian and Iraqi forces, including the Kurdish peshmerga, with pay, equipment and infrastructure.

Another is the International Professional Military Education program, which has faced criticism that it duplicated the State Department’s long-running International Military Education and Training program.

Karlin wouldn’t say whether the Pentagon supports the State Department’s legislative reform efforts, but she did note the two are in lockstep philosophically over the importance of security sector governance.

Defense policy legislation in 2017, she explained, worked to streamline what had been a patchwork of security assistance authorities and encouraged greater collaboration between the two departments.

“The vast majority of the security cooperation authorities that we have mandate State Department concurrence,” Karlin said. “Virtually all other security sector assistance in both directions is co-vetted in different forums that we have. There are discretionary authorities on both sides of the river, but our coordination does feel pretty exceptional.”

Asked if the State Department ought to have a broader say in the Defense Department’s security cooperation programs, Karlin said, “I think what we’re finding is that the approach we have right now is working pretty well,” as evidenced by the massive shipments of security aid continuously flowing to Ukraine from the U.S. and its partners.

“Whether it’s something like that or with more longer-term programs, we are quite literally in daily conversations with our colleagues at State,” she said.

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South Korea's Defense Ministry declined to comment and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The show of force comes after North Korea last month ramped up tensions to levels not seen in years by launching its first intercontinental ballistic missile since 2017. It is also apparently restoring tunnels at the Punggye-ri site where it conducted all six of its previous nuclear tests, in what could be the harbinger of an imminent blast from an atomic device.

An atomic test would be the first globally in more than four years and add to concerns about the risks of nuclear brinkmanship amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

North Korea is preparing for some of the biggest events on its political calendar that include nationwide celebrations on Friday that mark the birth of deceased state founder Kim Il Sung -- the grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un -- and the April 25 anniversary of the foundation of its army.

It has used the celebrations before to show off its military might and hold rallies demonstrating support for its leader. North Korea is looking at a mass rally on Friday and a military parade on April 25, Yonhap reported.

Pyongyang may also try to steal the spotlight from South Korea's inauguration of a new president on May 10 with a nuclear test, the DongA newspaper reported Tuesday, citing an unidentified South Korean government official.

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## **EUROPE**

### **14. Europe Moves to Arm Ukraine as Sanctions Fail to Sway Putin**

Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (1141) | Kevin Whitelaw, Marc Champion and John Follain

Ukraine's allies in Europe are moving beyond their usual emphasis on diplomacy and sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with a new focus on urgently arming Kyiv as the best chance at changing Vladimir Putin's decision-making.

After six weeks of a war that sanctions have done little to ease -- and no sign that negotiations with Russia will produce any result -- some of the bloc's least likely warriors are calling for more weapons.

On Monday Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock -- from the traditionally pacifist Green Party -- called for sending "more military equipment, above all heavy weapons." She added: "There is no time to make excuses."

The shift partly comes as European nations accept that sanctions have done little to crimp Russia's ability to fund its military operations, and several nations continue to resist the toughest actions over fears they would also hit their own economies. Many of the measures introduced by the EU, such as restrictions on technology exports, are designed to impact the Russian economy over time.

In terms of short-term impact, the bloc has few tools left at its disposal other than sanctioning Russia's oil and gas -- and on that member states remain divided. An EU diplomat also noted that the bloc's assessment of how to inflict pain on the Russian government doesn't always square with Putin's own strategic calculations.

"Normally, wars have been won and lost on the battlefields," Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, told reporters at a meeting of foreign ministers in Luxembourg on Monday. The bloc approved an extra 500 million euros (\$545 million) to buy more arms for Ukraine.

After the meeting, Baerbock said the ministers agreed to boost their efforts. "We will jointly as the EU, jointly as friends of the Ukraine, intensify in future the delivery of weapons," she told reporters.

Ukraine is bracing for a stepped-up assault on eastern Ukraine, with Russian forces currently regrouping to target the Donbas region. Without an influx of heavy weapons, Ukraine's military will struggle to fend off a Russian advance.

"We now basically stand in front of this equation to decide what is more important: sanctions or weapons," Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's foreign minister, told reporters on Monday. "My conclusion -- and if you had told me this two months ago, I would have said, are you crazy -- is that it's now weapons."

The new focus on hard power is also driven by a recognition that Europe may be reaching the limits of what it can agree to in terms of additional sanctions on Russia. The EU banned Russian coal last week, but the final deal came only after countries agreed to allow a four-month period for the embargo to kick in.

Foreign ministers from several EU countries pushed for a ban on Russian oil during their meeting on Monday, according to an EU diplomat, but others have been unwilling to take the economic pain from such a step.

The EU is starting to explore ways to limit Russia's revenue from oil sales, short of a full ban. Those include tariffs or an escrow account to freeze the extra profits Moscow is making from oil price spikes following its invasion of Ukraine. But even such compromises will be difficult to strike, with Hungary insisting that any such decision would need to be taken by EU leaders at a summit.

"Whether we buy gas or not, in the next days the Russian army will have the means to wage war, equally," Borrell said after the foreign ministers meeting. "So we have to concentrate on the defensive aspects, that is the priority."

Ukraine, for its part, has asked for a wide range of gear.

“We need air defense systems, we need airplanes, tanks, other armored vehicles, artillery systems, munitions,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Monday in an address to the South Korean parliament. He has also called for the EU and others to embargo Russian oil and gas.

The EU and NATO are beginning to accept that the war in Ukraine could drag on for months and that Kyiv will need a lot more help to continue repelling Russia’s assault. At the same time, there’s no indication that Europe or the U.S. is ready to begin supplying Ukraine with items like fighter jets.

Borrell told EU diplomats the countries must make decisions on weapons deliveries in days and not weeks, and the bloc must do whatever it takes to help Ukraine, according to people familiar with the matter.

There is still some hesitation by governments over what to supply. An EU diplomat noted that countries need some assurances about where the weapons they send will end up, since Kyiv has some unreliable paramilitaries operating. Modern weapons systems also require training, which takes time that Ukraine might not have as it braces for a Russian assault in the country’s east.

*--With assistance from Iain Rogers, Daryna Krasnolutska, Stephanie Bodoni and Birgit Jennen*

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## **15. NATO Anti-Aircraft Weapon Donations Aren’t Covering Ukraine Losses**

Newsweek Online, Apr. 11 (1237) | David Brennan

Slovakia last week became the first country to donate a sophisticated Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft system to Ukraine, as leaders in Kyiv stress the need for more and better anti-aircraft weapons to blunt Russia’s punishing aerial bombardment.

But the Slovakian system alone is not enough to replenish Ukraine’s mauled anti-aircraft network. As Kyiv prepares to face Russian President Vladimir Putin’s renewed offensive in the eastern Donbas region, Ukrainian leaders are still stressing the need to defend their airspace and the importance of Western support in doing this.

Slovakia’s Defense Ministry confirmed to Newsweek that it had sent one S-300 system to Ukraine. The transfer was facilitated by Germany and the Netherlands that sent Slovakia U.S.-made Patriot anti-aircraft systems to free up the S-300, which Slovakia inherited after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993.

“We believe this system will help save as many innocent Ukrainians as possible from further aggression by Putin’s regime,” the Slovakian Defense Ministry said in a statement released last week.

Ukraine is believed to have had around 100 S-300 batteries before the invasion began, totalling some 300 launchers. Open source figures suggest it has lost at least 21 of the launchers – the equivalent of seven batteries. Newsweek has contacted Ukraine’s Defense Ministry to request comment.

This apparently steady, if slow, erosion of Ukraine’s anti-aircraft inventory is of great concern to leaders in Kyiv. The longer the fighting continues, the more launchers will be destroyed. Ukraine will also eventually run low on missiles.

Russia has already claimed to have destroyed the Slovakian S-300 in a missile strike in Dnipro. Slovakian Prime Minister Eduard Heger’s office dismissed the claim as “disinformation.”

Since the invasion began, Ukrainian officials have called on Western countries to enforce a no-fly zone over Ukraine, a request repeatedly rebuffed by NATO for fear of direct confrontation with Russian forces.

NATO nations also bungled a planned delivery of Russian-made fighter jets to Ukraine, prompting frustration in Kyiv. Providing long-range anti-aircraft systems would go some way to reducing the Russian threat with less danger of escalation.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba traveled to Brussels to meet with NATO foreign ministers on Thursday. Among his armament requests were “heavy air defense systems” such as the S-300.

Greece and Bulgaria also possess S-300s that could theoretically be sent to Ukraine. But doing so would degrade these nations’ own military readiness. Neither Athens nor Sofia have yet shown any willingness to transfer their S-300s to Ukraine.

The failure to eliminate Ukraine’s anti-aircraft systems was a glaring one by Russia’s armed forces. Ukraine’s air force, long- and medium-range anti-aircraft systems and portable shoulder-launched surface-to-air weapons have all eaten away at the Russian air force. Ukraine claims to have downed 154 aircraft and 137 helicopters since the invasion began on February 24.

Ukraine has received around 25,000 portable anti-aircraft weapons since the start of the invasion, Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Thursday. The Ukrainians, he said, are “extraordinarily thankful” for this support.

But these shoulder-fired weapons cannot reach targets at high-altitude, like the S-300 and other similar systems can. They also cannot intercept Russian ballistic missiles, which have wrought so much damage on Ukrainian military and civilian targets as well as infrastructure.

The better Ukraine’s long-range anti-aircraft umbrella, the lower Russian aircraft will be forced to fly. This makes them more vulnerable to portable weapons carried by Ukrainian ground forces.

Russian aircraft still enjoy greater freedom in the air than their Ukrainian opponents. Last week, Russian planes were flying around 250 sorties a day, according to the Pentagon. Ukraine's forces, meanwhile, have generally been limited to between five and 10 sorties.

Recent Russian flight activity has been centered in the east and south, where Moscow's troops are thought to be planning to launch a large offensive in the hope of capturing Donbas.

The Russian advance in the east has been limited. Its troops have had more success in the south, establishing a land corridor from the annexed Crimea peninsula to the occupied Donbas.

"Russia has concentrated quite a few planes in that area," Andriy Zagorodnyuk, Ukraine's former defense minister, told Newsweek of the eastern front. Anti-aircraft reinforcements would "of course" make a difference to the military balance in the east, Zagorodnyuk said, if Ukraine can procure them in time.

Andriy Ryzhenko, a retired naval captain and former deputy chief of staff in Ukraine's navy, told Newsweek that the Slovakian S-300 will not make a major difference on its own. "But it helps anyway," he said.

Ryzhenko said Russia's air power is Ukraine's biggest problem. "Air attacks are their only dominance," he explained. "It compensates their losing of ground," he added, referring to Ukraine's successful counter-attacks across all the Russian axes of invasion.

A Russian victory in the east could turn the war in Putin's favor. Success in Donbas may even give Russia a springboard to again threaten Kyiv and the rest of Ukraine's coastline. Another messy defeat like that inflicted on the Russians outside of Kyiv, would further weaken the Putin's position and narrow his options.

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## **16. Russian forces left bombs, death and destruction around Kyiv. Now, a painstaking demining operation is underway**

CNN.com, Apr. 11 (2008) | Frederik Pleitgen and Vasco Cotovio

On the outskirts of Kyiv, Lt. Col. Mykola Opanasenko kneels down in a remote field as he winds up a small electrical generator to power a blast.

"Fire," he shouts, before bracing and pressing the trigger. A fraction of a second later, an ear-ringing bang pierces through the otherwise silent countryside.

This is the sixth controlled explosion 34-year-old Opanasenko and his demining unit have carried out since Russia withdrew its forces from the Kyiv region earlier this month. Today, they blew up 16 unexploded artillery shells.

each weighing around 45 kilograms (nearly 100 pounds), in one explosion. They have another 30 shells to go through before the day is over.

Their unit is one of many operating in the region. In total, they say they've destroyed 2.5 tons of ammunition in the past week and a half alone.

"If we are all alive, then everything is successful," Opanasenko says.

As Russian forces retreated, they left behind scores of unexploded shells and bombs in addition to mines they planted to slow down the Ukrainian advance, to protect their withdrawal, or perhaps, simply to scorch the earth.

Mines, ammunition and rusty machine guns from destroyed armored vehicles can be dangerous for civilians now returning to their homes, so Opanasenko's unit goes from village to village, scouring the ground for any of these deadly ordnances that need to be cleared out.

Signs warning of mines can be seen across towns and villages around Kyiv. Units like Opanasenko's will continue their work for months to come across the country as the war rages on, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service (SES).

"As of now, we need to survey more than 300,000 hectares," the head of the SES, Serhiy Kruk, told journalists last Wednesday.

"Therefore, in cooperation with the Armed Forces and the National Police of Ukraine, we are actively working and doing everything to return people and restore livelihoods," he said, adding Kyiv will be a model for similar efforts in other regions.

At a different location near the capital, Opanasenko shows CNN another dangerous ordnance they've found in a backyard. It's tube shaped, with a blunt red tip and six fin-like attachments at its end.

"It is one of the elements of a cluster bomb dropped from an airplane," he says. "There are about 50 such elements in one bomb."

"This is a highly explosive fragmentation bomb to kill people, designed just to kill people," Opanasenko adds, before taking it away for disposal.

His unit has found several of these explosives around the Ukrainian capital, he says.

Russian forces have been accused of regularly using cluster munitions against civilian targets in Ukraine. Earlier this month, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said it received credible allegations that Russian armed forces have used cluster munitions in populated areas at least 24 times.

Such attacks “may amount to war crimes,” UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

### *A larger effort*

Mine sweeping goes hand in hand with other clean-up efforts as residents from the Kyiv region begin to embrace their new reality and try and return to what is left of their shattered lives following Russia’s withdrawal.

Around 30,000 people have returned to the area, according to local authorities. Some businesses are reopening, and traffic is significantly increasing. Some military checkpoints have also been removed from the city’s arteries and some public transportation is resuming.

As they do, authorities are continuing to remove debris from the streets, including shells of destroyed tanks and other armored vehicles.

It’s a seemingly endless clean-up task for public officials, especially those who are tasked with collecting bodies caught in the cross fire.

At the main cemetery in Irpin, a Kyiv suburb, rows of graves for soldiers and civilians have been freshly dug.

Here, the military burials take place in quick succession. Russia may be regrouping, shifting its forces towards the East, but the war is not over -- and there’s not a moment to spare.

Tetyana Bliznyuk is surrounded by her husband’s comrades as his body is laid to rest just before the sun sets, the last of the day’s burials for members of Ukraine’s Armed Forces.

When she last saw her husband, Oleksandr Lytkin, he promised her he’d be right back, Bliznyuk says.

“(He was killed by) a mortar shell,” she says, her eyes still swollen red. “I’m very proud of him, he’s a hero.”

“It’s so scary! No one thought this was possible in the 21st century,” she says, adding that the war “must be stopped.”

Her pain is shared by millions around Kyiv, as the death and destruction left by Russia’s invading forces becomes increasingly visible.

### **17. U.S. Army chief of staff on hand as ally Lithuania announces training for Ukrainians**

Stars and Stripes Online, Apr. 11 (0934) | John Vandiver

Lithuania will host a mission to train Ukrainian soldiers to use new weaponry that the Baltic country's fellow NATO allies are sending Kyiv to assist in its war against invading Russian forces.

Lithuanian defense officials announced the plan Sunday, the same day U.S. Army chief of staff Gen. James McConville was in the country for security talks.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Sunday that it had concluded a separate training effort with Ukrainian forces in the U.S.

The troops were being trained on operating maritime patrol craft and use of weapons systems, such as the Switchblade drone, that the U.S. is now providing to Ukraine.

"To achieve maximum effect, we will soon organize military training for Ukrainian troops here in Lithuania," Lt. Gen. Valdemaras Rupsys, the Lithuanian defense chief, told local reporters.

The effort will center on training Ukrainian military instructors, who can in turn pass on their weapons knowledge to rank-and-file troops in Ukraine, Rupsys told the Delfi news agency.

Rupsys also held talks with McConville, who told reporters that the Pentagon continues to assess what the future American force structure will look like in countries such as Lithuania, which have been eager for a larger American military presence.

"We have rotational forces here, and our policymakers have said that they will defend every inch of NATO," Delfi quoted McConville as saying. "And they are working through what that will look like as far as rotational or permanent troops as we speak."

For now, there are no immediate plans for U.S soldiers to join the Lithuanian initiative, which is expected to begin in the coming weeks.

"We can't speculate on whether or not that could change in the future," U.S. Army Europe and Africa said in a statement Monday.

The U.S. has long been involved in the training of the Ukrainian military. For years, the Army operated out of a site in western Ukraine that was focused on preparing troops to fight Russian-backed separatists in the eastern region known as the Donbas.

However, because of security concerns, the American training was put on hold less than two weeks before Feb. 24, the date Russia launched its full-fledged invasion.

The Russia-Ukraine war was preceded by a buildup of about 200,000 Russian service members and materiel near Ukraine's borders on three sides.

At the time of the halt in the U.S. training, about 160 National Guard soldiers were relocated from Ukraine to Germany, where they continue to take part in other Army instruction in Europe.

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### **18. Albania's former 'Stalin City' looks West with NATO airbase**

Reuters, Apr. 12 (0139) | Not Attributed

In an Albanian city once named for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, dozens of Soviet- and Chinese-made planes rust in the open air on a former communist airbase, some with flat tyres, others covered with dust.

The site in the central city now called Kucova is being transformed into a modern NATO airbase, a symbol of Albania's westward shift -- and a key military buffer in Europe as Russia wages war in Ukraine.

The renovation project was agreed in 2018 by the Balkan state and NATO, which has already committed \$55 million (50.4 million euros) to the project, according to Albanian sources.

Construction began at the beginning of the year, ahead of Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine that has sparked fears of a spillover into NATO and EU member states.

Though the timing of the Kucova base redevelopment was a coincidence, for some it is a welcome one.

"The changed global security environment has now created considerable impetus for the completion of the (base) renovation plan," a NATO official in Brussels told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The base, due to be completed in 2023, will give the "alliance an important strategic facility in the Western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Black Sea region", the NATO official said.

After decades of global isolation, Albania became a NATO member in 2009.

It was shunned by much of the world under paranoid Communist dictator Enver Hoxha, who forged close ties with the Soviet Union and China before falling out with them over their apparent deviation from true Marxism.

The country embraced the West after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, and today is eager to become an EU member.

The defunct aircraft at the Kucova base are reminders of a chapter of Albania's history many are happy to leave behind -- and a signal to Russia which has sought to extend its influence in the region.

"The construction of this base is a clear message to other players with bad intentions in the Western Balkans region," Albania's Defence Minister Niko Peleshi told AFP.

The construction is certain to irk Moscow, which strongly opposes any NATO expansion into eastern and central Europe -- especially in the Balkans which has traditionally been torn between East and West.

Today, Albania's neighbours Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia are all part of NATO too.

For Seit Putro, who has worked in the finance department at the base for more than 30 years, it's a welcome confirmation of Albania's political allegiances.

"Once in the East, we are now in our place, next to the West, which is a good step forward for all," he told AFP.

The 350-hectare (865-acre) site in the former 'Stalin City' was built in the 1950s under Hoxha with help from the Soviets, and completed later with a network of the same kind of underground tunnels that were dug across the country in case of nuclear attack.

Once the NATO renovation is finished, it will function as a tactical operational base, kitted out with a refurbished runway more than two kilometres (1.2 miles) long, an updated control tower and new storage units.

It will have the capacity to host state-of-the-art military aircraft and can also be used for refuelling and ammunition storage.

Officials are also hoping the base, which once employed 700 people, will create new jobs in the poor region, 85 kilometres south of the capital Tirana.

It will have a "very positive economic and social impact", said deputy commander of the base, Major Leandro Syka.

The aircraft now languishing on the airbase mainly consist of Chinese and Soviet MiGs, Soviet-made Antonovs and Yak-18s.

At the end of the Cold War, the base had about 200 planes and 40 helicopters, which were put out of commission as they were obsolete.

About 75 remain today, and their fate remains uncertain.

The authorities have to yet to decide whether they will be auctioned, put in a museum or turned into scrap metal.

For some, they hold painful memories from past conflicts.

Former pilot Niazi Nelaj remembers clearly his first flight aboard a Mig-15, which bore bullet marks from combat in distant Asian countries.

But the 85-year-old is happy to see the airbase aligned with NATO, and he believes Albania's previous pivot toward the East was only an "accident of history".

"Albania's natural alliance has always been and will be with the West," he said.

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## **RUSSIA**

### **19. Russian Navy Taking on Resupply Role Nearly 50 Days Into Ukrainian Invasion**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 11 (1829) | Heather Mongilio

Russian Navy ships in the Black Sea are currently resupplying troops in Ukraine instead of playing an offensive role, a senior defense official said Monday.

Day 47 into the Ukrainian invasion, and the Russian Navy continues to mostly support the invasion. The country has a couple dozen ships in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the senior defense official told reporters.

Those ships have contributed to some missile strikes in the Donbas region, but those are a small percentage of the Russian missile attacks, the senior defense official said.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Monday that there are no indications the ships are there for minesweeping operations and that the Department of Defense believes the ships are part of resupply efforts for the south of the Donbas region.

"I can't read out Russian naval activity with any great level of specificity," Kirby said.

The United Kingdom has pledged to send anti-ship missiles to Ukraine, although it is unclear what kind.

The senior defense official could not say what missiles the British were sending, referring reporters to Downing Street. He did confirm that the United Kingdom announced they would send coastal defense cruise missiles.

A U.K. defense official told USNI News on Monday the missiles were short-range, Soviet-era anti-ship weapons.

About half a dozen of the Russian warships are in the Sea of Azov, most of them surface combatants, the defense official said. They are there to help resupply efforts in Mariupol, the official added.

Mariupol remains in Ukrainian hands, although the city is still seeing heavy fighting. The city's mayor said 10,000 civilians have died so far in the siege, predicting that the death toll will be higher, according to The Associated Press.

"I think we're all bracing for when the rest of the world gets to see what happens in Mariupol, what has happened [during the siege]," the senior defense official said. "I think we're certainly bracing ourselves here for some potentially really, really horrible outcomes."

While Russia saw more success in the southern part of Ukraine than it did in the north, troops still failed to achieve the goal of capturing population centers like Mariupol, the defense official said.

"They have been no closer to taking Mariupol today than they were last week," the official said.

Mykolaiv is also still under Ukrainian control, while Kherson is currently controlled by Russian troops. The areas between Mykolaiv and Kherson are contested.

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## **20. Russia's invasion has escalated a brewing battle over space**

Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A5 | Noah Bierman

A 57-second video posted by the Russian government last month caught the attention of scientists and diplomats, but not in a way that inspired optimism about the future of global cooperation in outer space.

In it, Russian cosmonauts floated about the International Space Station, hugging and waving goodbye to an American astronaut. Then they entered their portion of the complex and sealed airlock doors behind them. With the video blasting a Russian song, "Farewell," CGI took over and depicted the cosmonauts' segment detaching from the station and drifting away (to the applause of Russian ground controllers).

The dark yet jaunty satirical video, depicting what would be the certain demise of the station, presaged more serious threats to an endeavor that has come to symbolize post-Cold War cooperation in space.

It is also a further sign that friction with the Kremlin, most recently aggravated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has seeped into space, exacerbating tensions over the rules of behavior there and halting negotiations over space weapons at a time when the battlegrounds of war are moving to the edges of Earth's atmosphere.

"The whole world is sort of readjusting to this whole notion of not just competition, but possible and even unintentional confrontation with other big powers" over how they use space, said Jessica West, a senior researcher with Project Ploughshares, a peace research group based in Canada.

Space has long been a barometer of the U.S.-Russia relationship. Cold War competition pushed Moscow and Washington toward new human feats in the 1960s, including the U.S. moon landing in 1969. Anxiety over President Reagan's "Star Wars" defensive weapons program drove arms negotiations in the 1980s that portended the end of the Soviet Union.

The 1998 space station agreement -- which also includes the European Union, Japan and Canada -- signaled a new era of shared advancement in the post-Cold War period. For more than two decades, the jointly operated station has been spinning around Earth.

That space detente was waning long before Russia invaded Ukraine in February, and the U.S. and its allies targeted Moscow's space industry in a raft of economic sanctions. For two decades, Russian President Vladimir Putin has pushed for an aggressive expansion of his country's space weapons program.

American officials have alleged, starting in 2009, that the Kremlin was developing anti-satellite missiles and more recently an anti-satellite mobile laser.

Russia launched what it described as an inspector satellite in 2017, prompting deep skepticism from American officials over what they labeled the craft's "abnormal behavior," suggesting it may also have a military use. Two years later, Russia placed a satellite within close range of a U.S. spy satellite, prompting concerns of an unintentional confrontation between the two military powers.

In November, Russia tested a missile that struck a satellite and blasted it into more than 1,500 large pieces of debris, any chunk of which could doom manned and unmanned commercial and military spacecraft, including the crew of the space station, which was forced to take shelter. The U.S. and its allies sharply criticized Russia over the test.

Meanwhile, the Trump and Biden administrations have ratcheted up efforts to counter competition from Russia and China in space. This was underscored by Trump's decision to start a new branch of the military, the Space Force.

The new military branch is one of his few legacies that Biden has embraced, with the White House submitting a recent budget request of \$24.5 billion for the Space Force, a bump of about 40% over the prior year. That's almost as much as the \$26 billion Biden requested for NASA.

Those lingering tensions have complicated attempts to rewrite international rules on space debris, and the invasion of Ukraine has led U.S. officials to put on ice any direct talks between Washington and Moscow over space-related issues.

"We see no need for those discussions while they are in conflict with the Ukrainians," Eric Desautels, acting deputy assistant secretary of State for emerging security challenges and defense policy, said in a recent interview.

Desautels said that Russia and China would like a future treaty that constrains the U.S. from placing space-based missile defenses in orbit. One of the biggest stumbling blocks is defining defensive weapons versus those with offensive capabilities. The U.S. argues that commercial actors could be caught up in more restrictive rules, even if their work lacks a military intent.

Complicating potential negotiations are a raft of economic sanctions imposed on Russia over the Ukraine war. The U.S. has taken intentional aim at the Russian space industry, with Biden vowing on the day of the invasion that U.S. sanctions were designed, in part, at degrading "their aerospace industry, including their space program."

The economic crackdown against Russia has prompted a series of threats from its space officials. The head of Russia's space program, Dmitry Rogozin, tweeted on April 2 in Russian that "the restoration of normal relations between partners in the International Space Station and other joint projects is possible only with the complete and unconditional lifting of illegal sanctions."

Even before the Ukraine invasion, Moscow had indicated that it may leave the partnership in the next few years as it signs new agreements with China on space exploration and lunar research.

Zhanna Malekos Smith of the Center for Strategic and International Studies said Russia has created "strategic fog" with its mixed signals over the space station pact. But she pointed to signs of hope, including the March 30 return from the station of American astronaut Mark Vande Hei, who traveled back with two cosmonauts -- Pyotr Dubrov and Anton Shkaplerov -- in a Russian capsule.

When Shkaplerov handed control of the station to astronaut Thomas Marshburn a day earlier, he said that whatever problems existed on Earth -- "in orbit, we are like one crew."

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## MIDDLE EAST

### **21. Iran Says Nuclear Deal in ‘E.R.’ Hanging on U.S. Decision**

Bloomberg News, Apr. 11 (0500) | Arsalan Shahla

Iran said the 2015 nuclear deal is alive but lingering in the “emergency room,” with its fate resting on a decision by the U.S. that could lift sanctions on Tehran’s economy and oil exports.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman, told reporters the Islamic Republic had finalized all the details needed to revive the landmark accord with other world powers involved in stalled negotiations in Vienna.

But he said the U.S. had yet to take a decision on the latest Iranian proposal for how to resolve the standoff over remaining issues between the two countries, which include a Trump-era terrorism designation for Iran’s elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

“We haven’t reached the point yet where the U.S. side has shown the will to return to its own obligations under the nuclear deal and the related United Nations resolution,” Khatibzadeh said. Washington must reverse all of the Trump administration’s measures against Iran, imposed as part of its “maximum pressure” strategy, he said.

While the terrorism listing isn’t formally part of the nuclear deal, Tehran has insisted it must be removed in order for the pact to be revived.

Diplomats paused their negotiations last month after Russia inserted new conditions related to western sanctions imposed on Moscow over its war on Ukraine. The Kremlin later backed down, but Tehran and Washington remain deadlocked, especially over the designation of the Guard as a foreign terrorist organization made by then-President Donald Trump.

Reversing that decision could be politically perilous for the Biden administration in an election year, with substantial opposition in both American parties.

Reviving the 2015 deal would ease sanctions on Iran and trigger the return of its crude oil to markets at a time of unprecedented volatility in fuel markets because of Russia’s attack on Ukraine and the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on supply and demand.

The nuclear accord unraveled after Trump renounced it and reimposed sanctions almost four years ago. Iran responded by escalating its uranium enrichment well beyond limits set by the accord. The confrontation fueled conflicts in the Middle East and a series of attacks on shipping in waterways key for global trade.

## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **32. Putin's War Roils U.S.-India Ties**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 12 (0200), Pg. A15 | Walter Russell Mead

The headlines focused on Europe last week as Russia regrouped for another brutal assault on Ukraine, but the Indo-Pacific is also heating up. Kurt Campbell, senior Asia policy maker at the National Security Council, planned a trip to the Solomon Islands to stave off a potential Chinese diplomatic coup, while President Biden added a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi even as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin prepared for in-person meetings with their Indian counterparts. In the long run, both sets of meetings could change world politics more than the struggle in Ukraine.

The Solomon Islands are a nation in the Pacific between Australia and Hawaii that includes six larger islands and almost 1,000 small ones. That strategic location made it the scene of some of the most bitter fighting in World War II. Instability has been more the rule than the exception since the islands gained independence in 1978. The roughly 700,000 inhabitants speak 80 different languages. The islands hold significant mineral deposits, and the surrounding waters offer rich fishing prospects, but continuing unrest along with pervasive corruption has discouraged foreign investment. The most recent round of rioting, in November 2021, ended only after Australian troops arrived.

Until 2019, the Solomon Islands maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Last month, news broke that the Solomon Islands and Beijing had drafted a security agreement that could allow Chinese military forces onto the islands. The complicated politics of tiny Pacific island nations are less attention-grabbing than missile strikes in the Donbas, but keeping the Western Pacific aligned with Washington might matter more to our future security than the outcome of Vladimir Putin's war.

The high-level meetings between top U.S. and Indian policy makers are even more critical. The war in Ukraine has strengthened the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The effect on America's relations with India has been more complicated. India has a long history of close military ties with Russia, and many Indian weapons systems today depend on Russian spare parts. Many Indians resent American lectures on India's quest for cheap Russian oil as NATO members continue to subsidize Mr. Putin's war machine by importing as much oil and gas as he is willing to ship.

While India and the U.S. have strengthened their bond over shared concerns about a rising China, they view that problem through different lenses. Americans look at their competition with China through the lens of global politics. Maintaining a balance of power in Eurasia has been a core concept of Anglo-American strategic thought since Elizabeth Tudor fought off the Spanish Armada in 1588. Americans instinctively see the "limitless friendship" between Mr. Putin's Russia and Xi Jinping's China as a geopolitical threat to the global balance of power and see India as a valuable part of a counter-coalition.

Indians see things through a South Asian regional lens, and from that perspective, things aren't looking good. A victory for the Taliban in Afghanistan, instability in Pakistan even as its relations with China deepen, civil war in Myanmar, a major political crisis in Sri Lanka, and China's busily building up its forces on India's northern and northeastern boundaries -- this is not the kind of world that India wants.

Worse, from an Indian perspective, American policy isn't helping. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan effectively strengthened Pakistan at India's expense and suggested that Team Biden doesn't see Indian security as a major concern. American attempts to isolate and punish Myanmar's junta, however morally inspiring, appear to some in Delhi to be making a bad situation worse and creating opportunities for China.

Whatever Indians think of Mr. Putin, New Delhi sees Moscow as a valuable source of weapons, an indispensable partner in Afghanistan, and, if not driven into China's arms, a valuable counterweight to Chinese power in Central Asia and beyond. Western policies intended to weaken and impoverish Russia that drive it deeper into alliance with China, do not, many in New Delhi believe, serve India's interests well.

There's more. The Biden administration casts its global strategy around a struggle between enlightened liberal democracy and the nonliberal world. India's Hindu nationalists are not enlisting in that crusade. They want to defend India's Hindu identity, under threat in their view both from proselytizing monotheistic religions like Islam and Christianity and from a Western liberal ideology that seeks to transform communal and gender relations around the world. The more ideological Americans get about their foreign policy, the more difficult the U.S.-India relationship is likely to become.

The pivot to Asia is about more than moving military assets around on the map. To succeed in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. must learn to incorporate the outlook of great powers like India into its thinking, even as it gives priority to the stability and friendship of small but strategic states like the Solomon Islands.

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### **33. A clear U.S. defense of Taiwan**

*Russia's war on Ukraine makes a pledge of action against a Chinese invasion of Taiwan necessary*

Los Angeles Times, Apr. 12 (0300), Pg. A11 | Shinzo Abe

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reminded many people of the fraught relationship between China and Taiwan. But while there are three similarities between the situation in Ukraine and Taiwan, there are also significant differences.

The first similarity is that there is a very large military power gap between Taiwan and China, just as there was between Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, that gap is growing larger every year.

Second, neither Ukraine nor Taiwan has formal military allies. Both countries are forced to confront threats or attacks alone.

Third, because both Russia and China are permanent, veto-wielding members of the United Nations Security Council, the U.N.'s mediation function cannot be relied upon for conflicts in which they are involved. This has been the case with the current Russian attack on Ukraine, and it would also be the case in any crisis over Taiwan.

But the situation surrounding Taiwan is even more uneasy. While Taiwan has no allies, it does have the Taiwan Relations Act, a 1979 U.S. law requiring the United States to provide Taiwan with the military equipment and supplies "necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capacity." This law has functioned as a form of compensation for America's unwillingness to say explicitly that it will "defend Taiwan" should it be attacked. This arrangement should now change.

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the U.S. stated early on that it would not deploy its troops in Ukraine's defense. But when it comes to Taiwan, the U.S. has adopted a policy of strategic ambiguity. This is the second point of difference: It remains unclear whether the U.S. would intervene by force in a crisis involving Taiwan.

Because the United States prefers to leave undefined its position on how it would respond to an assault on Taiwan, China has (at least up to now) been discouraged from military adventurism. This is so because China's rulers must account for the possibility that the U.S. would indeed intervene militarily. At the same time, American ambiguity has forced Taiwan to consider the possibility that the U.S. will not intervene militarily, and this has deterred radical pro-independence groups on the island.

The U.S. has maintained its Janus-faced policy for decades. But the third, most important difference between Ukraine and Taiwan suggests strongly that it is time for the U.S. to reconsider its approach. Simply put, whereas Ukraine is an independent state beyond any doubt, Taiwan is not.

Russia's invasion is not only an armed violation of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty, but also an attempt to overthrow the government of a sovereign state with missiles and shells. On this point, there is no controversy in the international community over the interpretation of international law and the U.N. Charter. While the extent to which countries participate in sanctions against Russia has differed, no country has claimed that Russia is not in serious violation of international law.

By contrast, China claims that Taiwan is "part of its own country," and the U.S. and Japanese position is to respect this claim. Neither Japan nor the U.S. has official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and most countries around the world do not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state. Unlike in Ukraine, Chinese leaders could claim that any invasion of Taiwan that China launches is necessary to suppress antigovernment activities in one of its own regions and that such acts, therefore, would not violate international law.

When Russia annexed Crimea, the international community ultimately acquiesced, even though Russia had violated Ukrainian sovereignty. Given this precedent, it is not surprising that Chinese leaders may very well expect the world to be more tolerant should they, too, adopt the logic of “regional” -- rather than national -- subjugation.

This logic has made strategic ambiguity untenable. The policy of ambiguity worked extremely well as long as the U.S. was strong enough to maintain it, and as long as China was far inferior to the U.S. in military power. But those days are over. The American policy of ambiguity toward Taiwan is now fostering instability in the Indo-Pacific region, by encouraging China to underestimate American resolve, while making the government in Taipei unnecessarily anxious.

Given the change in circumstances since the policy of strategic ambiguity was adopted, the U.S. should issue a statement that is not open to misinterpretation or multiple interpretations. The time has come for the U.S. to make clear that it will defend Taiwan against any attempted Chinese invasion.

Whenever I met President Xi Jinping during my time as prime minister, I always made it a rule to convey clearly to him that he should not misjudge Japan’s intention to defend the Senkaku Islands, and that Japan’s intentions were unwavering. The human tragedy that has befallen Ukraine has taught us a bitter lesson. There must no longer be any room for doubt in our resolve concerning Taiwan, and in our determination to defend freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

*--Shinzo Abe was prime minister of Japan from 2006-07 and 2012-20*

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### **34. Deadliest Weapon in Ukraine Is a Cell Phone**

Bloomberg Opinion, Apr. 12 (0200) | James Stavridis

As the war in Ukraine pushes well into its second month, much of the outcome thus far — including Russian failures in executing their battle plans — is the result of logistics. Moscow has struggled abysmally to get gasoline, ammunition and food to its frontline troops. On the Ukrainian side, the flow of weapons and other materiel from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the U.S. has been breathtaking.

Russia is now forced to reassess its objectives and consolidate its forces in territory it already controlled before the invasion, in the southeastern Donbas region. So far, at least, it is a stunning setback for President Vladimir Putin.

But one area of warfare hangs in the balance: information. Despite ample video evidence of widespread war crimes by Russian troops, provided by Ukrainian forces and international journalists, the Kremlin is still managing the information war with energy, imagination and fairly effective counternarratives.

It's a familiar litany by now: The Ukrainian government is composed of Nazis; corpses of civilians in the cities of Bucha and Irpin are staged; missile strikes on targets like maternity hospitals and train stations are "false flag" operations conducted by the Ukrainians; and it is Ukraine, not Russia, that is preparing to use nerve agents.

For the Russians, this is not a trivial exercise. A significant part of the world will regard this conflict through the diet of information it consumes. As the war drags on, this will greatly influence global willingness to support sanctions and increasingly higher energy prices. Inside Russia, of course, Putin has control over almost every aspect of the media and the Internet, at least for the moment, and he can use that to tap into the nationalism of the Russian people.

But in the rest of the world — particularly China and India, where well over a third of the world's population lives — there are deeply conflicting narratives at work. (China has cautiously supported Russia in the conflict; India is more or less neutral.) The same is true in a significant portion of Latin America and Africa, where there is some sympathy for Putin's claims that the West has somehow threatened Moscow.

The Russian leader points to the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as far worse than his "special operation" in Ukraine. The Russians are experts at manipulating information technically, producing so-called deepfake videos that are marketed globally across propaganda machines like the Russian Television Network, or RT. For example, in mid-March a hacked news clip from Ukrainian TV falsely indicating that President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was surrendering went viral on social media. (In fairness, the Ukrainians have mounted similar disinformation campaigns.)

How can the Western democracies and Ukraine win the battle of information? What are the techniques and tactics of information warfare, which are just as important as providing anti-aircraft and antitank weapons in achieving success?

America must begin with humility as it seeks to make its case. Sometimes people say to me, "Admiral, you're right, we are in a war of ideas." Not quite — in fact, we are engaged in a marketplace of ideas.

We must compete in that marketplace, selling the idea that the Western vision of democracy, liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and gender and racial equality are inherently and obviously the only worldview that matters. Messaging, especially on the Internet and social media, is central to this soft sell.

In many parts of the world, the U.S. and its allies now have to explain patiently to leaders and citizens why those ideas matter so deeply and what their societies can gain from them. For example, we've got to be able to explain the differences between this war in Ukraine and previous Russian meddling in the Middle East. What is happening in Syria is a moral travesty, but the geopolitical stakes are far higher in Eastern Europe. But if you are a teenager in sub-Saharan Africa or the Andean ridge of South America, those differences are not always obvious.

Second, there is a fraught technological competition. Winning requires resources devoted to telling the stories from the bloody battlefields to the diplomatic boardrooms. Videos have to be crisp and convincing, showing in graphic detail the war crimes being committed daily in Ukraine. This needs to be packaged and moved over the social networks in creative ways that capitalize on the West's advantages — from getting them in the hands of social influencers in dozens of key countries to setting up professional-quality websites that are easy to navigate.

Obtaining, validating and editing the millions of cell phone hits generated every day is a key task. So is working with Big Tech to find ways around the blocking of sites and Internet connections by autocratic powers. Elon Musk's Starlink satellite Internet service, provided free to Ukrainians, is a prime example.

For the U.S. government, all this requires a great deal of interagency cooperation. There is no longer an overarching U.S. information agency as there was during the Cold War. That mission today is broadly conducted by the office of the under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs.

But the State Department budget, never large, has been hammered over the last decade; it needs help to conduct an information campaign effectively. Many other cabinet agencies deal with promoting America's image abroad, including the Departments of Commerce, Defense and Homeland Security. They must sync up messages and move them globally.

The Central Intelligence Agency must continue its deep involvement in obtaining classified information, and disseminating unclassified versions — including inside Russia itself. The Joe Biden administration's unprecedented releases of sensitive intelligence before the Russian invasion were key in lining up an unexpected outpouring of global support for the Ukrainian cause.

The U.S. needs to forge more aggressive international synchronization. For example, visits to Kyiv or videoconferences with Zelenskiy by international leaders should be scheduled as part of a planned campaign, not in the current haphazard fashion. In addition to the European Union and NATO, key allies such as Japan and Australia need to be meshed into a consistent operation.

Unfortunately, the Russians have a significant head start in the information war. For a decade, they have been very effective at intruding into Western democracy, especially by spreading Internet conspiracy theories in the run-ups to national elections in the U.S. and Europe.

The West, however, has a major messaging advantage: Its values are the right ones. Russia is conducting an illegal campaign of brutal war crimes in Ukraine; the Ukrainian people are bravely defending their democracy; the West is providing significant military, diplomatic and economic support; and history will judge Putin's fellow travelers harshly.

But the U.S. cannot simply use its wealth and power to hammer the rest of the world with its argument. Competing in the global marketplace of ideas will require a touch of humility, significant resources, a well-run campaign between nations and government agencies, and above all steady belief in the values we cherish.

*--James Stavridis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a retired U.S. Navy admiral and former supreme allied commander of NATO, and dean emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is also chair of the board of the Rockefeller Foundation and vice chairman of Global Affairs at the Carlyle Group. His latest book is "2034: A Novel of the Next World War"*

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### **35. The U.S. military should be prepared for a humanitarian assistance role in the Ukraine crisis**

Military Times Online, Apr. 11 (2100) | Louis C. Tripoli

At the most recent NATO summit, President Biden announced \$1 billion in new funding for food, clean water, shelter, and medical care for those in Ukraine and those who have fled to neighboring countries, but there may be a role for more direct assistance if requested by the countries that are affected.

Since the start of the Russian invasion on February 24, more than 4.1 million people have fled Ukraine and up to 6.5 million have been displaced internally, including about half of Ukrainian children, according to the United Nations.

The initial response from the nations surrounding Ukraine has been generous but may not be sustainable. Strangers have kindly opened their homes, and their governments have offered health services to Ukrainians. Current estimates indicate that 2.6 million Ukrainians have fled to Poland, 609,000 to Romania, 365,000 to Hungary, 387,000 to Moldova, and 281,000 to Slovakia.

However, neighboring nations such as Poland and Romania may soon reach a point where they are overwhelmed by the influx of refugees. Officials in Krakow and Warsaw are looking for assistance managing the displaced persons in Poland. Warsaw's computer system has been unable to keep up with the volume of newcomer information. In Romania, shelter, diapers, formula, and SIM cards remain in high demand. Germany is echoing the similar sentiments as up to 15,000 displaced people arrive daily.

In response, the State Department's United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, dispatched a Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART, to the region. If warranted, USAID offers assistance to host nations via the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, or OFDA.

In addition to these efforts, it is worth considering the U.S. military's humanitarian assistance and disaster response, or HADR, core capabilities for this crisis. U.S. forces have responded to a myriad of global disasters. No matter the disaster, whether a tsunami, earthquake, or epidemic, the U.S. military provided essential resources, transportation, medical supplies and treatment centers, and logistical support in exigent circumstances. Of course, host nations (or NATO) must first request humanitarian assistance from the U.S. before the processes of invoking U.S. military HADR can go forward.

The U.S. military has unmatched capabilities and expertise in expeditionary medicine and logistics, and the need for medical support and supplies is acute. Another core capability of the U.S. military is the response to chemical, biological, or nuclear threats. Given that the Washington Times and other news outlets reported President Biden's warning of Russian chemical attacks in Ukraine, planning for this scenario may be useful. Of course, any assistance that the U.S. military provides would have to be carefully calculated to avoid widening the conflict.

Military HADR is not a long-term solution to a humanitarian problem. Joint Publication 3-29, the official policy of the U.S. military for providing humanitarian assistance by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, states that Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, or FHA, is intended to supplement or complement efforts of host nation civil authorities or agencies with the primary responsibility for providing assistance."

Furthermore, it states that "crisis response and limited contingency operations are typically limited in scope and scale and conducted to achieve a very specific objective in an operational area." In other words, military assistance in humanitarian crises is only designed to be temporary. It serves in a transitional role to help agencies who are on the ground providing direct relief.

The risks of outbreaks of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 among a population already impacted by low vaccination rates is exponentially increased with crowded spaces, lack of sanitation or personal protective equipment, and limited health services brought upon by war conditions. Policy makers also need to consider other infectious disease threats; for example, drug resistant tuberculosis is prevalent in certain areas of the Ukraine.

Host countries and relief agencies must be ready to deal with communicable diseases such as polio, tuberculosis, and COVID-19, while also managing non-communicable diseases and acute conditions that are common in displaced persons all while simultaneously managing the logistics of food and shelter, reuniting families, obtaining host country travel permits, and planning for onward movement and transition of care.

It is expected that there will be injuries related to trauma, either from exposure to weapons or accidents, including burn and inhalation injuries. Some may be victims of torture, rape, or other intentional injury. This situation may require high-level medical, surgical, obstetrical, pediatric, or behavioral healthcare that is beyond the reach of host country or relief organization capability. These factors support making the case for U.S. military HADR presence sooner rather than later.

While the military is not the best long-term solution to a humanitarian problem like this one, if called upon to assist, military planners will set conditions for orderly transfer of HADR operations to host nations, non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, and private agencies.

In addition, the U.S. military has a long history of working with and beside NGOs on many occasions so that transition is seamless. For example, NGOs regularly participate in U.S. Navy medical missions aboard hospital ships. Although several experienced U.S. and international NGOs are on the ground now, the U.S. military's unparalleled HADR operations skills can provide the infrastructure to coordinate disparate efforts.

Many U.S.-based NGOs and private organizations are already providing humanitarian assistance in the region, and, if called upon, it is likely that the U.S. military would explore relationships with these entities, as described in policy. Logistics, operations, and public health capabilities are as important as medical care in this situation, so coordination with a balanced collaborative of organizations, each with unique capabilities, will be paramount for successful relief efforts.

As the world faces a potentially more dangerous phase in the war — one that may include exposure to non-conventional weapons — it is prudent to be ready for a rapid escalation in humanitarian challenges and the limits of host countries in the region to cope with further waves of displacement. A near-term collaboration between U.S. military planners and U.S.-based NGOs and humanitarian organizations is warranted and should be undertaken.

*--Louis C. Tripoli, M.D., Rear Admiral (ret.), United States Navy, and former Command Surgeon, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, is an advisor for AM LLC, a leading provider of K-12 and community health solutions. Dr. Tripoli's opinion does not represent official U.S. government or DoD policy*

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## SUMMARY

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## TWEETS

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force tweeted: “On April 12, JASDF F-2 and JMSDF ships conducted a bilateral exercise with the Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group in the Sea of Japan in order to strengthen the capability of #JapanUSAlliance for effective deterrence and response.” Separately, “More than 1,000 #Ukraine marines surrender in key port of #Mariupol, says #Russia,” according to a tweet from a Reuters editor. And National Defense Magazine wrote: “DepSecDef Hicks voices concern about pace of hypersonic tests.”

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POLITICO Online, Apr. 13 | Connor O’Brien

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2. Air Force to issue GBSD re-entry vehicle contract to Lockheed Martin  
InsideDefense.com, Apr. 12 | Shelley K. Mesch

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3. DIA sees ‘dramatic’ change in space competition; China, Russia ‘mature’ capabilities  
BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 | Theresa Hitchens

China and Russia continue to rapidly “mature” their counterspace capabilities, but they also have been modernizing their own space systems at a breathtaking pace since 2019 — in some part to reduce their reliance on US and other

foreign providers, according to a new Defense Intelligence Agency analysis. "It's not just the capability, it's the fact that ... they each have a Space Force," John Huth, DIA defense intelligence officer for space and counterspace, explained in a press briefing today. "And their intent is to make space part of that combined arms effort in any conflict."

## RUSSIA

4. Putin Says Peace Talks Reach 'Dead End,' Vows to Fight On  
Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13, Pg. A1 | Evan Gershkovich, Thomas Grove and Brett Forrest

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5. Biden calls Russia's war in Ukraine 'genocide'  
Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A2 | Tyler Pager

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6. Pentagon looks to vastly expand weapons provided to Ukraine  
Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A17 | Dan Lamothe and Karoun Demirjian

The Biden administration is poised to dramatically expand the scope of weapons it is providing Ukraine, U.S. officials said Tuesday, with the Pentagon looking to transfer armored Humvees and a range of other sophisticated equipment.

7. U.S. cannot confirm use of chemical weapons in Ukraine, Blinken says  
Reuters, Apr. 12 | Idrees Ali, Humeyra Pamuk, Daphne Psalcdakis and Ismail Shakil

The United States is not in position to confirm reports of the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine but was working to determine what actually happened, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

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Reuters, Apr. 13 | Not Attributed

More than 1,000 Ukrainian marines have surrendered in the besieged port of Mariupol, Russia's defence ministry said on Wednesday of Moscow's main target in the eastern Donbas region which it has yet to bring under its control.

9. Putin Vows Return to Moon, Despite Sanctions  
Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13, Pg. A7 | Mauro Orru

Russia will resume its moon-exploration program, President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday, paving the way for a new space race as international space cooperation comes under strain following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## CHINA

10. China's military has US aircraft carriers in its sights, but those flattops aren't 'little teacups,' their captains say  
BusinessInsider.com, Apr. 12 | Christopher Woody

In March 1922, the US Navy's first aircraft carrier, the USS Langley, entered service. A century later, some are questioning whether carriers can survive in the wars of the future. The development of increasingly sophisticated anti-ship weapons by capable adversaries, namely Russia and China, has raised doubts about those ships. The doubts about the carrier's future are driven in large part by China's military modernization, which has produced a variety of

long-range weapons and more capable aircraft, ships, and submarines to launch them. China's anti-ship missiles are the major concern, especially the DF-21D and DF-26B ballistic missiles, which are designed for naval targets and sometimes called "carrier killers."

## KOREAN PENINSULA

11. U.S. Navy reveals East Sea drills involving aircraft carrier, stealth jets  
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Apr. 13 | Not Attributed

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12. North Korea uses space program to disguise ballistic missile development U.S. military intelligence  
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Apr. 12 | Byun Duk-kun

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## IRAN

15. Iran's Khamenei says nuclear talks 'progressing well'  
Agence France-Presse, Apr. 12 | Not Attributed

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tuesday that negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear deal were advancing but urged officials not to place all bets on the Vienna talks.

16. Iran Guards commander says death of all U.S. leaders would not avenge Soleimani killing  
Reuters, Apr. 13 | Parisa Hafezi

The killing of all American leaders would not be enough to avenge the U.S. assassination of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' top commander Qassem Soleimani two years ago, a senior Iranian Guards commander said on Wednesday.

## NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

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Kyodo News (Japan), Apr. 12 | Not Attributed

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## AIR FORCE

18. AFGSC conducts Senior Leader Conference at F.E. Warren

90th Missile Wing Public Affairs, Apr. 12 Press Release

Commanders, command chiefs, civic leaders and staff from across Air Force Global Strike Command converged upon F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, April 5-8 for the command's spring senior leader conference.

19. Hicks to Congress: Be Patient, Allow Some Failures in New Development Programs Like Hypersonics  
Air Force Magazine Online, Apr. 12 | John A. Tirpak

Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks urged Congress to be more patient with the Pentagon as it develops new systems, like hypersonic missiles.

20. Hicks Voices Concern About Pace of Hypersonic Tests  
National Defense Magazine Online, Apr. 12 | Meredith Roaten

The approach to testing and evaluation for hypersonic weapons is one of Deputy Secretary Kathleen Hicks' biggest concerns about the advanced technology programs, she said April 12.

21. Boeing looks to Spirit for B-52 engine upgrades to keep bombers flying  
Wichita Eagle Online (Kansas), Apr. 12 | Matthew Kelly

Boeing has selected Spirit Aerosystems to provide engine parts for a round of upgrades that will help keep B-52 bombers in the sky through at least 2050.

NAVY

22. Navy secretary visits Bremerton, Bangor, touts multi-billion modernization of shipyard  
Kitsap Sun Online (Bremerton, WA), Apr. 12 | Josh Farley

The Navy is "deeply committed" to a multi-billion dollar modernization effort at its shipyards, including its largest in Bremerton, as new generations of aircraft carriers and submarines will require upgraded dry docks and facilities for maintenance work, President Joe Biden's Navy secretary said at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor on Monday.

COMMENTARY

23. We must acknowledge space as it is: A warfighting domain  
The Hill Online, Apr. 12 | Gen. Kevin Chilton (Ret.)

On Jan. 11, 2007, China launched a direct-ascent anti-satellite weapon (ASAT), which successfully intercepted and destroyed a Chinese satellite. It took fewer than 15 minutes from launch to impact. At the time, I was serving as the commander of Air Force Space Command, the predecessor of the Space Force. We could track the strike, saw its after-effects, but were powerless to offer leaders proactive options in case a U.S. satellite was targeted.

24. Putin is holding GPS hostage – Here's how to get it back  
C4ISRNET.com, Apr. 12 | Dana A. Goward and Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA)

On November 15, 2021 a missile streaked into space from Russia, destroying a retired Russian satellite. The remnant debris endangered other satellites and the International Space Station crew that included Russian cosmonauts.

25. If Ukraine falls, Putin could take aim at the Baltics next  
Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A21 | Michael Gerson

I was with President George W. Bush when he visited Lithuania in 2002, just after the Baltic states had been offered membership in NATO. Bush had been one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in the alliance, which would establish the obligation of mutual defense.

26. Consequences of Biden's Iran deal will be dangerously worse for the world  
Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 | James Jay Carafano and Adam Milstein

Negotiations over a new nuclear deal with Iran have stalled. For now. But the talks are expected to resume. Policymakers would be wise to use this lull to take a sober look at the draft deal. They should pay particularly close attention to the dangerous regional consequences that would arise from another flawed deal with Iran.

#### STATE-RUN MEDIA

27. No meetings with Russian top brass on Putin's schedule yet Kremlin spokesman  
TASS (Russia), Apr. 12 Not Attributed

The traditional spring series of meetings with Russia's top military officials has not yet been put on the Russian president's schedule, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

28. US uses conflict in Ukraine for containing Russia – Chinese Foreign Ministry  
TASS (Russia), Apr. 12 Not Attributed

The US authorities intentionally fuel the conflict in Ukraine for containing China and Russia, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a news briefing on Tuesday.

29. Taiwan's drills, defense handbook 'futile in resisting reunification'  
Global Times (China), Apr. 13, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun

The island of Taiwan on Tuesday held military exercises and released a civil defense handbook in an apparent move to hype cross-Straits tensions, which was met with a negative reception on the island, and mainland experts said that neither move will be helpful to Taiwan secessionists should a conflict break out.

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TWEETS OF NOTE  
Twitter, Apr. 12-13



# U.S. Strategic Command News Briefs

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AS OF 0600 HOURS, APRIL 13

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### 20. Hicks Voices Concern About Pace of Hypersonic Tests

*National Defense Magazine Online, Apr. 12 | Meredith Roaten*

The approach to testing and evaluation for hypersonic weapons is one of Deputy Secretary Kathleen Hicks' biggest concerns about the advanced technology programs, she said April 12.

### 21. Boeing looks to Spirit for B-52 engine upgrades to keep bombers flying

*Wichita Eagle Online (Kansas), Apr. 12 | Matthew Kelly*

Boeing has selected Spirit Aerosystems to provide engine parts for a round of upgrades that will help keep B-52 bombers in the sky through at least 2050.

## NAVY

### 22. Navy secretary visits Bremerton, Bangor, touts multi-billion modernization of shipyard

*Kitsap Sun Online (Bremerton, WA), Apr. 12 | Josh Farley*

The Navy is "deeply committed" to a multi-billion dollar modernization effort at its shipyards, including its largest in Bremerton, as new generations of aircraft carriers and submarines will require upgraded dry docks and facilities for maintenance work, President Joe Biden's Navy secretary said at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor on Monday.

## COMMENTARY

### 23. We must acknowledge space as it is: A warfighting domain

*The Hill Online, Apr. 12 | Gen. Kevin Chilton (Ret.)*

On Jan. 11, 2007, China launched a direct-ascent anti-satellite weapon (ASAT), which successfully intercepted and destroyed a Chinese satellite. It took fewer than 15 minutes from launch to impact. At the time, I was serving as the commander of Air Force Space Command, the predecessor of the Space Force. We could track the strike, saw its after-effects, but were powerless to offer leaders proactive options in case a U.S. satellite was targeted.

**24. Putin is holding GPS hostage – Here’s how to get it back**

*C4ISRNET.com, Apr. 12 | Dana A. Goward and Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA)*

On November 15, 2021 a missile streaked into space from Russia, destroying a retired Russian satellite. The remnant debris endangered other satellites and the International Space Station crew that included Russian cosmonauts.

**25. If Ukraine falls, Putin could take aim at the Baltics next**

*Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A21 | Michael Gerson*

I was with President George W. Bush when he visited Lithuania in 2002, just after the Baltic states had been offered membership in NATO. Bush had been one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in the alliance, which would establish the obligation of mutual defense.

**26. Consequences of Biden’s Iran deal will be dangerously worse for the world**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 | James Jay Carafano and Adam Milstein*

Negotiations over a new nuclear deal with Iran have stalled. For now. But the talks are expected to resume. Policymakers would be wise to use this lull to take a sober look at the draft deal. They should pay particularly close attention to the dangerous regional consequences that would arise from another flawed deal with Iran.

**STATE-RUN MEDIA**

**27. No meetings with Russian top brass on Putin’s schedule yet – Kremlin spokesman**

*TASS (Russia), Apr. 12 | Not Attributed*

The traditional spring series of meetings with Russia’s top military officials has not yet been put on the Russian president’s schedule, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

**28. US uses conflict in Ukraine for containing Russia – Chinese Foreign Ministry**

*TASS (Russia), Apr. 12 | Not Attributed*

The US authorities intentionally fuel the conflict in Ukraine for containing China and Russia, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a news briefing on Tuesday.

**29. Taiwan’s drills, defense handbook ‘futile in resisting reunification’**

*Global Times (China), Apr. 13, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun*

The island of Taiwan on Tuesday held military exercises and released a civil defense handbook in an apparent move to hype cross-Straits tensions, which was met with a negative reception on the island, and mainland experts said that neither move will be helpful to Taiwan secessionists should a conflict break out.

**TWEETS OF NOTE**

*Twitter, Apr. 12-13*

**TOP STORIES**

**1. Political brawl looms over nuclear cruise missile Biden plans to scrap**

***Biden threw foreign policy progressives a bone by killing a weapons system Trump proposed. But Republicans on Capitol Hill are ready to bring it back from the dead***

*POLITICO Online, Apr. 13 | Connor O'Brien*

Progressives are on the ropes again in the defense budget debate.

A rare victory for arms control advocates in President Joe Biden's nuclear plans will be clawed back if defense hawks on Capitol Hill have their way in the coming months.

A fight is already brewing in Congress over the Biden administration's decision to defund a new nuclear-tipped sea-launched cruise missile authorized by former President Donald Trump. Republicans are opposing the move, arguing Joint Chiefs chair Gen. Mark Milley and other top officers' endorsement of the program shows that Biden is defying the advice of top military commanders on U.S. nuclear deterrence.

"One way or another, we need to overturn that decision," Rep. Doug Lamborn of Colorado told POLITICO. Lamborn is the top Republican on the House Armed Services Strategic Forces panel, which oversees the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Whether to continue funding for the program or to allow the administration to shutter it is expected to feature prominently in a debate over the size and scope of the nuclear arsenal when the House and Senate Armed Services Committees consider their annual defense policy bills.

If Congress injects funding to keep the nuclear cruise missile alive, it would be yet another blow to advocates who had high hopes for restrained nuclear policy and defense spending with Biden in the White House. The Congressional Budget Office estimated in 2021 that the new cruise missile and its warhead would cost \$10 billion through 2030, though the nonpartisan scorekeeper conceded the figure is "highly uncertain."

The administration's Nuclear Posture Review — a still-classified blueprint that outlines the long-term designs for the nuclear arsenal — isn't expected to make major changes to nuclear policy and the inventory of weapons. Progressives once hoped that the president would honor his campaign promises and move U.S. nuclear posture to what's known as "sole purpose" (i.e., that nukes would only be used to deter or in response to a nuclear attack), but Russia's war in Ukraine and China's ballooning nuclear arsenal put a quick end to those dreams.

But Biden's defense budget threw a couple bones to the left: It aims to zero out funding for the cruise missile, known as the SLCM-N, and retire the B83 nuclear gravity bomb. Lawmakers clashed over both programs last year.

Republicans have already assailed Biden's \$813 billion fiscal 2023 national defense budget as not enough to counter high inflation and meet the needs of military commanders worldwide. Now, GOP lawmakers are capitalizing on the split with military brass, arguing the administration isn't taking the advice of its top commanders when it comes to nuclear weapons.

U.S. Strategic Command head Adm. Charles Richard, whose outfit oversees the nuclear mission, endorsed the cruise missile to address a "deterrence and assurance gap" in a letter to lawmakers. Gen. Tod Wolters, who leads U.S. forces in Europe, concurred with Richard's assessment in a March 30 House hearing.

Then Milley, who backed the cruise missile during his 2019 confirmation process, told lawmakers last week that his views on the weapon haven't changed and that the president "deserves to have multiple options" in the arsenal.

Republicans are counting on that advice to sway the debate.

"That's all we needed," ranking House Armed Services GOP member Mike Rogers said of Milley's testimony. "I think you'll see bipartisan support for putting it back in."

House Armed Services chair Adam Smith (D-Wash.), who backs canceling the cruise missile, conceded "there's a divide" on the panel over the issue.

"It's something we're going to debate," Smith said. "I don't know how contentious it's going to be."

"Can we make [the Pentagon] make it? I don't know," he added of the developmental cruise missile. "Obviously there are some people that think we can and they're going to try, and I disagree with them."

Biden is also seeking \$34.4 billion to overhaul each leg of the nuclear arsenal — including moving forward with a replacement to the aging intercontinental ballistic missile fleet.

But in a minor win for arms control advocates, the administration elected to cancel the Navy cruise missile, which is one of two new weapons the Trump administration's 2018 nuclear plan proposed adding to the inventory. The other was a sub-launched low-yield ballistic missile that has already entered the fleet.

The four-decade-old B83 bomb, meanwhile, was set to be retired until the Trump administration's posture review revived it.

Canceling the cruise missile and retiring gravity bomb are simply "common sense" moves, according former Rep. John Tierney, executive director of the Council for a Livable World, arguing that Biden's nuclear vision "falls far short" of the changes he should have pursued.

"I think there is an urgency ... to have taken this opportunity to change the stale thinking that they have around here about nuclear policy and move forward, which they failed to do," Tierney said.

Some opponents warn that a sea-launched cruise missile — an earlier version of which was removed from the fleet in the early 1990s and finally retired during the Obama administration — is destabilizing and would contribute to an arms race with China and Russia.

Still other lawmakers argue the missile, which would be outfitted on Navy attack submarines, is redundant and harmful to the boats' mission when low-yield missiles are now deployed on ballistic missile subs.

"We've had arguments before about how many nuclear missiles we need to have an adequate deterrent. This isn't that," Smith said.

"It's not just a matter of, 'Well, isn't more better?'" Smith said. "Putting nuclear missiles on attack submarines will undermine the mission that attack submarines currently engage in."

At a House Armed Services hearing last week, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin touted the administration's hefty modernization plans while downplaying the decision to slash the cruise missile. He argued the weapon provides "marginal capability" that "is far outweighed by the cost."

Despite splitting with his boss's recommendation to scrap the cruise missile, Milley emphasized to lawmakers that the U.S. still has ample nuclear power without it.

"We have lots of options and we have a significant nuclear capability," Milley told Senate Armed Services on Thursday. "So I don't want any foreign adversary to misread what I'm saying."

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), a critic of heightened nuclear spending, said he's "very disappointed" but not shocked by where Biden landed on the issue.

"I understand the circumstances which he's in. He's got a war with Russia," Garamendi told POLITICO. "Do you think anybody in this House and the Senate is going to say we need less of anything? The answer's no."

"It's more of the same," Garamendi said. "And particularly more bombs, more delivery systems, more threat."

It's not the first time lawmakers have slugged it out over the sub-launched cruise missile. Democrats on the House Appropriations Committee pushed to defund the administration's \$15 million fiscal 2022 request for research and development efforts for the program, but a compromise funding package ultimately forked over the money.

Biden's previous nuclear weapons budget, submitted last spring before the Nuclear Posture Review was complete, was largely seen as a placeholder.

But "continuity" appears to be the name of the game headed into the fiscal 2023 budget debate. And division among lawmakers over the future of the sea-launched cruise missile is "a very manageable problem" for Congress, said Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.).

"Trump wanted to look tougher on defense so he threw in a couple things that looked a little tougher. Not really much," Cooper, who chairs the House Armed Services Strategic Forces panel, said in an interview. "And then Biden wants to look a little bit gentler on defense so he has to be a little bit gentler. But only a little bit. The real story is continuity."

"No one is talking about cutting off a leg of the triad. That would be a problem," Cooper said.

--Bryan Bender contributed to this report

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## **2. Air Force to issue GBSD re-entry vehicle contract to Lockheed Martin**

InsideDefense.com, Apr. 12 | Shelley K. Mesch

The Air Force plans to award Lockheed Martin a sole-source procurement to continue work on the re-entry vehicle for the Ground Based Strategic Defense system's nuclear warhead, according to a notice released Tuesday.

Under the contract, Lockheed Martin will advance to the engineering and manufacturing development and production and deployment phase of the Mk21A re-entry vehicle, a modification of the legacy Minuteman III's Mk21 that will carry the GBSD's new W87-1 warheads.

The Air Force completed a preliminary design review last March and did not find any additional risks, spokeswoman Leah Bryant told Inside Defense at the time.

The service plans to award a contract in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023, pending milestone B approval, Bryant said in an email to Inside Defense Tuesday. A request for proposals will likely be released several months prior, she said.

Lockheed is an expected pick for the deal since it is the only contractor maturing an Mk21A design. In October 2019, the company won a \$108 million technology-maturation and risk-reduction contract.

The program is on track to achieve initial operational capability in FY-30, Bryant said. A flight test is expected later this year, she said.

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## **3. DIA sees 'dramatic' change in space competition; China, Russia 'mature' capabilities**

***The bottom line, according to DIA is that space "is being increasingly militarized" around the globe, and the threats to US military and commercial space activities continue to grow, from ground-based ASAT tests, to ISR fleets, to deep space hiding places***

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 | Theresa Hitchens

WASHINGTON -- China and Russia continue to rapidly "mature" their counterspace capabilities, but they also have been modernizing their own space systems at a breathtaking pace since 2019 — in some part to reduce their reliance on US and other foreign providers, according to a new Defense Intelligence Agency analysis.

"It's not just the capability, it's the fact that ... they each have a Space Force," John Huth, DIA defense intelligence officer for space and counterspace, explained in a press briefing today. "And their intent is to make space part of that combined arms effort in any conflict."

Senior DIA space analyst Kevin Ryder added: "China and Russia value superiority in space and as a result, they'll seek ways to strengthen their space and counterspace programs and determine better ways to integrate them within their respective militaries," added

The report says that between 2019 and 2021 "the combined operational space fleets of China and Russia" have grown by approximately 70%, following a 200% increase between 2015 and 2019 across "nearly all major space categories."

"Since early 2019, competitor space operations have also increased in pace and scope worldwide, China's and Russia's counterspace developments continue to mature, global space services proliferate, and orbital congestion has increased," the report says.

The bottom line, according to DIA is that space "is being increasingly militarized" around the globe, and the threats to US military and commercial space activities continue to grow.

"The expansion of Chinese and Russian space and counterspace weapons combined with the general rise of other foreign space capabilities is driving many nations to formalize their space policies to better position themselves to secure the space domain and facilitate their own space services," the report says.

The report, "2022 Challenges to Security in Space," is the second unclassified space threat assessment released by DIA, following the original version in 2019. Aimed at the general public, the report combines a review of past developments based on open source information, as well as what might be characterized as informed speculation about future threats.

The second edition continues to focus on China and Russia, but like it's predecessor also looks briefly at counterspace activities by Iran and North Korea — as well as broader changes in the space environment, such as the proliferation of commercial capabilities and the upwards trend in space debris that could threaten US space assets.

"The second iteration addresses increases in the pace and scope of competitive space operations since early 2019, of which, you are about to hear, have been dramatic," Huth said.

In particular, the report says, China and Russia are "developing various means to exploit the perceived U.S. reliance on space-based systems and challenge the U.S. position in the space domain. Beijing and Moscow seek to position themselves as leading space powers, intent on creating new global space norms," the report says. "Through the use of space and counterspace capabilities, they aspire to undercut U.S. global leadership. Iran and North Korea will continue to develop and operate electronic warfare (EW) capabilities to deny or degrade space-based communications and navigation."

#### *China As An ISR Powerhouse; Details Of Orbital Weapons System Remain A Mystery*

As of January 2022, China's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) satellite fleet "contained more than 250 systems—a quantity second only to the United States," the report says. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) now owns/operates "about half of the world's ISR systems, most of which could support monitoring, tracking, and targeting

of U.S. and allied forces worldwide, especially throughout the Indo-Pacific region.” And Beijing continues to pursue improvements to these systems that “should increase China’s monitoring capabilities—including observation of U.S. aircraft carriers, expeditionary strike groups, and deployed air wings, making them more susceptible to long-range strikes. ... These capabilities are being augmented with electronic reconnaissance satellites that monitor radar and radio transmissions.”

As for counterspace weapons, DIA notes that while the PLA’s “operational ground-based ASAT missile system is intended to target” satellites in Low Earth Orbit (where many intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance birds operate), it also “probably intends” to pursue those that can reach both Medium Earth Orbit (the location of GPS satellites) and Geosynchronous Orbit where both US commercial and military satellite communications are stationed.

China has been researching space-based kinetic weapons since at least 2006, the report says, including testing for the first time on July 27, 2021 a “fractional orbital launch of an ICBM with a hypersonic glide vehicle.” That test “demonstrated the greatest distance flown (~40,000 kilometers) and longest flight time (~100+ minutes) of any Chinese land attack weapons system to date.”

Pressed for details on the capabilities of China’s fractional orbital bombardment system, the DIA officials refused to be drawn into details. “This is the first time we’ve seen this tested,” Ryder said. “So it’s a little early right now to be able to determine its full set of capabilities, and those that we have determined ... can’t be discussed in this forum.”

Beijing also considers space-related electronic warfare (EW) and offensive cyber capabilities as “critical” to modern warfare, the report says. “The PLA routinely incorporates in its exercises jamming and antijamming techniques that probably are intended to deny multiple types of space-based communications, radar systems, and GPS navigation support to military movement and precision-guided munitions employment.” It “probably” also is developing jammers specifically to target SATCOM and SAR — with the latter “very likely” aimed at protecting “terrestrial assets by denying imagery and targeting in any potential conflict involving the United States or its allies.”

The PLA further “has multiple ground-based laser weapons of varying power levels to disrupt, degrade, or damage satellites that include a current limited capability to employ laser systems against satellite sensors. By the mid- to late-2020s, China may field higher power systems that extend the threat to the structures of nonoptical satellites.”

#### *Russia, On A Tighter Budget, Bets On Counterspace Systems*

“Russia’s space program is robust but more narrowly focused than China’s. Additionally, Moscow’s budget is more limited than Beijing’s because of competing priorities within Russia’s broader military modernization efforts,” the report notes. Nonetheless, Moscow continues to pursue a range of counterspace systems.

“Russian counterspace doctrine involves employing ground-, air-, cyber-, and space-based systems to target an adversary’s satellites with attacks ranging from temporary jamming or sensor blinding to destruction of enemy spacecraft and supporting infrastructure,” the report finds.

Russia also “employs some of the world’s most capable individual ISR satellites,” including “more than 30 satellites providing electro-optical imagery, a new radar observation platform, missile warning, and electronic and signals intelligence” — half of which belong to the Russian Defense Ministry.

In addition, DIA says, “Russia has fielded a wide range of ground-based EW systems, including mobile systems, to counter GPS, tactical communications, SATCOM, and radars.” This is in accordance with Moscow’s belief that “the information sphere, especially space-enabled information collection and transmission” is “strategically decisive.” Thus, Russia is modernizing “its military’s information attack and defense organizations and capabilities” across the board.

“Russia probably will field lasers that are more capable of damaging satellites in the mid-to-late 2020s. By 2030, Russia may also field higher power systems that extend the threat to the structures of all satellites, not just electro-optical ISR,” the report adds.

DIA also pointed to a host of Russian ASAT testing — including the 2020 test of its Cosmos 2543 satellite that involved a high-speed projectile, and the infamous test last November of a ground-based ASAT missile that created a large debris field in LEO. The military “continues to research and develop sophisticated orbital capabilities that could serve dual-use purposes,” the report adds.

### *Deep Space Worries*

This edition of the DIA report includes a new spotlight on Chinese and Russian Moon and Mars exploration, and potential threats from the increased use of cislunar space for exploration and potential economic exploitation.

“Deep-space operations beyond Earth orbit, sometimes called xGEO, are focused on scientific missions and exploration of the Moon and other celestial bodies. Spacecraft in xGEO are much harder to track and characterize, and could threaten U.S. or allied high-value satellites. Adversaries could also place operational or reserve satellites in deep space so they are much harder to monitor for later use in lower orbits,” DIA states.

And the report assesses that if Russia and China are successful in their deep space activities, the report says, “these efforts will likely lead to attempts by Beijing and Moscow to exploit the moon’s natural resources.”

Asked for details by Breaking Defense, Ryder caveated that “what we’ve seen so far has been more civilian in nature. However, China emphasizes in their writings, civil military integration and dual use purpose space capabilities. So, while we do understand that right now it is civil in nature, we continue to monitor for any possibility of military activity.”

### *Crowded Near Space*

The report also widens its examination of threats from increasing congestion and pollution on orbit, the officials said.

“The collision risk is to all civilian, commercial, and government satellites of all nations. This adds to the difficulty of ensuring safe space operations and the overall stability of the space environment,” the report explains.

The report notes that the “primary risk” is “uncataloged lethal nontrackable debris (LNT), which are objects between 5 millimeters and 10 centimeters in size. An estimated 600,000 to 900,000 pieces of uncataloged LNT are in LEO.”

Further, the report finds that the likelihood of “collisions of massive derelict objects” in LEO also is growing “and almost certainly will continue through at least 2030 because of rising numbers of space launches — especially those with multiple payloads — and continuing fragmentation from collisions, battery explosions, and further ASAT testing events.”

### RELATED STORIES:

Bloomberg News: [China, Russia Seek Weapons to Hit U.S. Satellites, Pentagon Says](#)

Breaking Defense: [DIA sees ‘dramatic’ change in space competition; China, Russia ‘mature’ capabilities](#)

CQ Roll Call: [Chinese and Russian ambitions in space pose threat, Pentagon warns](#)

Defense One: [DIA Warns China's Space Tech Seeks to Block U.S. Radars, Jam Munitions](#)

Inside Defense: [DIA: U.S. adversaries' space capabilities are expanding](#)

Washington Examiner: [Russia and China look to militarize and dominate space: US intelligence report](#)

Washington Times: [China's orbiting hypersonic missile part of growing space-based arsenal, DIA warns](#)

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## **RUSSIA**

### **4. Putin Says Peace Talks Reach 'Dead End,' Vows to Fight On**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13, Pg. A1 | Evan Gershkovich, Thomas Grove and Brett Forrest

President Vladimir Putin of Russia said peace talks with Kyiv had reached a "dead end," as Moscow's forces on Tuesday bombarded Ukrainian military positions and residential areas in the country's east and unleashed new rocket attacks.

In his first extended comments on the war since last month, Mr. Putin said that without an agreement acceptable to the Kremlin, Russian forces would continue their offensive.

Mr. Putin said that peace talks had stalled after what he called a "fake" situation in Bucha, a town outside of Kyiv where Ukrainian officials reported the discovery of several hundred dead civilians this month after Russian troops retreated.

Ukrainian and Western officials are pursuing investigations into potential war crimes committed there and in other formerly Russian-held towns in northern Ukraine before Moscow's withdrawal at the end of March.

President Biden said Tuesday that Mr. Putin's actions in Ukraine amounted to "genocide," marking the first time his administration has used the term. Later, Mr. Biden said it would be up to legal experts to determine whether the term formally applies to Russian actions. "But it sure seems that way to me," Mr. Biden said.

Mr. Biden, a Democrat, is expected to make public as early as Wednesday an additional \$750 million in military and other support for Ukraine, which would bring U.S. aid to more than \$2 billion since Russia's invasion of the country, according to senior U.S. defense officials. The new package would include Mi-17 helicopters and sea drones that Ukrainian officials said they need to defend against the Russian forces.

Officials said details of the package were still under discussion and some elements might not be included in this round.

Meanwhile, Mr. Putin said Ukrainian negotiators had "deviated from agreements" reached in Istanbul. Kyiv had presented last month its proposal for a neutral status and international security guarantees, but the sides haven't moved closer toward a potential cease-fire.

"We have again returned to a dead-end situation," Mr. Putin said. "Inconsistency about essential matters has been creating well-known difficulties in achieving final agreements on the negotiating track which would be acceptable to us. Unless that happens, the military operation will continue until it concludes and the objectives set at the beginning of this operation are achieved."

Mr. Putin said the main goal of the offensive was "to help people in Donbas," in another sign that his forces would launch an assault on the eastern region. He said that "there is no doubt" the goal will be achieved, speaking during a visit to the Vostochny Cosmodrome, a Russian spaceport in the country's Far East, along with his Belarusian counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said fighting was continuing in Ukraine's south near the cities of Kherson and Mykolaiv and that Russia is continuing to emphasize Donbas in a shifting war effort. British intelligence said Russia would continue to redeploy its troops from Belarus to the Ukrainian east and likely try to take the eastern city of Kramatorsk, the site of a deadly missile attack last week.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Tuesday that high-precision air- and sea-based missiles destroyed an ammunition depot and a hangar with Ukrainian aircraft at the Starokostiantyniv military airfield in the western Khmelnytskyi region, as well as an ammunition depot near Havrylivka in the Kyiv region. He said that Russian strikes had targeted Ukrainian positions in Donbas, claiming they had destroyed six strongholds of Ukraine's 24th Separate Mechanized Brigade.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russians were boosting air-defense capabilities near Melitopol and Ilovaik and added that Ukrainian forces had repulsed six enemy attacks in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, destroying four Russian tanks and eight artillery systems. The Ukrainian air force said it had downed a Russian plane, two helicopters and four drones.

Ukraine's domestic intelligence agency, meanwhile, said it had detained Viktor Medvedchuk, a Ukrainian ally of Mr. Putin, who had been on the run. Mr. Medvedchuk, who headed a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine that authorities shuttered last month, has long had a close relationship with Mr. Putin, who is the godfather of one of Mr. Medvedchuk's children.

The agency posted on Tuesday a picture of Mr. Medvedchuk in handcuffs and wearing military fatigues on its Telegram channel, saying: "No traitor will escape punishment and will be held accountable under Ukrainian law."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that he couldn't confirm Mr. Medvedchuk's detention, in remarks carried by the Interfax news agency.

Ukrainian authorities are investigating allegations by Ukrainian forces that they came under a Russian chemical attack in Mariupol, where Russia is still fighting to consolidate gains. Moscow sees the city as crucial to its efforts in taking over eastern Ukraine and pushing westward.

The Ukrainian unit deployed in Mariupol, the Azov regiment, said Russian forces dropped an unknown chemical substance from a drone, causing respiratory and nervous-system symptoms among its troops and civilians. No independent evidence of the attack has emerged from Mariupol.

The Russian government hasn't commented about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Mariupol. In Washington, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the White House couldn't confirm the allegations and was continuing to gather information.

Railway connections were disrupted in the town of Shebekino in Russia's Belgorod region, near the Ukrainian border northeast of Kharkiv, the regional governor told Russia's RIA news agency. There were no casualties, he said, and the cause of the disruption was being investigated.

Russia heavily uses the railways to reinforce and resupply its troops preparing the Donbas offensive, and Shebekino is on one of its main rail links to the area. Russia said last month that two Ukrainian helicopters launched an airstrike on a fuel depot in Belgorod, a claim Kyiv didn't confirm or deny.

*--Mauro Orru and Matthew Walls contributed to this article*

RELATED STORY:

New York Times: [Putin Calls Talks a 'Dead End' but Limits War Aim to Eastern Ukraine](#)

## 5. **Biden calls Russia's war in Ukraine 'genocide'**

Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A2 | Tyler Pager

DES MOINES -- President Biden on Tuesday referred to Russia as committing "genocide" in Ukraine, a significant escalation of the president's rhetoric and a notable shift that comes as U.S. officials have avoided using the term, which suggests an effort to wipe out all or part of a specific group.

Biden's initial comment came at an event in Menlo, Iowa, where Biden was decrying the effects of Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine on the higher prices Americans are paying for gas and food.

"Your family budget, your ability to fill up your tank, none of it should hinge on whether a dictator declares war and commits genocide a half a world away," Biden said.

He later told reporters he intentionally used the word genocide in his speech, though he added that he would "let the lawyers decide internationally whether or not it qualifies." But he said, "It sure seems that way to me."

The United Nations defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

Biden suggested that is exactly what Russia is doing as it commits atrocities in Ukraine, including what evidence suggests was a slaughter of unarmed civilians in the town of Bucha. The president described Russia's actions as going far beyond a military campaign against an adversary, saying it is rather an organized effort to erase Ukraine's identity as an independent nation.

"It's become clearer and clearer that Putin is trying to wipe out the idea of being Ukrainian," Biden said. "The evidence is mounting. It looks different than last week. More evidence is coming out literally of the horrible things that the Russians have done in Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has repeatedly decried Moscow's actions against his country and appealed for international help, praised Biden's comments, saying they were the "true words of a true leader."

"Calling things by their names is essential to stand up to evil," Zelensky wrote on Twitter. "We are grateful for US assistance provided so far and we urgently need more heavy weapons to prevent further Russian atrocities."

By contrast, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, had both stopped short of describing Russia's assault as a genocide in recent days. No official agency of the United States has made a determination that Russia's brutalities qualify as a genocide.

"Based on what we have seen so far, we have seen atrocities," Sullivan said last week. "We have seen war crimes. We have not seen a level of systematic deprivation of life of the Ukrainian people to rise to the level of genocide."

Biden's comments Tuesday are the latest example of the president seemingly getting ahead of his own White House in condemning Putin and the war in Ukraine. He often appears torn between his desire to denounce the brutal onslaught and the fact that certain terms have legal definitions that can trigger specific actions.

In mid-March, he called Putin a "war criminal" after weeks of avoiding the term, and at a time when his administration was still determining whether that label officially applied. Since then, administration officials have become more open about calling the atrocities in Ukraine war crimes.

Then, during a trip to Warsaw to bolster the NATO alliance, Biden ad-libbed at the end of a speech and seemingly called for a regime change in Russia, a notion that was and is not the policy of the U.S. government.

"For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," Biden said. The White House quickly cleaned up the comments and Biden later said he was not "articulating a policy change" but rather expressing his "moral outrage" at Putin's actions.

The term "genocide" was first used by the Polish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin in 1944 to describe the Nazi effort to eradicate the Jews during the Holocaust, and was codified as an international crime in the Genocide Convention of 1948. Russia is among the roughly 150 parties to the convention, which seeks to prevent and punish genocide.

A perpetrator's intent in carrying out killings can be the hardest element to prove, international law experts say, since there can be many reasons to commit violence against members of a group without the goal of eradicating it. Massacres in Cambodia in the 1970s, in Rwanda in 1994 and in Bosnia in the 1990s are among the outbreaks of killing since World War II that have been considered genocides.

Under the United Nations definition, a genocide can be accomplished by anything from killing members of the group directly to inflicting unbearable conditions on them to forcibly transferring their children.

Some analysts have pointed to comments like those published by the Russian state-run news agency RIA-Novosti as potential evidence of Russia's intent. One recent article, as reported in the Guardian, declared that "Ukrainianism is an artificial anti-Russian construct that has no civilizational substance of its own, a subordinate element of an extraneous and alien civilization." It said the name "Ukraine" should be abolished.

Russian forces have dramatically escalated the brutality of their attacks in Ukraine in recent weeks, with the scale of killings and depravity becoming clear in places like Bucha, near the capital, Kyiv. Investigators there have uncovered evidence of torture before death, beheading and dismemberment, and the intentional burning of corpses. Mass graves have been discovered.

Ukraine is also bracing for Russia to launch a new offensive in the eastern part of the country amid fresh concerns about Moscow launching a chemical weapons attack, something that is also prohibited by an international convention that Russia has signed. The Chemical Weapons Convention is enforced by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, an international body based in The Hague.

Putin said Tuesday that his invasion of Ukraine is going as planned and vowed to continue the war. In a rare news conference, the Russian leader said he had "no choice" but to invade Ukraine, and he added that negotiations with the country - which some participants had described not long ago as making progress - had reached an "impasse."

Biden's comments Tuesday were unexpected not only because his administration has carefully avoided calling the Ukraine war a genocide, but also because his speech was on an entirely different topic. The president, appearing in Iowa, was discussing his plans to keep gas prices down.

He has increasingly taken to calling the current price surge "Putin's Price Hike," and it was in that context that he describe the Russian president's actions as a genocide.

Meanwhile, Biden is working to keep the pressure on Russia and to keep the Western alliance unified.

The United States is expected to significantly expand its military assistance to Ukraine with a new aid package that could be worth \$750 million, U.S. officials said Tuesday. The Pentagon is planning to send armored Humvees, Mi-17 helicopters that can be equipped to attack Russian vehicles, armored Humvees and a range of other equipment.

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## **6. Pentagon looks to vastly expand weapons provided to Ukraine**

Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A17 | Dan Lamothe and Karoun Demirjian

The Biden administration is poised to dramatically expand the scope of weapons it is providing Ukraine, U.S. officials said Tuesday, with the Pentagon looking to transfer armored Humvees and a range of other sophisticated equipment.

The new aid package could be worth \$750 million, these people said. Like others, they spoke on the condition of anonymity because the transfer has not yet been finalized.

Preliminary plans circulating among government officials and lawmakers in Washington also included Mi-17 helicopters, howitzer cannons, coastal defense drones and protective suits to safeguard personnel in the event of a chemical, biological or nuclear attack, the officials said, though they cautioned that it was not immediately clear if all of those items would end up in the final aid package.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declined to comment. On Tuesday night, after this article was published online, another U.S. defense official said the Russian-made helicopters would not be included.

The prospective new delivery, first reported by Reuters, comes on top of the more than \$2.4 billion in U.S. security assistance provided to Ukraine since President Biden took office last year, including \$1.7 billion in aid since Russia launched its invasion Feb. 24.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his administration have pleaded for more sophisticated weapons to counter the Russian military's technological advantages. Ukraine's military has defied initial expectations and mounted a ferocious resistance, having already staved off a bloody, weeks-long assault on the capital, Kyiv, that was aimed at toppling Zelensky's administration. As a result, Russia has shifted its objectives, consolidating its assault on key cities in the south and in the east.

Ukrainian defense minister Oleksii Reznikov spoke with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday, Kirby told reporters during a news briefing at the Pentagon. The discussion was part of a "constant dialogue and conversation" between the two officials and focused in part on the weapons and other assistance being provided to Ukraine. Additional details were not disclosed, but Reznikov wrote on Twitter earlier this week that Ukraine is seeking additional unmanned aircraft, air-defense systems, artillery, armored vehicles, combat aircraft and anti-ship missiles.

Some of the weapons expected in the next package are new to Ukrainian troops and would probably require training before they can be used in combat. A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon, told reporters Tuesday that the Biden administration is open to doing so if it fills specific needs for Ukraine.

The United States and its allies have been rushing arms to Ukraine for weeks, with the United States alone sending eight to 10 flights of military assistance into neighboring countries every day, the senior U.S. defense official said. Those deliveries then are moved via ground convoy into Ukraine, which determines how and where the gear gets distributed.

As of Tuesday, the Pentagon was close to completing delivery of the last items in an \$800 million security assistance package approved by Biden on March 16 and a \$100 million set of shipments approved last week, the senior defense official said. The larger package included Switchblade drones that can be armed with explosives and flown into targets, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, and anti-armor weapons including Javelin missiles. The package approved last week included additional Javelins, after a request from Ukraine as it prepares for a renewed Russian offensive in the east.

"These items are not sitting around very long," the senior defense official said. "Once they get into the transshipment sites, they are palletized and put on trucks, those trucks are picked up by Ukrainian armed forces and taken into Ukraine."

Ukrainian officials also have begun to meet with U.S. defense firms to see how else they might be able to improve their defenses. In one recent example, the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, met last week with representatives from General Atomics, the maker of Reaper and Predator drones, said C. Mark Brinkley, a company spokesman.

Brinkley said Tuesday the company is "currently exploring options" for supporting Ukraine, something that would require U.S. government approval.

"We have aircraft available now for immediate transfer," Brinkley said. "With support from the U.S. government, those aircraft could be in the hands of Ukrainian military pilots in a matter of days."

Such a transfer, Brinkley said, would expand Ukraine's ability to conduct aerial surveillance of the battlefield and provide "highly lethal strike capabilities not afforded" by smaller unmanned aircraft. Ukrainian pilots already familiar with drone operations would not be "starting from scratch" in learning how to fly them, he said.

In a statement, Markarova acknowledged Tuesday night that she met with General Atomics representatives.

"Together with our team, we discussed with General Atomics the prospects of increasing the capacity of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the current situation in Ukraine," she said.

When asked what hardware she requested of the company, Markarova's spokeswoman declined to specify, saying Ukraine would prefer to "surprise Russia on the battlefield."

General Atomics supplies the U.S. Air Force with the Reaper and the U.S. Army with the Gray Eagle, an upgraded version of the Predator that was used widely by the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

*--John Hudson contributed to this report*

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Reuters: [U.S. to announce \\$750 million more in weapons for Ukraine, officials say](#)

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### **7. U.S. cannot confirm use of chemical weapons in Ukraine, Blinken says**

Reuters, Apr. 12 | Idrees Ali, Humeyra Pamuk, Daphne Psaledakis and Ismail Shakil

WASHINGTON -- The United States is not in position to confirm reports of the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine but was working to determine what actually happened, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

Ukraine said earlier it was checking unverified information that Russia may have used chemical weapons while besieging the city of Mariupol.

"We're in direct conversation with partners to try to determine what actually has happened," Blinken told reporters, adding that it had been a focus of concern even before Russia moved its troops into Ukraine.

A senior U.S. defense official on Tuesday said much the same thing about Mariupol, adding that the United States had no information to support the movement of chemical agents by Russia in or near Ukraine.

U.S. President Joe Biden last month said Russia's unsubstantiated accusations that Kyiv had biological and chemical weapons suggested Russian President Vladimir Putin may be laying the groundwork to use them.

Chemical weapons production, use and stockpiling is banned under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. Although condemned by human rights groups, white phosphorous is not banned under the convention.

Russia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Russian-backed separatist forces in the east denied using chemical weapons in Mariupol, the Interfax news agency reported.

"There is a theory that these could be phosphorous munitions," Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar said on Tuesday.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands and displaced millions.

Moscow calls its actions a "special operation" to destroy Ukraine's military capabilities and capture what it views as dangerous nationalists, but Ukraine and the West say Russia launched an unprovoked war of aggression.

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## **8. More than 1,000 Ukraine marines surrender in key port of Mariupol, says Russia**

Reuters, Apr. 13 | Not Attributed

LVIV, Ukraine -- More than 1,000 Ukrainian marines have surrendered in the besieged port of Mariupol, Russia's defence ministry said on Wednesday of Moscow's main target in the eastern Donbas region which it has yet to bring under its control.

If the Russians take the Azovstal industrial district, where the marines have been holed up, they would be in full control of Mariupol, which would allow Russia to reinforce a land corridor between separatist-held eastern areas and the Crimea region that it seized and annexed in 2014.

Surrounded by Russian troops for weeks, Mariupol would be the first major city to fall since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, with the battle for the industrial heartland of Donbas likely to define the course of the war.

Ukraine's general staff said that Russian forces were proceeding with attacks on Azovstal and the port, but a defence ministry spokesman said he had no information about any surrender.

Reuters journalists accompanying Russian-backed separatists saw flames billowing from the Azovstal district on Tuesday.

On Monday, the 36th Marine Brigade said it was preparing for a final battle in Mariupol that would end in death or capture as its troops had run out of ammunition.

Thousands of people are believed to have been killed in Mariupol and Russia has been massing thousands of troops in the area for a new assault, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said.

Ukraine says tens of thousands of civilians have been trapped inside the city with no way to bring in food or water, and accuses Russia of blocking aid convoys.

Russia's defence ministry said that 1,026 soldiers of Ukraine's 36th Marine Brigade surrendered, including 162 officers.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS WARNING

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, an ardent supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin, urged remaining Ukrainians holed up in Azovstal to surrender.

"Within Azovstal at the moment there are about 200 wounded who cannot receive any medical assistance," Kadyrov said in a Telegram post. "For them and all the rest it would be better to end this pointless resistance and go home to their families."

Russian television showed pictures of what it said were marines giving themselves up at Illich Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol on Tuesday, many of them wounded.

It showed what it said were Ukrainian soldiers being marched down a road with their hands in the air. One of the soldiers was shown holding a Ukrainian passport.

Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar has said there was a high risk of Russia using chemical weapons, echoing earlier warnings by Zelenskiy, who on Wednesday told the Estonian parliament by videolink Russia was using phosphorus bombs to terrorise civilians.

He did not provide evidence and Reuters has not been able to independently verify his assertion.

Chemical weapons production, use and stockpiling is banned under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. Although condemned by human rights groups, white phosphorous is not banned.

Russia denies using chemical weapons, saying it had destroyed its last chemical stockpiles in 2017.

Moscow's incursion into Ukraine, the biggest attack on a European state since 1945, has seen more than 4.6 million people flee abroad, killed or wounded thousands and left Russia increasingly isolated on the world stage.

The Ukrainian prosecutor general's office said 191 children had been killed and 349 wounded since the start of the invasion.

The Kremlin says it launched a "special military operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" Ukraine. Kyiv and its Western allies reject that as a false pretext for an unprovoked attack.

#### FOUR PRESIDENTS VISITING KYIV

The presidents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were on their way to Kyiv to meet Zelenskiy, an adviser to the Polish leader said on Wednesday.

The four join a growing number of European politicians to visit the Ukrainian capital since Russian forces were driven away from the country's north earlier this month.

U.S. President Joe Biden said for the first time that Moscow's invasion of Ukraine amounted to genocide, as Putin said Russia would "rhythmically and calmly" continue its operation and achieve its goals.

Russia has denied targeting civilians and has said Ukrainian and Western allegations of war crimes are fabricated.

Many towns Russia has retreated from in northern Ukraine were littered with the bodies of civilians killed in what Kyiv says was a campaign of murder, torture and rape.

Interfax Ukraine news agency on Wednesday quoted the Kyiv district police chief saying 720 bodies had been found in the region around the capital, with more than 200 people missing.

The General Headquarters of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Russian forces were maintaining attacks on civilian infrastructure in the Kharkiv region in the northeast and the Zaporizhzhia region in central Ukraine.

At least seven people were killed and 22 wounded in Kharkiv over the past 24 hours, Governor Oleh Synegubov said. A 2-year-old boy was among those killed in the 53 artillery or rocket strikes Russian forces had carried out in the region, he said in an online post.

Reuters could not independently verify the information.

Russia denies targeting civilians. Putin on Tuesday used his first public comments on the conflict in more than a week to say Russia would "rhythmically and calmly" continue its operation, and expressed confidence his goals would be achieved.

Zelenskiy mocked Putin in an early morning address: "How could a plan that provides for the death of tens of thousands of their own soldiers in a little more than a month of war come about?"

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## **9. Putin Vows Return to Moon, Despite Sanctions**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13, Pg. A7 | Mauro Orru

Russia will resume its moon-exploration program, President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday, paving the way for a new space race as international space cooperation comes under strain following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East to commemorate Yury Gagarin's orbiting of the Earth in 1961, Mr. Putin said Russia would resume its lunar program through the launch of its Luna-25 moon probe from the spaceport this year.

"Despite difficulties and attempts to hinder us in this direction from the outside, we will consistently and persistently move ahead with the plans," said Mr. Putin, as cited by Russian state media.

Russia's last lunar mission, Luna-24, dates back to 1976 in what was the third mission from the Soviet Union to bring lunar soil samples to Earth.

Mr. Putin said Russia would continue to develop a new-generation transport vehicle, as well as nuclear space-energy technologies, where Russia has a "clear advantage," but didn't elaborate. He said Russia would significantly expand its constellation of satellites.

The U.S. and Russia have cooperated in space for nearly five decades. The countries' joint habitation of the International Space Station began in November 2000.

Since the U.S. retired its space shuttle fleet in 2011, American astronauts have repeatedly traveled to the space station aboard Russian rockets. Those flights have diminished recently following the success of Elon Musk's private SpaceX in developing launchers that can take astronauts into orbit and dock with the space station.

Now Russia's invasion of Ukraine has threatened international space cooperation. Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, cast doubt on its future involvement in the ISS and said it was halting deliveries of rocket engines to the U.S.

The European Space Agency recently suspended cooperation with Russia on the planned ExoMars rover mission to hunt for signs of life on the red planet, citing the invasion of Ukraine. ESA said it would assess options for a way forward for the mission.

Roscosmos Director-General Dmitry Rogozin recently said that only the full lifting of sanctions would restore normal working relations with other space agencies, an unlikely development as Russia continued to pour reinforcements into eastern Ukraine over the weekend, preparing for what are likely to become the war's biggest battles.

Mr. Putin brushed off the impact of international sanctions on Russia's space program, saying that Gagarin's flight took place while the Soviet Union was in isolation.

"We have done everything in complete technological isolation, and we have achieved such tremendous success," he said.

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## **CHINA**

### **10. China's military has US aircraft carriers in its sights, but those flattops aren't 'little teacups,' their captains say**

BusinessInsider.com, Apr. 12 | Christopher Woody

In March 1922, the US Navy's first aircraft carrier, the USS Langley, entered service. A century later, some are questioning whether carriers can survive in the wars of the future.

The development of increasingly sophisticated anti-ship weapons by capable adversaries, namely Russia and China, has raised doubts about those ships.

The captains of two of those carriers discounted the concern, saying the US Navy's 11 flattops would be tough to find and hard to stop.

Questions about whether carriers are "obsolete" have come up before, including when Congress was debating whether to build the USS Enterprise, the Navy's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in the late 1950s, Capt. Paul Campagna, the commanding officer of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, said.

"I think the aircraft carrier has shown itself to be very enduring. For anyone that's worried about the modern threat that's out there, I'll just say that the carrier is not on an island," Campagna said on April 5 at the Sea Air Space conference in National Harbor, Maryland.

"It deploys with the air wing. It deploys with the strike group. It deploys with a layered defense that goes from the bottom of the ocean and out to space, and anyone who thinks that we're fragile, little teacups out there or something like that is grossly mistaken," Campagna added.

The doubts about the carrier's future are driven in large part by China's military modernization, which has produced a variety of long-range weapons and more capable aircraft, ships, and submarines to launch them.

China's anti-ship missiles are the major concern, especially the DF-21D and DF-26B ballistic missiles, which are designed for naval targets and sometimes called "carrier killers."

The DF-21D was introduced in the mid-2000s, and the DF-26 was first seen in public in 2015. They have long been considered threats to US ships and bases.

China has built targets shaped like US aircraft carriers and destroyers, and hawkish Chinese officials have advocated using those missiles against the real things.

It is unacceptable to continue this status quo, despite dramatically more dangerous conditions. We did not choose this fight, but we must respond to the conditions set forth by our adversaries.

*--Retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Kevin Chilton is the Explorer Chair for Space Warfighting Studies at the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. He previously led U.S. Strategic Command and Air Force Space Command, and was a NASA astronaut*

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#### **24. Putin is holding GPS hostage – Here's how to get it back**

C4ISRNET.com, Apr. 12 | Dana A. Goward and Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA)

*"GPS is an enormous bargaining chip for Vladimir Putin" – George Beebe, former Chief Russia Analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency*

On November 15, 2021 a missile streaked into space from Russia, destroying a retired Russian satellite. The remnant debris endangered other satellites and the International Space Station crew that included Russian cosmonauts.

Russia's anti-satellite test was meant as a clear message to the U.S.; Russia can destroy American satellites. Two weeks later a Russian news media personality bragged that Russia could bring down all 32 GPS satellites, a move that would affect nearly every facet of American life. The demonstration and subsequent threat would become a prelude to Russia's next major act.

As Russia shot down a satellite, they were also massing troops at their border with Ukraine. When they invaded in February, the threat to American satellites became a particularly ominous deterrent to U.S. support for Ukraine.

U.S. critical infrastructure relies on precise timing and navigation signals from GPS satellites. A member of the National Security Council acknowledged this at a December public meeting saying "GPS is still a single point of failure" for America.

If GPS signals suddenly disappeared, transportation systems would immediately suffer. Everything would slow down, carry less capacity and be more dangerous. Air travel would be less efficient and safe. Delivery services would be hamstrung. Uber and Lyft would be out of business.

Other critical systems would follow over subsequent days. Cellphone towers and internet switches would lose synchronization. Banks could not timestamp transactions. Control systems for electrical grids, sewer and water systems, and many industrial applications would fail or revert to inefficient manual operations.

Putin would not even need not go through the trouble of shooting down satellites and risking all-out war. He could do it with the flip of a switch.

Russia excels at cyber and electronic warfare. Its experts have boasted their abilities could "make aircraft carriers useless." Russian forces regularly jam GPS and other satellite signals in various parts of the world. They also have perfected "spoofing," a technique which sends false signals to make GPS users think they are someplace they are not.

Russian capabilities also reportedly extend into space with nuclear powered electronic warfare satellites. These could jam GPS signals across the face of the planet.

A cyber or jamming attack would have clear advantages over destroying satellites. Cyber-attacks are often difficult to attribute and would be less likely to prompt a shooting war. Putin also would have the flexibility to undo things if they started to get out of hand, or once he got what he wanted.

Just the threat of interfering with GPS can help Putin keep the U.S. at bay.

Unlike Russia, China, and some other countries, the U.S. does not have a terrestrial system to fall back on when essential timing and navigation signals from space are not available.

We had such a system, but instead of security and resiliency, bureaucrats saw unneeded duplication with GPS and it was shutdown. And notwithstanding promises in 2008 and 2015 to establish a land-based backup for GPS, and a 2018 law requiring one to be in operation by the end of 2020, nothing has been done.

GPS is an enormous bargaining chip for Putin, and enables him to impose his own crippling economic and political sanctions on the U.S. at any time.

A GPS outage would have immediate and severe impacts to our economy. Impacts that will grow with time and create huge domestic problems while hindering our ability to act against Russian aggression.

Even a couple hours' disruption would severely undermine public confidence in the government. It will create long lasting political problems and weaken our nation's position on the world stage for decades.

Putin's November anti-satellite test added another consideration and constraint to America's on-going geopolitical calculus.

Yet this is a conundrum of our own making; it is the result of failing to invest in resilient systems despite knowing the potential devastating results.

Establishing one or more widely available alternatives for GPS will help solve this issue, and in the words of a former Obama era official, "take the bullseye off of GPS." It will eliminate a "single point of failure," and make GPS safer by reducing its attractiveness as a target.

Government agencies have identified readily available technologies and services needed to make GPS, and thus America, more secure. The projected annual price tag is a small fraction of the \$1.5B spent on GPS each year, and something that could easily be funded by the recently enacted Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework.

America prides itself on being a nation of laws. The administration must follow the law, implement a GPS backup as soon as possible, and rescue our hostage GPS from Putin.

*--Hon. John Garamendi (D-CA) represents California's 3rd Congressional District and chairs the House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee; Mr. Dana A. Goward is President of the non-profit Resilient Navigation and Timing Foundation. He retired from the federal Senior Executive Service, is a retired U.S. Coast Guard Captain and serves on the President's Space-based Positioning, Navigation, and Timing Advisory Board*

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## **25. If Ukraine falls, Putin could take aim at the Baltics next**

Washington Post, Apr. 13, Pg. A21 | Michael Gerson

I was with President George W. Bush when he visited Lithuania in 2002, just after the Baltic states had been offered membership in NATO. Bush had been one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in the alliance, which would establish the obligation of mutual defense.

At the celebration ceremony, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus presented Bush with the Cross of the Order of Vytautas the Great, his country's highest honor. Bush presented Adamkus with a basketball signed by Michael Jordan, revealing a different set of cultural priorities. But Bush's speech that day (which I helped produce) highlighted a greater gift: "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy," he said, "has also made an enemy of the United

States of America. In the face of aggression, the brave people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will never again stand alone."

You could almost hear three nations exhale in relief. The Baltics have the misfortune of sitting at a bloody geopolitical crossroads, and their last two occupations were particularly horrifying. Nazi German "killing units" murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews. The Soviet Union deported half a million Baltic citizens to gulags or Siberia. The Soviets also imported ethnic Russians to change the ethnic composition of these conquered nations.

The United States never recognized Soviet Russia's illegal occupation of the Baltics. But its and NATO's commitment to prevent any future occupation engendered some controversy. Experts such as George Kennan thought that NATO membership for a former constitutive republic of the U.S.S.R. would needlessly provoke the Russians. And some military observers found the actual NATO defense of the Baltics - on Russia's border and far from NATO's centers of military power - to be a near impossibility.

The argument over the NATO-ization of the Baltics was a prelude to disputes over Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions in Ukraine and beyond. Some experts bluntly explain - as did the title of a 2014 article by the University of Chicago political scientist John J. Mearsheimer - "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault." Mearsheimer contended that Russian leaders "would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion."

In this view, Putin is primarily the defender of the Russian homeland. His soldiers might have the moral restraint of drunken Cossacks, but he is resisting the hubristic expansion of a hostile military alliance.

This conviction, no doubt, is widely shared among Russians, and easily exploitable by their leader. Putin has portrayed his unprovoked attack on Ukraine as another reaction to fascist aggression from the West. His deception runs along well-worn historical grooves. Over the centuries, Russia has faced invasions from across the vast, flat plain reaching from Germany to the heart of Mother Russia. For many older Russians, memories of World War II consist mainly of Western perfidy and Russian indomitability.

Putin has written almost lyrically about the spiritual unity between Kyiv and Moscow. Evidently he bombs only the ones he loves. But his intentions are far more practical. The Putin-NATO divide might not rise to the level of ideological conflict, but it does involve a serious argument about the future of Europe.

Most recent U.S. presidents have maintained that NATO expansion is the natural outcome of a rules-based international order. European countries that meet defined standards on good governance, economic freedom and civilian control of the military can be admitted. This has helped consolidate several democratic transitions in Eastern Europe. It has also helped rectify the terrible wrong of the Yalta agreements, which formally cut Europe into areas of dominance and threw a number of vulnerable nations to the wolves.

Putin's contrasting goal, says former U.S. ambassador to NATO and Russia Alexander Vershbow, is "to pressure the West into accepting some sort of Yalta 2, a Europe divided into spheres of influence with limited sovereignty for everyone but Russia." This would allow him to restore Russian hegemony over its "near abroad."

Why is this conflict between rules and spheres so important? If Putin is engaged in a defensive struggle, then the Ukraine war is mainly about Ukraine. Some will propose that President Volodymyr Zelensky make the necessary concessions - no Ukrainian NATO membership, Russian control of the Donbas region - to end a bloody war. Peace through self-dismemberment.

But if Putin is attempting to reconstruct the Russian sphere of influence in Europe, his success in Ukraine would pave the way for future horrors. The logic that led to Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine - no NATO in the Russian sphere - would almost certainly lead toward the Baltics.

The lesson? Ukraine, with aggressive help from NATO, must defeat Russian forces, or the United States might soon face the question: Do we really fight for Lithuania? Though we are obligated, the decision and task would not be easy. Helping draw a NATO redline at Ukraine could help the United States preserve itself from impossible choices of the future.

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## **26. Consequences of Biden's Iran deal will be dangerously worse for the world**

### ***Administration should use the lull in negotiations to reconsider the flawed pact***

Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 | James Jay Carafano and Adam Milstein

Negotiations over a new nuclear deal with Iran have stalled. For now. But the talks are expected to resume. Policymakers would be wise to use this lull to take a sober look at the draft deal. They should pay particularly close attention to the dangerous regional consequences that would arise from another flawed deal with Iran.

As matters stand now, the new deal would be even worse than the original. Instead of the “stronger and longer” agreement we’d been promised, the deal now on the table is weaker and will shorten the time for Iran to become a nuclear power. Rather than prevent Iran from getting the bomb, it would pave the way for Tehran to become nuclear and empower its “sanction-free” global terroristic arm – the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The most likely outcome of these developments would be a devastating regional war between Israel and Iran, as Tel Aviv tries to prevent Tehran from achieving its stated goal of wiping Israel from the earth. This war would inevitably expand, with Iran attacking Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Even if there is no immediate war, it is only logical that Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt would think it necessary to acquire nuclear arsenals to deter Iran — a dangerous situation that could also lead to a nuclear war.

Let’s consider the rosiest of scenarios with no war or nuclear proliferation. The deal would still release billions of dollars of frozen Iranian funds and lift the current sanctions against the regime. This will empower and embolden Iran’s Islamist dictatorship, just as it did after the original 2015 nuclear deal.

That agreement gave Tehran a windfall, which the regime promptly used to accelerate its uranium enrichment and ballistic missile program. Those funds also enabled the IRGC to escalate its military intervention in Syria and ramp up the transfer of advanced drones and missiles to a lethal network of proxy terror groups: Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Iraqi militias and the Houthi militants in Yemen. These anti-Western terrorist groups target civilians in Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Make no mistake. The Iranian regime remains as staunchly anti-American as ever.

While Iranian diplomats have been engaged in nuclear talks in Vienna, Tehran has orchestrated a series of proxy attacks against U.S. forces in the region and Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

These attacks will likely increase after a new Iran deal. U.S. concessions on sanctions would subsidize Iran’s continuing military buildup, proxy terrorist network, internal repression and nuclear program.

Furthermore, the new Iran deal will strengthen Russian President Vladimir Putin, empower the economic and military alliance between Russia and Iran, and open up more ways for Russia to circumvent the U.S. and European sanctions imposed due to its invasion of Ukraine.

There is also the unsettling probability that the Biden administration will make the same mistake that the Obama administration made: Fail to adequately push back against Iran’s destabilizing regional behavior after a nuclear agreement, however flawed, is reached.

Fearful of jeopardizing what it mistakenly considers a legacy achievement, the Biden administration may be even more inclined than it is now to treat Iran with kid gloves.

This complacent passivity will project weakness that could further encourage Iranian hardliners, undermine longstanding U.S. national interests, and demoralize U.S. allies in the region threatened by Iran's aggressive regime and feel betrayed by the Biden administration.

Even worse, Russia and China would be two of the biggest beneficiaries of the deal outside of Iran. Moscow, which already has earned billions of dollars building Iran's nuclear reactors, hopes to sell arms to Tehran for billions more. China, which signed a 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership agreement with Tehran last year, will gain increased trade, easier access to a major source of oil imports, and a reinvigorated ally in a critical region.

What's the alternative? The Biden administration needs to think outside the box. The U.S. cannot afford a prohibitively heavy price for a flawed nonproliferation agreement that amounts to little more than a diplomatic speed bump.

Instead, the U.S. should make every effort to deprive the Iranian regime and its terroristic arm of resources that can be used to advance its odious agenda. Simultaneously, Washington should support and encourage Israeli-Arab cooperation to build a breakfront of collective security and economic integration that stiff-arms Iranian expansion. The region also needs an integrated air and missile defense umbrella. There may also be a need for extended nuclear deterrence against a breakout Iranian nuclear threat.

The Middle East has long been a powder keg. The current deal would only make it bigger and shorten the fuse.

*--A Heritage Foundation vice president, James Jay Carafano directs the think tank's research program on matters of national security and foreign affairs. Adam Milstein is the co-founder of the Israeli-American Council, where he serves as a board member and chair emeritus*

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## **STATE-RUN MEDIA**

### **27. No meetings with Russian top brass on Putin's schedule yet – Kremlin spokesman**

TASS (Russia), Apr. 12 | Not Attributed

The traditional spring series of meetings with Russia's top military officials has not yet been put on the Russian president's schedule, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

"[The meetings] have not yet been planned. Evidently, as long as [the special military] operation is under way, the top brass is busy. Naturally, the tradition will continue, but no exact date have yet been set," he said.

The Russian president traditionally holds a series of defense-related meetings twice a year, in May and November. Before the start of the novel coronavirus pandemic, those events included visits to defense enterprises and facilities.

The latest series of those meetings took place in November 2021, when Putin met with top military officials, chief designers and heads of defense enterprises to discuss technological development of the Russian armed forces, including the development of drones.

The 2021 spring series of defense meetings was devoted to long-term development of the Russian armed forces, implementation of the state procurement order, as well as projects in military transport aviation and long-range high-precision weaponry.

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### **28. US uses conflict in Ukraine for containing Russia – Chinese Foreign Ministry**

The US authorities intentionally fuel the conflict in Ukraine for containing China and Russia, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a news briefing on Tuesday.

"US and NATO policies have brought Russia-Ukraine rifts to a critical point. The American side has taken no steps to ease the escalation of tensions, but on the contrary, it has been adding fuel to the conflict, thus forcing other countries to take sides," he said.

"The US is systematically spreading disinformation in order to discredit China and distort its fundamental stance in favor of peace talks. It has been trying to dodge responsibility, staging provocations and trying to derive benefits, find room for maneuver and at the same time contain Russia and China," Zhao said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on February 24 launched a special military operation in Ukraine in response to a request for help from the leaders of two Donbass republics. He stressed that Moscow had no plans for an occupation of Ukrainian territories. The West responded with the introduction of large-scale sanctions against Russia.

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### **29. Taiwan's drills, defense handbook 'futile in resisting reunification'**

Global Times (China), Apr. 13, Pg. 3 | Liu Xuanzun

The island of Taiwan on Tuesday held military exercises and released a civil defense handbook in an apparent move to hype cross-Straits tensions, which was met with a negative reception on the island, and mainland experts said that neither move will be helpful to Taiwan secessionists should a conflict break out.

The armed forces on the island of Taiwan held a series of drills Tuesday morning, with the aim of testing the troops' joint air defense command and control capabilities, a spokesperson at Taiwan's defense authority said, after residents in many places on the island including Taipei and New Taipei City were awakened by the sound of warplanes, media on the island reported on Tuesday.

Taiwan's F-16 and IDF fighter jets simulated Chinese mainland warplanes, Taiwan media reported, but some Taiwan netizens said on social media that the drills are useless.

Also on Tuesday, Taiwan's defense authority released a civil defense handbook aimed at teaching residents on the island how to seek refuge in major emergencies, including a military conflict, Taiwan media reported, saying that the 28-page Chinese-language handbook contains QR codes for users to scan to access directions on where to go and what to do in a major emergency.

The handbook is being issued amid concerns over the possibility that the Chinese mainland could launch a cross-Straits conflict, reports said.

This was also questioned by the public on the island, with many asking if QR codes and a mobile network would still even be functional if communications infrastructures were destroyed.

From a military point of view, both the drills and the handbook are futile in saving "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should a cross-Straits conflict break out, as the overwhelming capabilities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) will render them useless, a Chinese mainland military expert told the Global Times on Tuesday, requesting anonymity.

The secessionist Democratic Progressive Party authority is only deceiving themselves, while also making a political show to hype cross-Straits tensions, the expert said.

PLA warplanes again entered Taiwan's self-proclaimed southwest air defense identification zone on Tuesday, marking a full attendance since the start of April, according to Taiwan media reports.

An aviation brigade based in East China affiliated with the PLA Air Force recently received a new batch of J-16 fighter jets, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Monday. This type of aircraft has been a frequent participant in the PLA's patrols and drills near the island of Taiwan.

The PLA's commissioning of more advanced fighter jets like the J-16 will eventually replace older fighter jets like the J-7 and the J-8, and contribute to the combat capability of the PLA, analysts said.

Even if a cross-Straits military conflict breaks out, the PLA will only target secessionists, not ordinary people, the expert said, noting that Taiwan's defense authority has an evil intent by issuing the handbook, as it is attempting to hype the "threat" of the mainland.

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## TWEETS OF NOTE

Twitter, Apr. 12-13

**U.S. Strategic Command, @US\_Stratcom:** *[Replying to @DeptofDefense tweet from 4/7]* "ICYMI: #Innovation drives tomorrow's #StrategicDeterrence modernization as it enhances today's operational and support capabilities, keeping us #AlwaysReady. Learn more here: [\[Link\]](#)" (4/12, 1144)

**Air Force Global Strike Command, @AFGlobalStrike:** "ENGAGE | Under Secretary Gina Ortiz Jones speaks at #StrikerWLS[.] The Honorable Gina Ortiz Jones, Under Secretary of the Air Force, joined #AFGSC today during the 2022 Women's Leadership Symposium. Jones spoke about diversity and inclusion during a Fireside Chat with Gen. Cotton." (4/12, 1820)

**Air Force Global Strike Command, @AFGlobalStrike:** "PEOPLE | 2022 Women's Leadership Symposium is LIVE! #StrikerWLS begins now! The mission of this year's symposium is to promote a community of inclusion across #AFGSC, enabling #Strikers to lead as their authentic selves." (4/12, 1300)

**Air Force Global Strike Command, @AFGlobalStrike:** "PEOPLE | 2022 Women's Leadership Symposium[.] #StrikerWLS begins now! The mission of this year's symposium is to promote a community of inclusion across #AFGSC, enabling #Strikers to lead as their authentic selves. [\[Link to photo\]](#)" (4/12, 0842)

**Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration Jill Hruby, @NNSAhruby:** "Frank Rose and I thank Dr. Charles Verdon for his exceptional service to the nuclear security enterprise. His leadership and contributions over the past 3.5 years to #NNSA headquarters have made lasting positive impacts to our important mission." (4/12, 1745)

**Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration Jill Hruby, @NNSAhruby:** "Welcome aboard, Marv! I'm excited to have you here @NNSANews to help us deliver on our vital science-based stockpile stewardship mission with your creative thinking and the urgency our Nation needs. [\[Link to photo\]](#)" (4/12, 1104)

**Submarine Group Ten, @SUBGRU10:** "This is the fifth time in ten years that USS Alaska has been selected for this honor, which recognizes outstanding support to the U.S. Strategic Command mission of strategic deterrence. [\[Link to press release\]](#)" (4/12, 1400)

**U.S. Air Force, @usairforce:** "@Whiteman\_AFB hosted a four-day interoperability exercise involving active duty, @AirNatlGuard and @USAFReserve fighter, bomber, refueling and support units from across the country. [\[Link to press release\]](#) @AFGlobalStrike" (4/12, 1203)

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**Reuters Tokyo-based Editor William Mallard, @BillyMallard:** "More than 1,000 #Ukraine marines surrender in key port of #Mariupol, says #Russia[.] -Fall of industrial district would give Russians control of port -Thousands believed killed in seven week siege @Reuters [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/13, 0509)

**Japan Air Self-Defense Force, @JASDF\_PAO\_ENG:** "On April 12, JASDF F-2 and JMSDF (@jmsdf\_pao\_eng) Ships conducted a bilateral exercise with the Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group in the Sea of Japan in order to strengthen the capability of #JapanUSAlliance for effective deterrence and response. #JASDF #F2 [\[Link to photos\]](#)" (4/13, 0045)

**National Defense Magazine, @NationalDefense:** "JUST IN: @DepSecDef Hicks Voices Concern About Pace of Hypersonic Tests | Story by @Mereroaten | @DARPA #Hypersonics [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/12, 1236)

**Global Times (China) Commentator Hu Xijin, @HuXijin\_GT:** *[Replying to @business tweet from 4/12, 0219]* "If Taiwan engages in secession incited by the US and triggers a war, PLA will launch thousands of missiles on day one (the Russian military has used fewer than 1,000 so far) and smash the Taiwan army in dozens of hours. So, the Tsai Ing-wen authority should avoid provoking a war" (4/12, 1144)

**National Institute for Public Policy Senior Analyst Matt Costlow, @Matt\_Costlow:** "This @BreakingDefense article is another good example of what @US\_Stratcom ADM Charles Richard has been calling for: rethinking nuclear deterrence requirements in light of new threats. That is why Keith Payne and I wrote our most recent Occasional Paper.↓ [\[Link to article\]](#)" (4/12, 1049)

**National Institute for Public Policy Senior Analyst Matt Costlow, @Matt\_Costlow:** "Updating the Cold War era 'Victory Denial' deterrence strategy for today is both realistic and necessary. [\[Link to paper\]](#)" (4/12, 1049)

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# DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, April 13

## OVERVIEW

As Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to continue his country's war on Ukraine, President Biden said for the first time that Russia's actions amounted to a "genocide" as President Putin is trying to "wipe out the idea of being a Ukrainian," the *Washington Post* reported. Additionally, a senior defense official revealed that the Biden administration is planning a new \$750 million military aid package for Ukraine to supplement prior shipments of 12,000 weapons for the Ukrainian Army, the *Associated Press* wrote. Also of note, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said that U.S. officials were in "continual dialogue" with Ukraine and U.S. allies to provide needed equipment, as the Pentagon planned to meet with military contractors to discuss these efforts, according to the *New York Times*.

## TOP STORIES

### 1. War will persist, defiant Putin says as inquiries begin

*Washington Post*, Apr. 13 (0115), Pg. A1 | Cate Cadell, Dan Lamothe, Mary Ilyushina, Karoun Demirjian and David L. Stern

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday called the war in Ukraine a "tragedy" but insisted the invasion will continue unabated, as the United States and its allies launched investigations into reports of a possible chemical attack ahead of an imminent Russian offensive in the country's east. Meanwhile, the Biden administration is poised to dramatically expand the scope of weapons it's providing Ukraine, U.S. officials said Tuesday, with the Pentagon looking to send armored Humvees and a range of other equipment.

### 2. Russia Has Yet to Slow a Western Arms Express Into Ukraine

*Associated Press*, Apr. 13 (0012) | Robert Burns

Western weaponry pouring into Ukraine helped blunt Russia's initial offensive and seems certain to play a central role in the approaching, potentially decisive, battle for Ukraine's contested Donbas region. Yet the Russian military is making little headway halting what has become a historic arms express. The Biden administration is preparing yet another, more diverse, package of military support possibly totaling \$750 million to be announced in coming days, a senior U.S. defense official said Tuesday.

### 3. The Pentagon will meet with major military contractors to plan aid for Ukraine

*New York Times Online*, Apr. 12 (1420) | Julian E. Barnes

A top U.S. defense official said on Tuesday that the Pentagon would convene a classified meeting with the leaders of the biggest American military contractors on Wednesday to discuss stepped-up assistance to Ukraine, including ways improve air defenses, anti-ship missiles and weapons to find and destroy Russian artillery. The meeting on

Wednesday, announced by Kathleen H. Hicks, the deputy secretary of defense, will include leaders of eight large military contractors, such as Raytheon Company and Lockheed Martin Corporation. The meeting will discuss how to overcome any potential supply problems — both to replenish American weapons stocks that have been drawn down to help Ukraine and to keep Kyiv supplied as the war continues.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **4. Pentagon: ‘Roughly Eight to 10 Flights a Day’ Full of Aid for Ukraine Pouring into Europe**

*Air Force Magazine Online, Apr. 12 (1609) | Greg Hadley and John A. Tirpak*

Roughly eight to 10 flights full of supplies and equipment for Ukraine are landing in Eastern Europe every day, Pentagon press secretary John F. Kirby told reporters on April 12, as the U.S. and other nations race to get their aid packages into the hands of Ukrainians combatting Russia’s invasion. “There’s more than 30 other nations contributing various amounts of material — some weapons, some not, some a mix, and we are helping coordinate the deliveries into Ukraine of all that material, not just ours, but of others at various trans-shipment sites in the region,” Kirby said during a briefing hosted by the State Department’s Brussels Media Hub. “And that flow continues.”

### **5. Hicks to Congress: Be Patient, Allow Some Failures in New Development Programs Like Hypersonics**

*Air Force Magazine Online, Apr. 12 (1638) | John Tirpak*

Speaking during an April 12 Defense Writers Group breakfast, Hicks touted the recent successful test of the Lockheed Martin version of the Hypersonic Air-breathing Weapon Concept (HAWC), which set a new record for hypersonic flight under scramjet power. The March flight test likely achieved about 327 seconds of hypersonic flight under scramjet power, versus 200 seconds achieved by the Boeing X-51 Waverider in 2010, based on figures provided by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The U.S., she said, “has to be willing to fail. I think this is a place we want to increase the trust the Congress has in the Department, as it goes after improvements and capabilities.”

### **6. Pentagon Won’t Merge Commissaries and Exchanges, For Now**

*Military.com, Apr. 12 (1510) | Patricia Kime*

The Defense Department has scuttled plans to merge the Defense Department’s commissary system with the military branches’ three separate exchange services. In an April 4 memo to Pentagon leadership, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks ordered officials to “cease all efforts to consolidate the Defense resale entities.”

### **7. Virginia GOP official resigns after revelation of his call to lynch the defense secretary**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 12 (1505) | Meghann Myers*

The chair of a Virginia electoral board stepped down Monday after pressure from fellow Republicans, including the state's governor, following a resurfaced racist Facebook screed against Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and retired Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré posted in early 2021. The Republican Party of Hampton first called for his resignation Friday.

#### **8. Pentagon does 'not object' to potential transfer of jets from Slovakia to Ukraine**

*Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 12 (1232) | Mike Brest*

The Pentagon would not stand in the way of a possible transfer of Slovakian fighter jets to Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Tuesday. "We certainly would not object to it. We have no right to object to it," the defense official said, noting that the U.S., to its knowledge, was not involved in any of the discussion in facilitating the deal.

### **EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE**

#### **9. Team Biden scrambles to respond to claims of Russia chemical weapon use**

*Politico Online, Apr. 12 (1323) | Alexander Ward and Jonathan Lemire*

Alleged and unconfirmed claims of chemical weapons use by Russia in Ukraine has forced a scramble inside the White House to match President Joe Biden's promise of an "in kind" response while avoiding further escalation of the conflict. The White House is urging caution, noting that the use of chemical weapons remains unverified. U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive subject, said they have been running scenario-planning exercises on the possible use of chemical weapons, having publicly raised the alarm that Russian President Vladimir Putin may take such a step. The officials said that military options in Ukraine aren't on the table — echoing Biden's repeated position of not wanting to spark World War III.

#### **10. GOP senators say Biden should share more intelligence support to Ukraine**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 (1528) | Mike Glenn*

The Republican members of the Senate Intelligence Committee are pressing the Biden administration to step up its information-sharing with Ukraine following Russia's invasion in late February, which has cost thousands of lives and triggered Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

### **EUROPE**

#### **11. Flow of Moscow Cyberattacks Continues**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13 (0200), Pg. A6 | Dustin Volz and Robert McMillan*

Ukrainian and Western intelligence officials feared Moscow's elite corps of state-sponsored hackers would launch crippling cyberattacks to complement its invasion of Ukraine. Instead the cyberwar has been something closer to Internet trench warfare: A grinding conflict of relentless, if sometimes unsophisticated attacks that have taken casualties but had limited impact on the course of the fight. What Ukraine hasn't seen is a successful type of

massive, strategic-level attack on civilian infrastructure, given the aggression and technical ability that Moscow's elite hackers have displayed in the past. On Tuesday, ESET, a Slovak-based cybersecurity firm, and Ukraine's cybersecurity emergency response team reported that a new strain of malware had been wielded in an attack on high-voltage electrical substations in Ukraine that was scheduled to damage systems earlier this month.

**12. Ukrainian Forces Still Hold Mariupol as Russians Close In**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 12 (1719) | Heather Mongilio*

Ukraine still controls its port city of Mariupol despite concerns that it might soon fall to Russia, a senior defense official told reporters Tuesday. "You've seen the devastation that Russian airstrikes have wrought on Mariupol in the city, but our assessment is that the Ukrainians are still fighting for it," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Tuesday.

**13. U.S., Allies Aim to Force Russia to Shift Money Away From War**

*Associated Press, Apr. 12 (1857) | Fatima Hussein*

The United States and its allies are pushing ahead with sanctions aimed at forcing Vladimir Putin to spend Russia's money propping up its economy rather than sustaining its "war machine" for the fight in Ukraine, a top Treasury Department official said Tuesday. Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo, one of the main U.S. coordinators on the Russian sanctions strategy, said in an interview with The Associated Press that the goal is to make Russia "less able to project power in the future."

## **RUSSIA**

**14. Russian Scientists Say They Have A New System to Monitor Attacks on the Russian Internet**

*DefenseOne.com, Apr. 12 (1102) | Patrick Tucker*

As Russia rains artillery fire down on Ukrainian cities, cyber attackers from around the world have been targeting Russian media, cryptocurrency services, and retail brands with denial of service attacks. A group of Russian scientists say that they've developed a new tool to block such attacks – but even that is an indication that severe economic sanctions are changing life in Russia. Engineers from Samara University developed a tool they called NetTestBox to monitor internet traffic into and out of Russia. "The information obtained by the system allows you to track unauthorized data leaks, see what part of the traffic goes through foreign channels, and, therefore, is vulnerable to external shutdown," according to a Monday article from Russia's Izvestia news outlet. (Like most Russian media, the site is state-controlled.)

## **INDO-PACIFIC**

**15. USS Abraham Lincoln operating in Sea of Japan following North Korea missile tests**

*Navy Times Online, Apr. 12 (1843) | Diana Stancy Correll*

The aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and its carrier strike group are operating off the Korean peninsula for the first time since 2017. The operations in the Sea of Japan follow North Korea's test-firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile in March.

**16. North Korea uses space program to disguise ballistic missile development – U.S. military intelligence**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Apr. 12 (1534) | Byun Duk-kun*

North Korea uses its space program as a disguise to test and advance its ballistic missile capabilities, a U.S. military intelligence report said Tuesday. The report also noted the North may be trying to acquire space and weapons technologies by hacking into aerospace companies.

**17. U.S., Australia Pressure Solomon Islands on China Military Pact**

*Bloomberg News, Apr. 13 (0308) | Ben Westcott*

Australia has publicly asked the Solomon Islands to “consider not signing” its draft security deal with the Chinese government, ramping up pressure on the Pacific country to ditch the controversial agreement. It comes after U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman spoke with Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele on Tuesday about plans for an American embassy in the Pacific nation. The two officials also talked about “joint efforts to broaden and deepen engagement between our countries in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region,” U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement Tuesday.

## **CHINA**

**18. China's military has US aircraft carriers in its sights, but those flattops aren't 'little teacups,' their captains say**

*Business Insider Online, Apr. 12 (1106) | Christopher Woody*

The doubts about the carrier's future are driven in large part by China's military modernization, which has produced a variety of long-range weapons and more capable aircraft, ships, and submarines to launch them. China's anti-ship missiles are the major concern, especially the DF-21D and DF-26B ballistic missiles, which are designed for naval targets and sometimes called “carrier killers.”

## **MIDDLE EAST**

**19. Iran Supreme Leader Optimistic Though Nuclear Talks Stalled**

*Associated Press, Apr. 12 (1409) | Nasser Karimi and Jon Gambrell*

Iran's supreme leader on Tuesday insisted negotiations over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal “are going ahead properly,” even after repeated comments by American officials that an agreement to restore the accord may not happen.

## **AFRICA**

**20. The New Scramble for Africa: China Seen Outpacing U.S.**

*Voice of America News, Apr. 12 (1409) | Kate Bartlett*

Former President Barack Obama “pivoted” toward Africa, his predecessor Donald Trump away from it and current U.S. leader Joe Biden has had his hands full with the pandemic at home and now the war in Ukraine. But in an address to lawmakers on Capitol Hill last week, the commander for U.S. forces in Africa pointed to China’s dominance in a region vital to America’s security and economic growth and warned that Washington ignores Africa at its peril.

**SPACE**

**21. China’s orbiting hypersonic missile part of growing space-based arsenal, DIA warns**

*Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 (1451) | Bill Gertz*

China’s test of an orbiting hypersonic missile last year demonstrated Beijing’s longest range land attack weapon and is part of a growing arsenal of space warfare capabilities, according to a Defense Intelligence Agency report on space threats released Tuesday. “The loss of space-based communication and navigation services could have a devastating impact on warfighters during a conflict — that’s one of the most serious scenarios anticipated,” DIA Director Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier said in releasing the report.

**AIR FORCE**

**22. Air Force positions autonomous drones, networked weapon systems as top priorities**

*Fedscoop.com, Apr. 12 (1424) | Jon Harper*

The Air Force is asking Congress for more than \$100 million in additional R&D funding for autonomous drones and networked weapon systems as the Pentagon pursues more cost-effective ways to match up against China. The technology is a top priority for Air Force leaders as they look toward the future operating environment and fiscal constraints that will limit the number of manned planes that the service can buy for Next-Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) and other programs.

**ARMY**

**23. Army still failing to process some naturalizations for foreign-born recruits, judge says**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 12 (1943) | Davis Winkie*

Despite an August 2020 court order that forced the Army to abolish minimum time-in-service requirements for foreign-born recruits requesting expedited U.S. citizenship, the service has failed to adequately implement the new rules, a federal judge said last month. The original court order came after the American Civil Liberties Union won a lawsuit arguing that the Defense Department unlawfully added time in service requirements and restrictive processing procedures to an expedited citizenship pathway available to troops through the Immigration and Nationality Act.

**24. Power struggle: How the U.S. Army is tackling the logistics of battlefield electricity**

*Defense News Online, Apr. 12 (0900) | Jen Judson*

In generations past, infantry officers' primary needs were ammunition, an extra pair of dry socks and enough water in the field. But soldiers today need vast stores of power just to manage daily operations, from the batteries that power the Samsung-based Nett Warrior system that connects soldiers to the electricity that keeps command posts and operations centers running.

## **MARINE CORPS**

**25. First to fight: Is this the end of the Corps as America's 911 force?**

*Military Times Online, Apr. 12 (1517) | Philip Athey*

First to fight long has been both a recruiting slogan and an enduring Marine mantra. Marines take pride in the Corps' history of showing up first, as America's 911 force. But those wars have ended, and a new war is on the horizon: China. It's the biggest threat the commandant has his eyes on. And it's the proclaimed reason he quickly and drastically has been working to change the Marine Corps.

## **NAVY**

**26. Navy secretary visits Bremerton, Bangor, touts multi-billion modernization of shipyard**

*Kitsap Sun Online (Bremerton, WA), Apr. 12 (1345) | Josh Farley*

The Navy is "deeply committed" to a multi-billion dollar modernization effort at its shipyards, including its largest in Bremerton, as new generations of aircraft carriers and submarines will require upgraded dry docks and facilities for maintenance work, President Joe Biden's Navy secretary said at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor on Monday. "Recapitalizing the shipyards is incredibly important," said Carlos del Toro, a Navy veteran who commanded a destroyer during his 22-year career as a Navy officer. "... These are major, major investments."

**27. 'Lightning Carrier' Concept Shows How Navy, Marine Corps Can Fly More F-35Bs from Amphibs**

*DefenseOne.com, Apr. 12 (1541) | Caitlin Kenny*

The Navy and Marine Corps recently proved they can operate an amphibious assault carrier as if it were a fixed-wing aircraft carrier, which officials said will give them more options for how to use these ships in the future. The demonstration showed the services can operate amphibious assault carriers with fifth-generation aircraft, like a smaller aircraft carrier, if needed. The exercise had the 20 aircraft operating at a high tempo, the release said. These amphibious assault carriers normally carry a mix of rotary wing aircraft like the MV-22B Osprey helicopters and some F-35Bs, along with several hundred Marines that respond to combat or humanitarian operations as part of a Marine Expeditionary Unit.

**28. The Navy's shipbuilder oversight offices are underutilized, watchdog agency reports**

*Defense News Online, Apr. 12 (1831) | Geoff Ziezulewicz*

The Navy has in recent years been plagued by a series of high-profile shipbuilding problems that have delayed construction, sent costs skyrocketing and impacted quality and performance across platforms. Although the sea service has an oversight tool within major private shipbuilding yards that could help improve things, it remains hindered, according to a Government Accountability Office report released this week.

**29. Navy to Deploy Four Cargo Drones on an Aircraft Carrier this Year**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 12 (1918) | Sam LaGrone*

A quartet of logistics drones capable of carrying up to 50-pound payloads will embark on a U.S. aircraft carrier later this year to see if the unmanned aerial vehicles are practical at sea. The test, led by the experimentation and prototyping division at the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), is a response to Military Sealift Command and Naval Air Forces Atlantic seeking a faster way to send critical parts to warships underway.

## **SPACE FORCE**

**30. Russia is jamming GPS satellite signals in Ukraine, U.S. Space Force says**

*Space.com, Apr. 12 (1338) | Elizabeth Howell*

Another piece of space infrastructure for Ukraine is under attack, according to an NBC report. Jammers from Russian forces besieging the country are targeting global positioning system (GPS) satellites that are used for navigation, mapping and other purposes, the report said, quoting the U.S. Space Force.

## **MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**31. Into the Military Metaverse: An empty buzzword or a virtual resource for the Pentagon?**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 (1935) | Andrew Eversden*

To understand the future of the military and the metaverse, Breaking Defense spoke with key Pentagon officials, outside experts and representatives from industry. While there are varying levels of enthusiasm, there is a growing agreement that as long as the military enters the virtual world with clear (if augmented) eyes, it could greatly benefit American warfighters in ways ranging from immersive combat planning to hyper-realistic virtual training to truly experiencing weapons systems in ways that have never before been possible. But as with technological leaps in the past, if the metaverse can't avoid becoming an empty buzzword thrown at every problem by leaders who don't fully grasp the concept, the Pentagon could end up wasting millions of dollars chasing a virtual dream.

## **NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

**32. Stop Buying Uranium From Russia**

*Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13 (0200), Pg. A13 | Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY)*

Europe has been rightly criticized for getting hooked on Russian energy. Now America must free itself from Russian uranium. I have introduced legislation to do this. Our nuclear supply chain should begin with American-mined uranium and end with American fuel. It is time to put Mr. Putin's nuclear cash cow out to pasture.

**33. If Ukraine falls, Putin could take aim at the Baltics next**

*Washington Post, Apr. 13 (0115), Pg. A21 | Michael Gerson*

Why is this conflict between rules and spheres so important? If Putin is engaged in a defensive struggle, then the Ukraine war is mainly about Ukraine. Some will propose that President Volodymyr Zelensky make the necessary concessions - no Ukrainian NATO membership, Russian control of the Donbas region - to end a bloody war. Peace through self-dismemberment. But if Putin is attempting to reconstruct the Russian sphere of influence in Europe, his success in Ukraine would pave the way for future horrors. The logic that led to Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine - no NATO in the Russian sphere - would almost certainly lead toward the Baltics.

**34. How the Pentagon's bad inflation math made a hollow budget**

*BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 (0934) | John Ferrari*

A staggering 8.5%. This is the US government's March inflation rate in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), released today. About a month ago, my colleague, Elaine McCusker and I wrote that the Pentagon should, in its FY23 budget release, not hide behind "rosy assumptions and passing the buck" to wish away inflation. Unfortunately, the Defense Department's 2023 budget not only ignores the rising inflation, it does just what we said they shouldn't do, and the new CPI figures should continue to raise the cause for alarm.

## TOP STORIES

**1. War will persist, defiant Putin says as inquiries begin**

*Washington Post, Apr. 13 (0115), Pg. A1 | Cate Cadell, Dan Lamothe, Mary Ilyushina, Karoun Demirjian and David L. Stern*

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday called the war in Ukraine a "tragedy" but insisted the invasion will continue unabated, as the United States and its allies launched investigations into reports of a possible chemical attack ahead of an imminent Russian offensive in the country's east.

Putin said there was no clear end to the conflict and "no choice" but to forge ahead with the invasion, brushing off the impacts of punitive sanctions during a visit to the Amur region in Russia's far east where he met with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

"We will act rhythmically, calmly, according to the plan that was originally proposed by the General Staff," he said.

“What is happening in Ukraine is a tragedy, no doubt about that. But we had no choice. It was just a matter of time” before an attack on Russia, he added.

Putin also said peace negotiations had reached a deadlock, blaming the Ukrainian side. “Kyiv moved away from the Istanbul agreements, so we are back to an impasse.” Putin said, referring to negotiations in the Turkish city late last month. “Yesterday, I was told that the Ukrainian side has changed something in its negotiating position. I don’t know the details yet.”

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is poised to dramatically expand the scope of weapons it’s providing Ukraine, U.S. officials said Tuesday, with the Pentagon looking to send armored Humvees and a range of other equipment.

The new aid package could be worth \$750 million, these people said. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because the transfer has not yet been finalized.

Preliminary plans circulating among government officials and lawmakers in Washington included Mi-17 helicopters, howitzer cannons, coastal defense drones and protective suits to safeguard personnel in the event of a chemical, biological or nuclear weapons attack, the officials said, though they cautioned that it was not immediately clear whether all of those items would end up in the final package. A defense official said late Tuesday that helicopters will not be included.

President Biden on Tuesday said the war amount to a “genocide,” saying that Putin is trying to “wipe out the idea of being a Ukrainian.” Senior administration officials had earlier been unwilling to use the word “genocide” to describe Russia’s actions.

The United States and its allies have launched investigations into reports that Russian forces had used chemical weapons in the battered city of Mariupol. Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov told the BBC on Tuesday that the city council has confirmed a “chemical poisoning” delivered via a Russian drone, but senior Ukrainian officials have been careful not to confirm the use of chemical weapons pending an investigation.

The reports stem from a claims by the Azov Battalion - a Ukrainian paramilitary group associated with far-right nationalism - that civilians were exposed to an “unknown” harmful substance but are now in a “relatively satisfactory” condition with some experiencing high blood pressure, heartburn, dryness around the eyes and throat, and a condition where blood rushes to the face.

The United States will face a “host of difficulties” in verifying the attack because of a lack of access to the region, said a senior U.S. defense official on Tuesday.

“These are difficult things to prove even when you are more proximate, and we are not. ... And so I think you can understand we want to be very careful here before making a proclamation,” the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Pentagon.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters Tuesday that “we have credible information that Russian forces may use a variety of riot control agents” to weaken Ukrainian soldiers and civilians in an effort to besiege Mariupol, a strategic port city.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar cited “a theory” that the weapons could have been phosphorous munitions. White phosphorous is not considered a chemical weapon and as such is not explicitly banned by international humanitarian laws, but it has the capacity to severely harm civilians.

An eight-mile convoy of Russian troops and weapons has begun maneuvering 37 miles north of Izyum, a Ukrainian city strategically situated to the north of Mariupol and occupied by Russian forces. It is likely to become a staging ground for fresh attacks, according to the Pentagon.

The armored group, which includes a command element and combat enablers, could at least partially resupply other forces in the region, the senior U.S. defense official said.

Poor weather in the eastern Donbas region is expected to slow any immediate Russian advances, according to Ukrainian officials. In a television interview on Tuesday, Serhiy Haidai, the regional governor of Luhansk, said that forecasts for heavy rain in the coming days are “100 percent to our advantage,” as Russian forces will probably be forced to move in column formations along major roads, making them an “easy target.”

Russian airstrikes, however, have continued to hammer cities in Ukraine’s south and east. Russia has launched 1,540 missiles at Ukraine since the war began, according to the latest figures released by the Pentagon.

Haidai said in a separate social media post on Tuesday that morgues in the Luhansk region were “overflowing” following shelling attacks. He said that cemeteries in some areas were inaccessible and volunteers and that utility workers took advantage of periods between shellings to bury the dead in temporary graves carved out by tractors. In areas under Russian occupation, organized burials are not possible, leaving residents to bury the dead in yards, he said.

High-level foreign figures have continued to pledge support for the embattled country, including a delegation of religious leaders from the United States, Europe and Israel that arrived in Ukraine on Tuesday to speak with refugees. However, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier reportedly scrapped plans for a potential trip to Kyiv after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky indicated he would not meet with him, according to Bild, a German daily.

Steinmeier appeared to acknowledge the rejection during an appearance in Warsaw, where he said a visit “was not wanted in Kyiv.” The snub highlights friction between Zelensky and the German government, which has balked at calls for a blanket embargo of Russian energy imports and sidestepped commitments to send heavy weapons to Ukraine.

Putin on Tuesday said that the “sanctions blitzkrieg” against Russia had failed as a deterrent and that the economy remained stable, as Russian officials separately threatened legal action against governments that have sanctioned Moscow.

Standard & Poor’s cut Russia’s credit rating on Friday after it defaulted on its sovereign debt by paying dollar-denominated bondholders in rubles. S&P said those bondholders can’t expect to convert the payments to dollars because of sanctions. Alongside a raft of other financial measures, the United States has barred Russia from using funds held in American banks to pay its debts.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the default a “man-made” crisis by Western governments. “We will sue, because we have taken all the necessary steps to ensure that investors receive their payments,” said Siluanov.

Globally, the conflict is “violently disrupting” international trade in food and agriculture products, exacerbating the global poverty crisis, according to new reports from aid groups. Oxfam warned in a report released Tuesday that 263 million more people are expected to lapse into extreme poverty this year as the invasion continues to cause a spike in food and energy prices.

Inside Ukraine, the economic toll of the conflict has already reached hundreds of billions of dollars, according to Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko. The cost of damage to critical infrastructure is currently about \$120 billion, while further damage to social and military infrastructure could add up to “more than \$500 billion,” he said in an interview with Sky News on Tuesday, calling on Russia to pay reparations after the war is over.

Zelensky said Monday in his nightly address that retreating Russian forces left “tens if not hundreds of thousands” of unexploded shells and mines in northeastern Ukraine, further complicating the region’s recovery.

“They consciously did everything to make the return to these areas after de-occupation as dangerous as possible,” he said.

In a boost for the Kyiv government, one of Putin’s trusted Ukrainian allies and friends, oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk, was recaptured Tuesday by Ukraine’s internal security service after weeks in hiding, according to the presidential administration.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Denis Monastyrsky said this weekend that more than 6,500 explosive devices were found within a 24-hour period as the cleanup continues, including in locations he believes were targeting soldiers, police and rescuers such as doorways, washing machines and under helmets.

In the northern city of Bucha, which is recovering after a brutal month-long occupation, Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said in a news conference that the city had opened a second mass grave on Tuesday to bury 56 people killed in the conflict. Bucha has so far recovered 403 bodies, but that number is expected to rise, he said.

A total of 2,671 people were able to escape via humanitarian corridors in eastern Ukraine on Tuesday, according to Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk. A UNICEF report estimated that almost two-thirds of Ukrainian children have been displaced during the conflict.

*--Lamothe and Cadell reported from Washington; Ilyushina reported from Riga, Latvia; Stern reported from Mukachevo, Ukraine. Adela Suliman and Annabelle Timsit in London; Andrew Jeong, Amy Cheng and Bryan Pietsch in Seoul; Annabelle C. Chapman in Paris; Tyler Pager in Des Moines; and Evan Halper, Jeff Stein, Herman Wong and Isaac Stanley-Becker in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **2. Russia Has Yet to Slow a Western Arms Express Into Ukraine**

Associated Press, Apr. 13 (0012) | Robert Burns

WASHINGTON -- Western weaponry pouring into Ukraine helped blunt Russia's initial offensive and seems certain to play a central role in the approaching, potentially decisive, battle for Ukraine's contested Donbas region. Yet the Russian military is making little headway halting what has become a historic arms express.

The U.S. numbers alone are mounting: more than 12,000 weapons designed to defeat armored vehicles, some 1,400 shoulder-fired Stinger missiles to shoot down aircraft, and more than 50 million rounds of ammunition, among many other things. Dozens of other nations are adding to the totals.

The Biden administration is preparing yet another, more diverse, package of military support possibly totaling \$750 million to be announced in coming days, a senior U.S. defense official said Tuesday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans not yet publicly announced. The additional aid is a sign that the administration intends to continue expanding its support for Ukraine's war effort.

These armaments have helped an under-gunned Ukrainian military defy predictions that it would be quickly overrun by Russia. They explain in part why Vladimir Putin's army gave up, at least for now, its attempt to capture Kyiv, the capital, and has narrowed its focus to battling for eastern and southern Ukraine.

U.S. officials and analysts offer numerous explanations for why the Russians have had so little success interdicting Western arms moving overland from neighboring countries, including Poland. Among the likely reasons: Russia's

failure to win full control of Ukraine's skies has limited its use of air power. Also, the Russians have struggled to deliver weapons and supplies to their own troops in Ukraine.

Some say Moscow's problem begins at home.

"The short answer to the question is that they are an epically incompetent army badly led from the very top," said James Stavridis, a retired U.S. Navy admiral who was the top NATO commander in Europe from 2009 to 2013.

The Russians also face practical obstacles. Robert G. Bell, a longtime NATO official and now a professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech University, said the shipments lend themselves to being hidden or disguised in ways that can make them elusive to the Russians — "short of having a network of espionage on the scene" to pinpoint the convoys' movements.

"It's not as easy to stop this assistance flow as it might seem," said Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University. "Things like ammunition and shoulder-fired missiles can be transported in trucks that look just like any other commercial truck. And the trucks carrying the munitions the Russians want to interdict are just a small part of a much larger flow of goods and commerce moving around in Poland and Ukraine and across the border.

"So the Russians have to find the needle in this very big haystack to destroy the weapons and ammo they're after and not waste scarce munitions on trucks full of printer paper or baby diapers or who knows what."

Even with this Western assistance it's uncertain whether Ukraine will ultimately prevail against a bigger Russian force. The Biden administration has drawn the line at committing U.S. troops to the fight. It has opted instead to orchestrate international condemnation and economic sanctions, provide intelligence information, bolster NATO's eastern flank to deter a wider war with Russia, and donate weapons.

In mid-March, a Russian deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, said arms shipments would be targeted.

"We warned the United States that pumping weapons into Ukraine from a number of countries as it has orchestrated isn't just a dangerous move but an action that turns the respective convoys into legitimate targets," he said in televised remarks.

But thus far the Russians appear not to have put a high priority on arms interdiction, perhaps because their air force is leery of flying into Ukraine's air defenses to search out and attack supply convoys on the move. They have struck fixed sites like arms depots and fuel storage locations, but to limited effect.

On Monday the Russians said they destroyed four S-300 surface-to-air missile launchers that had been given to Ukraine by an unspecified European country. Slovakia, a NATO member that shares a border with Ukraine,

donated just such a system last week but denied it had been destroyed. On Tuesday the Russian Ministry of Defense said long-range missiles were used to hit two Ukrainian ammo depots.

As the fighting intensifies in the Donbas and perhaps along the coastal corridor to the Russian-annexed Crimean Peninsula, Putin may feel compelled to strike harder at the arms pipeline, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called vital to his nation's survival.

In the meantime, a staggering volume and range of war materiel is arriving almost daily.

"The scope and speed of our support to meeting Ukraine's defense needs are unprecedented in modern times," said John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary. He said the approximately \$2.5 billion in weapons and other material that has been offered to Ukraine since the beginning of the Biden administration is equivalent to more than half of Ukraine's normal defense budget.

One example: The Pentagon says it has provided more than 5,000 Javelin missiles, which are among the world's most effective weapons against tanks and other armored vehicles and can even take down a low-flying helicopter. The missile, shaped like a clunky dumb bell and weighing 50 pounds (23 kilograms), is fired by an individual soldier; from its launch tube it flies up at a steep angle and descends directly onto its target in what is known as a "curveball" shot hitting the top of a tank where its armor is weakest.

The specific routes used to move the U.S. and other Western materials into Ukraine are secret for security reasons, but the basic process is not. Just this week, two U.S. military cargo planes arrived in Eastern Europe with items ranging from machine guns and small arms ammunition to body armor and grenades, the Pentagon said.

A similar load is due later this week to complete delivery of \$800 million in assistance approved by President Joe Biden just one month ago. The weapons and equipment are offloaded, moved onto trucks and driven into Ukraine by Ukrainian soldiers for delivery.

Kirby said the material sometimes reaches troops in the field within 48 hours of entering Ukraine.

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### **3. The Pentagon will meet with major military contractors to plan aid for Ukraine**

New York Times Online, Apr. 12 (1420) | Julian E. Barnes

A top U.S. defense official said on Tuesday that the Pentagon would convene a classified meeting with the leaders of the biggest American military contractors on Wednesday to discuss stepped-up assistance to Ukraine, including ways improve air defenses, anti-ship missiles and weapons to find and destroy Russian artillery.

Washington's \$1.7 billion in assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's invasion, including the provision of thousands of Stingers and Javelin missiles, has forced American military contractors to step up production of older weapons systems, both for Ukraine's need and to replenish the United States military's stocks.

The Pentagon is now examining what additional longer-range weapons to supply to Ukraine, as well as making sure that the government in Kyiv receives basics it needs, like additional artillery shells. U.S. military officials want American military contractors to begin work on supplying Ukraine for a possible long conflict with Russia.

The meeting on Wednesday, announced by Kathleen H. Hicks, the deputy secretary of defense, will include leaders of eight large military contractors, such as Raytheon Company and Lockheed Martin Corporation. The meeting will discuss how to overcome any potential supply problems — both to replenish American weapons stocks that have been drawn down to help Ukraine and to keep Kyiv supplied as the war continues.

The Pentagon is working with the American companies to identify which of them has the right military capabilities for Ukraine and can “move expeditiously to get it in there,” Ms. Hicks said.

“What can we do to help them?” she told reporters at a meeting of the Defense Writers Group. “What do they need to generate supply?”

Ms. Hicks did not discuss specific weapon systems that the United States would supply. But other defense officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the agenda of the classified meeting, said the discussions would focus on weaponry in five areas.

Improving Ukraine's air defenses and its ability to shoot down Russian aircraft is one of Kyiv's most urgent concerns. In addition, the United States is looking at how to improve Ukraine's coastal defenses, such as with missiles that can be fired at Russian ships, and Ukraine's supply of anti-personnel weapons, like Claymore mines and other weapons used to kill enemy infantry. The Pentagon also wants contractors to examine demining equipment and counter-battery technology, radar that can track and locate enemy artillery, that Ukraine could use.

Ms. Hicks said U.S. officials were in a “continual dialogue” with Ukraine and American allies about how best to provide the equipment that Ukraine had requested. Ms. Hicks said some of the most important supplies it needs are the basics: artillery rounds and other forms of ammunition.

But she added that the United States would continue to look at other capabilities the Ukrainians have requested “to give them a little more range and distance.”

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## DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

### **4. Pentagon: ‘Roughly Eight to 10 Flights a Day’ Full of Aid for Ukraine Pouring into Europe**

Air Force Magazine Online, Apr. 12 (1609) | Greg Hadley and John A. Tirpak

Roughly eight to 10 flights full of supplies and equipment for Ukraine are landing in Eastern Europe every day, Pentagon press secretary John F. Kirby told reporters on April 12, as the U.S. and other nations race to get their aid packages into the hands of Ukrainians combatting Russia’s invasion.

“There’s more than 30 other nations contributing various amounts of material – some weapons, some not, some a mix, and we are helping coordinate the deliveries into Ukraine of all that material, not just ours, but of others at various trans-shipment sites in the region,” Kirby said during a briefing hosted by the State Department’s Brussels Media Hub. “And that flow continues.”

All told, more than two dozen countries ranging from Japan to Canada to North Macedonia have pledged to send billions of dollars worth of military equipment to Ukraine, presenting a daunting logistical challenge as those nations look to deliver that equipment at speed.

It’s an issue that U.S. Transportation Command boss Gen. Jacqueline D. Van Ovost addressed several times at the end of March when appearing before Congress.

“We work very closely with European Command as they integrate with Ukraine and prioritize the needs of Ukraine, so that we are able to ship and get [material] close to Ukraine and onward-moved very quickly, as we manage not only the nodes or the airports and seaports to get stuff there, but the people that work there and the flow in,” Van Ovost said during a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing.

In a Senate hearing, Gen. Tod D. Wolters, head of U.S. European Command, praised TRANSCOM for delivering “miracles at the point of need” in the Ukraine-Russia war. Similarly, Kirby touted the Defense Department’s ability to track, ship, and deliver aid.

“There’s roughly eight to 10 flights a day coming in to these trans-shipment sites from all over the world. And that stuff is not sitting around in warehouses,” Kirby said. “We’re helping get it on pallets and helping it get on trucks and helping it get into Ukraine every single day.”

In mid-March, President Joe Biden authorized an \$800 million package of defensive assistance for Ukraine, followed by another \$100 million in early April. Kirby said on April 12 that the Pentagon expected those packages to be completed in a matter of days and delivered “by the middle of this month.”

Speaking during a Defense Writers Group event on April 12, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said there are packages of U.S. military aid to Ukraine soon to be announced that will include longer-ranged weapons than have been provided so far. She did not name the weapons.

“Those are presidential decisions,” Hicks said of the new aid packages, and “I don’t want to get in front of those.” However, the Pentagon is “moving quickly” on weapons that would “provide a little more range and distance” than what has been given to date, and “you’ll see more in the coming days,” she told defense reporters.

The new weapons would be in addition to Javelin man-portable anti-tank weapons and Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft weapons, Hicks said. She said Stingers and Javelins, as well as artillery rounds and “other ammunition” are “incredibly important” to Ukraine, noting, “We’ve moved a lot of that, and that will continue,” she said.

When asked if the U.S. would provide weapons that Ukraine could launch into Russia, Hicks said the U.S. is in continuing talks with Britain and 30 other countries about how best to provide “capability that the Ukrainians request” that sends “a clear signal, in terms of the U.S./Russian dynamic.”

Ukraine has requested aircraft, or a NATO-established no-fly zone over the country, as well as other weapons.

The U.S. is reviewing “a wide range of systems,” for Ukraine, she said. In addition to weapons and cash aid, the U.S. has been providing intelligence assistance to Ukraine, “which I would call ‘high-end’ help,” Hicks said.

The urgency to get that equipment into Ukraine fast has increased as Russia has begun to reposition its forces and focus its efforts on eastern Ukraine, raising fears that the war’s brutality could increase even more and become, in the words of one Pentagon official, a “knife fight.”

“We are mindful of the time,” Kirby acknowledged, noting the Pentagon has shortened the time it takes to actually get equipment into Ukrainian hands “down to between four to six days.”

Calling that speed “unprecedented” across his time in the Pentagon, Kirby did note that not all shipments have been that fast.

One of the most high-profile pieces of the U.S. defensive aid packages being sent is the batch of Switchblade drones — loitering munitions that are sometimes referred to as “kamikaze” drones. The Pentagon confirmed on April 6 that a small number of Ukrainian troops, already in the U.S. for professional military education, were being trained to operate the Switchblades, and on April 10, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III held a video call with those service members on the same day they were slated to return home.

“He ... wanted to know [how] they felt the training went, and he was quite gratified to hear that they were pleased by what they were trained on, not just in terms of Switchblade, but other things,” Kirby said of Austin’s

Navy Pelosi appointed him to conduct a review of the Capitol's security infrastructure, interagency processes and command and control following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack by supporters of President Donald Trump.

David Dietrich, an electoral board member from Hampton, Virginia, called them the n-word and called for "a good public lynching."

"Even in light of those truly irresponsible, mean-spirited — indeed, wicked — comments, [Austin's] going to be focused on leading the department forward and, and trying to continue to set an example going forward," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told Military Times Tuesday. "That's where his head is."

As secretary, Austin has spoken frequently about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion when it comes to the readiness of the military, a force that is more than 40% non-white.

"No matter who you are, no matter ... where you came from, what your background is, he believes that if you're qualified, and you want to serve this country, you should be able to do it. And you'll be able to do it without fear of discrimination or harassment," Kirby said. "And in his view, there's no place in the Department of Defense for comments like that, or for actions that come from comments like that."

Multiple polls of Military Times readers have noted white supremacist attitudes in the force, with more than a third of respondents noting they had seen or experienced racist behavior.

In addition to diversity and inclusion training and education, the Pentagon is also working to remove reminders of racist history from its installations. A commission has proposed renaming nine Army posts memorializing Confederate military officers, as well as hundreds of buildings, roads and other items meant to honor the Confederacy.

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## **8. Pentagon does 'not object' to potential transfer of jets from Slovakia to Ukraine**

Washington Examiner Online, Apr. 12 (1232) | Mike Brest

The Pentagon would not stand in the way of a possible transfer of Slovakian fighter jets to Ukraine, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Tuesday.

Slovakia, which has already provided military technology to the Ukrainian military that the United States has back-filled, could provide MiG-29 fighter aircraft, Prime Minister Eduard Heger said Monday, according to Politico, though it's unclear how many the country would provide.

"We certainly would not object to it. We have no right to object to it," the defense official said, noting that the U.S., to its knowledge, was not involved in any of the discussion in facilitating the deal.

Earlier during the war in Ukraine, the U.S. nixed a proposed Polish deal that would provide Ukraine with MiG-29 aircraft because the Polish wanted to transfer the planes to U.S. custody first. The Pentagon called the possible deal “high-risk” and not “tenable.”

The defense official specified that the objection to the previous possible agreement was the role in getting the planes to Ukraine, not Poland’s idea to provide the aircraft.

“I want to stress again, from the very beginning, we said that these are sovereign decisions that nations can make, and we respect them, and if a nation wants to provide fixed-wing fighter aircraft to Ukraine, then that’s up to them to decide and for them to speak to. And what our goal again, our objections to the previous proposal was that the country in question expressed the desire to transfer them into our custody for us to deliver to Ukraine,” the official said.

“That is what we objected to. We did not object to the idea of the provision of fixed-wing aircraft to Ukraine, and that will be a decision in this case for Slovakia to make,” the official continued.

The Slovakian government is looking to move away from relying on MiGs because the upkeep on such aircraft requires a “relationship” with Russia, Heger said, noting that they’re waiting two more years to receive U.S.-made F-16s.

Ukrainian leaders continued to press Western governments for additional military resources as Russia has changed its operating tactics to focus on the Donbas region, the eastern and southeastern part of the country. The U.S. alone has provided \$1.7 billion in military aid since Russia invaded.

Last week, Slovakia provided the Ukrainians with an S-300 air defense system, and U.S. European Command repositioned one Patriot missile system to Slovakia in return.

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## EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

### **9. Team Biden scrambles to respond to claims of Russia chemical weapon use**

*The administration has said Russian chemical weapons use in Ukraine would trigger a ‘proportional’ U.S. response. Its pledge may soon be tested*

Politico Online, Apr. 12 (1323) | Alexander Ward and Jonathan Lemire

Alleged and unconfirmed claims of chemical weapons use by Russia in Ukraine has forced a scramble inside the White House to match President Joe Biden’s promise of an “in kind” response while avoiding further escalation of the conflict.

The White House is urging caution, noting that the use of chemical weapons remains unverified. U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive subject, said they have been running scenario-planning exercises on the possible use of chemical weapons, having publicly raised the alarm that Russian President Vladimir Putin may take such a step. The officials said that military options in Ukraine aren't on the table — echoing Biden's repeated position of not wanting to spark World War III.

The word used by multiple U.S. officials who've been involved in contingency planning for such an attack for at least a month is "proportional," meaning America and its allies intend to respond in a manner befitting the potential war crime.

Instead, some suggested America and its allies could impose further sanctions on Moscow or further bolster Ukraine's defenses with advanced weaponry. Biden aides have also speculated that the use of chemical weapons may be the final impetus for European nations to stop importing Russian energy, funds for which have fueled Putin's war machine and filled his country's coffers.

Before doing any of that, the first step is to confirm a Ukrainian military group's charge that Russia on Monday deployed a chemical substance in Mariupol. The Azov regiment, a frontline fighting unit that has fought Russia in the Donbas since 2014 and has been tied to neo-Nazi groups and white supremacists, said Russian troops dropped a chemical weapon from a drone and poisoned at least three people, though the group said the affected soldiers are not facing disastrous health effects. If true, that'd be the first known use of chemical weapons in the war since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

U.S. and European officials have yet to substantiate the accusation. Experts say a preliminary assessment could be made using photos or videos, if they exist, while U.S. or Western officials on the ground collect samples for more conclusive verification. Ukraine could also invite the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, a global watchdog headquartered in the Netherlands, to send a rapid-response team to the site for investigation.

Officials cautioned Tuesday that such a determination may not be imminent. It may take some time to assess if chemical weapons were used, just as it did during the conflict in Syria back in 2013.

"There's no independent verification in that area, so it's likely to be a long time," a European official told POLITICO. There are a "host of difficulties" in verifying the claims, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Tuesday. "These are difficult things to prove even when you are more proximate, and we are not."

Additionally, U.S. officials raised questions about the credibility of the Azov regiment, noting that the far-right group might be eager to provoke a larger confrontation. They also noted that Ukrainian officials, who have been quick to accuse Russia of atrocities, have not definitively declared that illicit weapons were used.

To that point, during his Monday address Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy did not confirm chemical weapons had been deployed, but did say he took the recent threat of their use in Mariupol by Russian-backed separatists “as seriously as possible.” But Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to the minister of Internal Affairs in Ukraine, hours beforehand tweeted that “Chemical weapons are used” in Mariupol.

Ned Price, the State Department spokesperson, told CNN hours later that the U.S. is working with Ukraine “to try and determine what exactly has transpired here.” British foreign minister Liz Truss added on Twitter that, “Any use of such weapons would be a callous escalation in this conflict and we will hold Putin and his regime to account.”

The U.S. has long warned that Russia might launch chemical weapons in Ukraine, prompting Biden to tell reporters in Europe last month that his administration would act swiftly if Putin’s troops went that far. “The nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use,” he said, adding “it would trigger a response in kind.”

It’s unclear as of now what the administration deems a “proportional” response to the alleged chemical weapons use in Mariupol. Publicly, Western officials condemn the use of all chemical weapons. But privately they acknowledge that there is a wide-range of lethality in such weapons – in other words, that there’s a big difference between a canister of chlorine and a sarin bomb dropped on a school. More severe consequences, they note, would be doled out in response to the potential use of more dangerous weapons.

What is clear, though, is that some response seems imminent were the international community to verify the Azov regiment’s accusation. “Any confirmed use of prohibited chemical weapons would trigger severe consequences for Russia,” said Andrew Weber, formerly the Pentagon’s top nuclear, biological and chemical weapons official during the Obama years.

The current moment echoes former-President Barack Obama’s “red line” in Syria, in which he pledged that chemical weapons use by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would trigger a U.S. response.

A year after Obama’s infamous remark, Assad’s forces killed more than 1,400 people with sarin gas. In response, then-Vice President Biden promised a crowd at the American Legion that “those who use chemical weapons against defenseless men, women and children should and must be held accountable.”

Ultimately, the Obama administration struck a deal with Russia to remove 600 metric tons of Syria’s chemical stockpile. Biden praised that decision at the time, crediting the White House for moving the world to act in the face of a “fundamental violation of human rights.” But the merits of the deal were soon thrown into doubt when Syrian forces oversaw additional chemical attacks in 2017 and 2018.

In response to those assaults, then president Donald Trump authorized strikes on Syrian targets.

“We cannot allow atrocities like that,” he said ahead of the second response.

Those strikes were largely symbolic responses. In the first instance, the Trump administration fired missiles at a Syrian air base from which planes had dropped the chemical weapons but gave advance notice to Russia to keep assets away from the targets. In so doing, it didn't ignite a larger global conflict, but it also didn't destroy the entirety of Syria's chemical weapons program.

Current administration officials insist that the situation is dramatically different now and that Biden has made no such red-line declaration either.

Striking Russia would be far more dangerous than hitting Syrian government targets. Moscow, armed with the world's largest nuclear arsenal and advanced cyber capabilities, could respond in a way that escalates the conflict outside of Ukraine's borders. As such, what is being considered now as a response to a confirmed chemical weapons attack are new sanctions, more weapons shipments to Ukraine or even a cyberattack.

"We will select the form and nature of our response based on the nature of the action Russia takes, and we'll do so in coordination with our allies. And we've communicated to the Russians ... that there will be a severe price if Russia uses chemical weapons," national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters in March, backing Biden's comments.

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## **10. GOP senators say Biden should share more intelligence support to Ukraine**

*Hill presses White House for more action in face of Russian invasion*

Washington Times Online, Apr. 12 (1528) | Mike Glenn

The Republican members of the Senate Intelligence Committee are pressing the Biden administration to step up its information-sharing with Ukraine following Russia's invasion in late February, which has cost thousands of lives and triggered Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and his GOP colleagues sent a letter Monday to Director of National Intelligence Avril N. Haines underscoring the need to share more U.S. intelligence with Ukraine's forces on Russia's plans and resources in the seven-week war.

"We remain deeply concerned that not enough is being done to share critical intelligence that would assist the Ukrainians as Russian forces move to secure territory in the southern and eastern parts of the country," the senators wrote.

Senator Rubio was joined in the letter by Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina; James E. Risch of Idaho; Susan Collins of Maine; Roy Blunt of Missouri; Tom Cotton of Arkansas, John Cornyn of Texas and Ben Sasse of Nebraska.

“We urge you to ensure that our intelligence agencies proactively share intelligence with the Ukrainians to help them protect, defend and retake every inch of Ukraine’s sovereign territory – which includes Crimea and the Donbas,” the senators wrote.

On Tuesday, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said the administration has been providing intelligence support to Ukraine, saying it had been “vital” to the Ukrainians’ success on the battlefield in holding back the larger and better-armed Russian forces.

“They’ve been very clear about that, publicly, as well,” she said during a briefing to the Washington, D.C.-based Defense Writers Group. “We will continue to look at the types of capabilities that the Ukrainians are asking for.”

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## **EUROPE**

### **11. Flow of Moscow Cyberattacks Continues**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13 (0200), Pg. A6 | Dustin Volz and Robert McMillan

Ukrainian and Western intelligence officials feared Moscow’s elite corps of state-sponsored hackers would launch crippling cyberattacks to complement its invasion of Ukraine. Instead the cyberwar has been something closer to Internet trench warfare: A grinding conflict of relentless, if sometimes unsophisticated attacks that have taken casualties but had limited impact on the course of the fight.

Some attacks have been bothersome, slowing some Ukrainians’ internet service or knocking it out, defacing websites, and destroying files on a small number of computers. Others have accomplished little more than keeping Ukraine’s cyber-defenders busy. Recently, as Russia’s strategic aims appear to be shifting to eastern Ukraine, more alarming attacks on Ukraine’s energy sector have been discovered, suggesting the next phase of the war could include a more active cyber conflict.

What Ukraine hasn’t seen is a successful type of massive, strategic-level attack on civilian infrastructure, given the aggression and technical ability that Moscow’s elite hackers have displayed in the past.

Still, the cyber fight has been “relentless,” according to Tom Burt, Microsoft Corp.’s vice president of customer security and trust. Microsoft has seen “at least one order of magnitude increase in the frequency and severity of the attacks since before the invasion,” Mr. Burt said.

“This is full-on, full-scale cyberwar,” he said.

Moscow has routinely denied allegations of cyberattacks against other countries and said recently its government websites were facing unprecedented cyber disruptions.

While cybersecurity analysts and intelligence officials are working to understand why the scale of the Russian cyber-offenses has been so much more limited than feared, several theories have emerged.

Russian strategists assumed the conventional campaign would wrap up in a matter of days and didn't appear to deploy their toughest cyber weapons, said U.S. officials. Ukraine's cyber defenses have improved in recent years, under constant attack from Russian hackers. Some of Russia's intelligence agencies may be waging propaganda and disinformation campaigns instead of launching offensive strikes, analysts say. And Russia may have overestimated its capabilities and underestimated Kyiv's.

"We're seeing B- or C-team players out of Russia," said Matthew Olney, a director with Cisco Systems Inc.'s Talos cybersecurity division. "It's fairly easy to track these folks -- they are not overly creative."

For Victor Zhora, the state cyberprotection agency's deputy chief, the current cyberwar in Ukraine began on Jan. 14 -- weeks before the first Russian tanks rolled in. On that day, hackers took government websites offline and tried to install their destructive "wiper" software designed to render computer systems inoperable.

Since then, Ukraine's government and critical business networks have faced a constant drumbeat of smaller-scale but still tactically significant attacks.

During the conflict, tests of internet services in Ukraine have shown a 16% reduction in connectivity, compared with the weeks before the war started, say researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology's Internet Outage Detection and Analysis project, which measures internet outages.

In addition, Ukraine has suffered hacks of government and corporate networks, phishing attacks, cyberattacks on citywide camera systems, near-daily attempts to install wiper software, and even tactical cyberattacks launched in conjunction with military strikes, according to representatives of Ukraine's State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection, and U.S. companies that are helping to defend these systems.

On Tuesday, ESET, a Slovak-based cybersecurity firm, and Ukraine's cybersecurity emergency response team reported that a new strain of malware had been wielded in an attack on high-voltage electrical substations in Ukraine that was scheduled to damage systems earlier this month.

The malware was similar to what was used in a previous grid attack in 2016 and was believed to be the handiwork of a notorious hacking unit within Russia's GRU military intelligence agency known as Sandworm, researchers said.

Officials didn't name the targeted utility but said it was privately run and that about two million people lived in the region that could have lost power. Though it was unsuccessful in knocking power offline, experts expressed alarm.

Yet, since the Ukrainian war began the worst hasn't come to pass. The Russians haven't taken down the Ukrainian power grid and they haven't caused a global cyber catastrophe.

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## **12. Ukrainian Forces Still Hold Mariupol as Russians Close In**

U.S. Naval Institute News, Apr. 12 (1719) | Heather Mongilio

Ukraine still controls its port city of Mariupol despite concerns that it might soon fall to Russia, a senior defense official told reporters Tuesday.

Mariupol has been a target for most of the nearly 50-day Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia used amphibious landing ships in the early days of the invasion to bring troops outside of the port city.

While it took the Russians longer than expected to reach Mariupol, Moscow bombarded the city with missiles, hitting a maternity hospital and residences.

"You've seen the devastation that Russian airstrikes have wrought on Mariupol in the city, but our assessment is that the Ukrainians are still fighting for it," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Tuesday.

Mariupol is a strategic target because the city would give Russia control of the Sea of Azov and create a land bridge to Crimea, Kirby said. It would also help Russia with its attacks on the Donbas region, the focus of Russia's invasion the past couple of weeks.

"So it has significance on many levels," Kirby said. "It also has great significance to the Ukrainian people, because of what it represents to their economic life ... because it is their city and it's part of their country, and they haven't given up on it, and we're not giving up on them either."

Russia continues to use airstrikes on Mariupol and the Donbas region, Kirby said. However, Moscow is also firing missiles from surface combatants in the Sea of Azov, he said, adding that it's unclear if any have landed in Mariupol.

Russia has been supplementing its airstrikes with missiles from ships, he said.

Russia continues to have approximately a couple dozen warships in the Black Sea, with around five ships in the Sea of Azov, a senior defense official told reporters Tuesday. A mix of minesweepers and frigates are operating in the Sea of Azov, while surface combatants and landing ships are in the Black Sea.

Mariupol has been hit hard by Russian fire, with the mayor of the city telling the Associated Press that 10,000 civilians had been killed and the death toll is expected to climb.

There are reports that Moscow has used chemical weapons on the city, AP reported, but the Pentagon could not confirm this, a senior defense official said Tuesday.

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### **13. U.S., Allies Aim to Force Russia to Shift Money Away From War**

Associated Press, Apr. 12 (1857) | Fatima Hussein

WASHINGTON -- The United States and its allies are pushing ahead with sanctions aimed at forcing Vladimir Putin to spend Russia's money propping up its economy rather than sustaining its "war machine" for the fight in Ukraine, a top Treasury Department official said Tuesday.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo, one of the main U.S. coordinators on the Russian sanctions strategy, said in an interview with The Associated Press that the goal is to make Russia "less able to project power in the future."

On the same day that inflation notched its steepest increase in decades, Adeyemo said reducing supply chain backlogs and managing the pandemic are key to bringing down soaring prices that he related to the ongoing land war in Ukraine, which has contributed to rising energy costs.

"Let's be clear that the increase in energy prices was caused by President Putin's invasion, and we're going to continue to see volatility in those markets as long as President Putin continues his illegitimate invasion of Ukraine," he said. He added that the Biden administration was "committed to doing everything we can to lower the cost of energy for the American people."

As Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's No. 2, Adeyemo is tasked with developing a sanctions strategy that many economists have equated to economic warfare with Russia. He's also leading Treasury's efforts to rebuild the American economy from the pandemic with equity at the fore.

Adeyemo discussed the next steps the U.S. and its allies will take to inflict financial pain on Russia and the complications the war has on rising costs to Americans back home.

The U.S. and its allies will next target the supply chains that contribute to the construction of Russia's war machine, Adeyemo said, which includes "everything from looking at ways to go after the military devices that have been built to use not only in Ukraine, but to project power elsewhere."

"What that means practically is that with less money, Russia will have less money to invest in their military," he said.

Adeyemo said Putin recently admitted that the Russian economy was going to have to transform. Adeyemo interpreted that to mean that “the Russian economy is less flexible, it’s smaller, it’s less able to project power into the future.”

Adeyemo’s work includes coordinating with U.S. allies to develop thousands of unprecedented sanctions on Russia’s leadership and its Central Bank, which is intended to cripple the country’s financial system.

Germany in particular faces international pressure to curb its business ties with Russia, which provides the European superpower with natural gas.

“Our German counterparts and my European counterparts in general are working as hard as possible to make plans to get off of Russian energy as quickly as possible, including last week’s announcement that they were going to ban Russian coal in the near term,” Adeyemo said. “And our expectation is that they’re going to take these steps.”

In the U.S., the economy has proven to be a struggle for the Biden administration as the strong job gains of the past year have also yielded the worst inflation in more than four decades.

The Labor Department reported Tuesday that prices in March climbed 8.5% from a year ago, the steepest increase since December 1981. While inflation began to increase before Russia invaded the Ukraine, the war has strained supplies of oil and gasoline. Half of the past month’s increase in consumer prices came from gas.

This economic volatility is a challenge to other work that Adeyemo is tasked with for Treasury — leading an equitable pandemic-related economic recovery through Treasury’s Office of Recovery Programs, which marks its one year anniversary this week.

Adeyemo said he had recently visited Memphis to see how the city was using American Rescue Plan dollars to help people pay their rent. Overall, he said, “we’ve seen 80% applied towards low income households, 40% to African American households and 20% to Latinx households.”

He said it was imperative that remaining relief money under the program be used to help small businesses, including through the State Small Business Credit Initiative, which allows states to increase access to credit for small businesses.

“Lots of communities are thinking through ways to not only use the money to address the immediate crisis, but how they build their communities better into the future in order to make sure that people have economic opportunity,” he said.

*--Associated Press writer Josh Boak contributed to this report*

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## RUSSIA

### **14. Russian Scientists Say They Have A New System to Monitor Attacks on the Russian Internet** *Attacks on Russian web services have grown considerably since the start of the invasion*

DefenseOne.com, Apr. 12 (1102) | Patrick Tucker

As Russia rains artillery fire down on Ukrainian cities, cyber attackers from around the world have been targeting Russian media, cryptocurrency services, and retail brands with denial of service attacks. A group of Russian scientists say that they've developed a new tool to block such attacks—but even that is an indication that severe economic sanctions are changing life in Russia.

Engineers from Samara University developed a tool they called NetTestBox to monitor internet traffic into and out of Russia. “The information obtained by the system allows you to track unauthorized data leaks, see what part of the traffic goes through foreign channels, and, therefore, is vulnerable to external shutdown,” according to a Monday article from Russia’s Izvestia news outlet. (Like most Russian media, the site is state-controlled.)

The testbox will “allow us to detect our country’s disconnections from international data exchange points and help assess the impact of unfriendly actions on [the Russian internet]. The system can be used to form a secure and independent digital space from other countries,” the article said.

Sam Bendett, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and an adviser at the CNA Corporation, said the development is another symptom of the sanctions on Russian IT.

“For years, the Russian infosec industry was preparing for a possible disconnect from international Internet data exchanges. Now, with the unprecedented IT sanctions that are impacting Russia’s high-tech industry, some in Russia think that threat may come to fruition. This NetTestBox is only a prototype, but similar technologies probably already exist in the Russian infosec ecosystem,” he told Defense One.

Since the start of Russia’s expanded invasion of Ukraine, attackers from around the world have been targeting Russian internet services with distributed denial of service, or DDOS, attacks. Considered less severe than a “hack,” a cyber attack suggesting penetration of a victim computer or multiple computers in a network, a DDOS attack floods the target with internet traffic, making the site inaccessible from outside.

DDOS attacks against Russian media, internet service providers, cryptocurrency sites, and retail sites—in that order—have been on the rise in the first quarter of this year, according to a new report published today by Cloudflare. The company, which specializes in helping sites prevent or recover from DDOS attacks, estimates that Russia became the fourth biggest DDOS target in the period from January until the end of March, up from the sixth largest target in the final quarter of last year.

“The majority of HTTP DDOS attacks that targeted Russian companies originated from Germany, the U.S., Singapore, Finland, India, the Netherlands, and Ukraine. It’s important to note that being able to identify where cyber attack traffic originates is not the same as being able to attribute where the attacker is located,” Cloudflare notes in the report.

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## **INDO-PACIFIC**

### **15. USS Abraham Lincoln operating in Sea of Japan following North Korea missile tests**

Navy Times Online, Apr. 12 (1843) | Diana Stancy Correll

The aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and its carrier strike group are operating off the Korean peninsula for the first time since 2017.

The operations in the Sea of Japan follow North Korea’s test-firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile in March.

“The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is conducting bilateral operations with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in the Sea of Japan,” Cmdr. Hayley Sims, a spokesperson for the 7th Fleet, said in an email to Navy Times. “Routine bilateral operations like this one reassure our allies and partners of the U.S. commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

“Our training enhances the credibility of conventional deterrence by demonstrating the strength of our bilateral partnerships,” Sims said.

On March 24, North Korea test-fired an intercontinental range ballistic missile marking the first time Pyongyang has carried out a long-range test since 2017 and the 12th weapons launch of 2022.

The same day, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and South Korea’s Minister of National Defense Suh Wook spoke on the phone about the test, and Austin emphasized that the U.S. commitment to South Korea is unwavering, according to the Pentagon.

“The two leaders pledged to continue close consultations between military authorities of the ROK and the U.S. going forward and agreed on the importance of maintaining a robust U.S.-ROK combined defense posture,” the Department of Defense said in a statement.

The Lincoln departed San Diego Jan. 3 for a regularly scheduled deployment. The deployment is significant, in part, because it’s the first to include Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 the Marine Corps’ first F-35C

The four drones will further refine requirements for future systems, Christina Allee with the NAWCAD experimentation office told USNI News.

“These demonstrations help both AIRLANT and MSC start defining the concept of operations and how they would integrate these capabilities,” she said.

“Part of doing this is not just looking for the technology but it’s also working, enabling the fleet to identify how they would do the concept of operations.”

NAVAIR has used the Blue Water UAS program as an example of how best to use tools for rapid research and development to meet fleet needs.

“In many instances, especially in the UAV market, industry has really made a substantial investment over the last five years, probably outpacing [the Defense Department] in many areas,” Schmidt said.

“If you started out with just a basic requirement in the standard acquisition process, it may be two years or more before you even get the ability to start to look at candidates. These guys are out there doing it right now today, in less than a year.”

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## **SPACE FORCE**

### **30. Russia is jamming GPS satellite signals in Ukraine, U.S. Space Force says**

*‘Ukraine may not be able to use GPS,’ a Space Force official told NBC*

Space.com, Apr. 12 (1338) | Elizabeth Howell

Another piece of space infrastructure for Ukraine is under attack, according to an NBC report.

Jammers from Russian forces besieging the country are targeting global positioning system (GPS) satellites that are used for navigation, mapping and other purposes, the report said, quoting the U.S. Space Force.

“Ukraine may not be able to use GPS because there are jammers around that prevent them from receiving any usable signal,” Gen. David Thompson, the Space Force’s vice chief of space operations, told NBC Nightly News Monday (April 11).

“Certainly the Russians understand the value and importance of GPS and try to prevent others from using it,” Thompson added. He noted that Russia has not directly attacked any satellites in orbit, but the Space Force is keeping an eye out for such possibilities.

Specifically, Russia is targeting the Navstar system of satellites used by the United States and made available openly to many countries around the world, Thompson said. (Russia has its own independent system, called GLONASS, while the Europeans have one called Galileo and China has one called Beidou.)

Navstar uses 24 main satellites that each orbit the Earth every 12 hours. The system works by sending synchronized signals to users on Earth. Because the satellites move in different directions, the user receives their signals at slightly different times. When four satellites are available, GPS receivers can use their signals to calculate the user's position, often to within just a few feet.

Ukraine is also suffering from a lack of Internet connectivity as a result of the Russian attacks, which began Feb. 24 and are ongoing. SpaceX, at Ukraine's request, has shipped thousands of Starlink terminals to the country to provide an independent set of infrastructure.

In early March, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk noted that Starlink signals have also been jammed, although his company is adapting. "Some Starlink terminals near conflict areas were being jammed for several hours at a time," Musk wrote via Twitter on March 1. "Our latest software update bypasses the jamming."

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## MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY

### **31. Into the Military Metaverse: An empty buzzword or a virtual resource for the Pentagon?**

*'You think about, like, a picture's worth 1,000 words, the video clip's worth a million words – well, how much is it worth to be able to literally experience it based on anywhere you are?'*

BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 (1935) | Andrew Eversden

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN REALITY AND A VIRTUAL EXISTENCE -- In December, a small office within the stoic Air Force bureaucracy hosted a meeting with some 250 people, gathered in a conference room with the usual whiteboards, sticky notes and yellow folders.

But the conference room didn't exist, and the attendees were hundreds of miles apart, spread from the United States to Japan, all wearing Oculus headsets.

With that meeting, visitors entered into the beating heart of the explosive, if uncertain, hype-cycle of the metaverse, a concept that has percolated for decades but was brought fully into the mainstream last year when Facebook rebranded as Meta.

Now, the metaverse, essentially interconnected virtual worlds likely accessed through virtual or augmented reality, is gripping the consumer world and expanding. The NBA's Brooklyn Nets have filed trademarks for

And while it seems unlikely that right now a soldier would have a persistent virtual presence that follows them around, it could provide for more accurate training. More data flow could allow soldiers to train against the performance characteristics of an enemy. Or, if the soldier's virtual presence was uploaded with their matching physical profiles, it could provide for more realistic training that could highlight the physical limitations of a soldier and their squads.

"If it makes sense to have a persistent digital persona that, let's say, matches your real-world physical characteristics so that in all the different simulations and training tools, you are at your correct level of performance relative to the other people you're working with — if that's the right way to solve the problem, I'm confident the military will do it," Luckey said.

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **32. Stop Buying Uranium From Russia**

Wall Street Journal, Apr. 13 (0200), Pg. A13 | Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY)

In 2018 I asked on these pages, "Why is the U.S. relying on adversaries to supply it with uranium?" Since then, a large U.S. supplier -- Russia -- has gone from adversary to aggressor to having its leaders accused of war crimes.

Vladimir Putin's Ukraine invasion exposed the foolishness of relying on despotic regimes for resources, particularly energy. Under pressure from Congress, President Biden belatedly banned Russian oil, natural-gas and coal imports. But he continues to ignore the fuel powering 20% of U.S. electricity generation -- uranium. More than 90% of the uranium that fuels U.S. power plants is imported, and Russia is the third-largest supplier. In 2021 Russian imports cost almost \$1 billion, money that helped underwrite Mr. Putin's war machine.

The U.S. is a global leader in commercial nuclear-reactor technologies. Why are we a laggard when it comes to fueling them?

A robust domestic nuclear-fuel supply chain would make the U.S. more energy secure. We can tap large uranium reserves in my home state, Wyoming, and elsewhere. Russia's state-owned nuclear-energy corporation, Rosatom, however, has flooded the market with subsidized fuel since 1991, the U.S. government says. That has driven America's only uranium conversion facility to shut down and its only enrichment facility to reduce output.

Mr. Putin has a personal interest in the success of Rosatom, a company he founded in 2007. Rosatom is a global full-service nuclear company. It builds and fuels reactors and removes spent fuel. It is an important source of Russian revenue. Rosatom has become a significant lever of Russian foreign policy. Mr. Putin personally pitched Rosatom's services to India, Egypt and Turkey. The company also has a \$10 billion contract to expand Iran's

Bushehr plant. Worryingly, Mr. Biden seems so eager for an Iran nuclear deal that he appears willing to waive sanctions on both countries so this contract can proceed.

The U.S. cannot develop a commercial capability to compete against Rosatom while we depend on foreign uranium. In 2020 Congress capped Russian uranium imports. Now we need to end them.

We must also establish a strategic uranium reserve to spur domestic production. Congress appropriated \$75 million to the Energy Department to establish one in 2020, yet the department hasn't purchased a single ounce of U.S. uranium.

Complementing efforts to produce more ore, we need an enrichment capability to produce high-assay, low-enriched uranium, or HALEU, for advanced reactors like TerraPower's Natrium being built in Wyoming.

Today, only Rosatom and the Energy Department are capable of producing HALEU. It's bad enough that we rely on Russian fuel for existing reactors. The same dependence for advanced reactors is unacceptable. The department should form partnerships with the private sector to establish a commercial HALEU-enrichment capability and in the meantime make its stockpile of enriched uranium available.

Europe has been rightly criticized for getting hooked on Russian energy. Now America must free itself from Russian uranium. I have introduced legislation to do this. Our nuclear supply chain should begin with American-mined uranium and end with American fuel. It is time to put Mr. Putin's nuclear cash cow out to pasture.

*--Mr. Barrasso, a Republican, is a U.S. senator from Wyoming*

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### **33. If Ukraine falls, Putin could take aim at the Baltics next**

Washington Post, Apr. 13 (0115), Pg. A21 | Michael Gerson

I was with President George W. Bush when he visited Lithuania in 2002, just after the Baltic states had been offered membership in NATO. Bush had been one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in the alliance, which would establish the obligation of mutual defense.

At the celebration ceremony, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus presented Bush with the Cross of the Order of Vytautas the Great, his country's highest honor. Bush presented Adamkus with a basketball signed by Michael Jordan, revealing a different set of cultural priorities. But Bush's speech that day (which I helped produce) highlighted a greater gift: "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy," he said, "has also made an enemy of the United States of America. In the face of aggression, the brave people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will never again stand alone."

You could almost hear three nations exhale in relief. The Baltics have the misfortune of sitting at a bloody geopolitical crossroads, and their last two occupations were particularly horrifying. Nazi German “killing units” murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews. The Soviet Union deported half a million Baltic citizens to gulags or Siberia. The Soviets also imported ethnic Russians to change the ethnic composition of these conquered nations.

The United States never recognized Soviet Russia’s illegal occupation of the Baltics. But its and NATO’s commitment to prevent any future occupation engendered some controversy. Experts such as George Kennan thought that NATO membership for a former constitutive republic of the U.S.S.R. would needlessly provoke the Russians. And some military observers found the actual NATO defense of the Baltics - on Russia’s border and far from NATO’s centers of military power - to be a near impossibility.

The argument over the NATO-ization of the Baltics was a prelude to disputes over Russian President Vladimir Putin’s intentions in Ukraine and beyond. Some experts bluntly explain - as did the title of a 2014 article by the University of Chicago political scientist John J. Mearsheimer - “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault.” Mearsheimer contended that Russian leaders “would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion.”

In this view, Putin is primarily the defender of the Russian homeland. His soldiers might have the moral restraint of drunken Cossacks, but he is resisting the hubristic expansion of a hostile military alliance.

This conviction, no doubt, is widely shared among Russians, and easily exploitable by their leader. Putin has portrayed his unprovoked attack on Ukraine as another reaction to fascist aggression from the West. His deception runs along well-worn historical grooves. Over the centuries, Russia has faced invasions from across the vast, flat plain reaching from Germany to the heart of Mother Russia. For many older Russians, memories of World War II consist mainly of Western perfidy and Russian indomitability.

Putin has written almost lyrically about the spiritual unity between Kyiv and Moscow. Evidently he bombs only the ones he loves. But his intentions are far more practical. The Putin-NATO divide might not rise to the level of ideological conflict, but it does involve a serious argument about the future of Europe.

Most recent U.S. presidents have maintained that NATO expansion is the natural outcome of a rules-based international order. European countries that meet defined standards on good governance, economic freedom and civilian control of the military can be admitted. This has helped consolidate several democratic transitions in Eastern Europe. It has also helped rectify the terrible wrong of the Yalta agreements, which formally cut Europe into areas of dominance and threw a number of vulnerable nations to the wolves.

Putin’s contrasting goal, says former U.S. ambassador to NATO and Russia Alexander Vershbow, is “to pressure the West into accepting some sort of Yalta 2, a Europe divided into spheres of influence with limited sovereignty for everyone but Russia.” This would allow him to restore Russian hegemony over its “near abroad.”

Why is this conflict between rules and spheres so important? If Putin is engaged in a defensive struggle, then the Ukraine war is mainly about Ukraine. Some will propose that President Volodymyr Zelensky make the necessary concessions - no Ukrainian NATO membership, Russian control of the Donbas region - to end a bloody war. Peace through self-dismemberment.

But if Putin is attempting to reconstruct the Russian sphere of influence in Europe, his success in Ukraine would pave the way for future horrors. The logic that led to Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine - no NATO in the Russian sphere - would almost certainly lead toward the Baltics.

The lesson? Ukraine, with aggressive help from NATO, must defeat Russian forces, or the United States might soon face the question: Do we really fight for Lithuania? Though we are obligated, the decision and task would not be easy. Helping draw a NATO redline at Ukraine could help the United States preserve itself from impossible choices of the future.

*--Michael Gerson is a nationally syndicated columnist who appears twice weekly in The Post. Gerson serves as senior adviser at One, a bipartisan organization dedicated to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable diseases. Until 2006, Gerson was a top aide to President George W. Bush as assistant to the president for policy and strategic planning. Prior to that appointment, he served in the White House as deputy assistant to the president and director of presidential speechwriting and assistant to the president for speechwriting and policy adviser*

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#### **34. How the Pentagon's bad inflation math made a hollow budget**

*If inflation trends keep, AEI's John Ferrari says DoD will see buying power plummet even as it spends billions*  
BreakingDefense.com, Apr. 12 (0934) | John Ferrari

While consumers are feeling the pinch of inflation in everyday life, the US military is feeling it to the tune of billions of dollars in spending power. In the op-ed below, AEI's John Ferrari argues the military should've seen it coming, and now Congress must act to rescue a defense budget based on flawed economic assumptions.

A staggering 8.5%. This is the US government's March inflation rate in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), released today.

About a month ago, my colleague, Elaine McCusker and I wrote that the Pentagon should, in its FY23 budget release, not hide behind "rosy assumptions and passing the buck" to wish away inflation. Unfortunately, the Defense Department's 2023 budget not only ignores the rising inflation, it does just what we said they shouldn't do, and the new CPI figures should continue to raise the cause for alarm.