

Conflict Update # 56

May 11th, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Key Takeaways – Operational

The Ukrainian counteroffensive north of Kharkiv City has forced Russian troops onto the defensive and has successfully alleviated artillery pressure on Kharkiv City.

Russian forces continued efforts to encircle Ukrainian positions in the Severodonetsk-Rubizhne-Lysychansk area but did not make any confirmed advances.

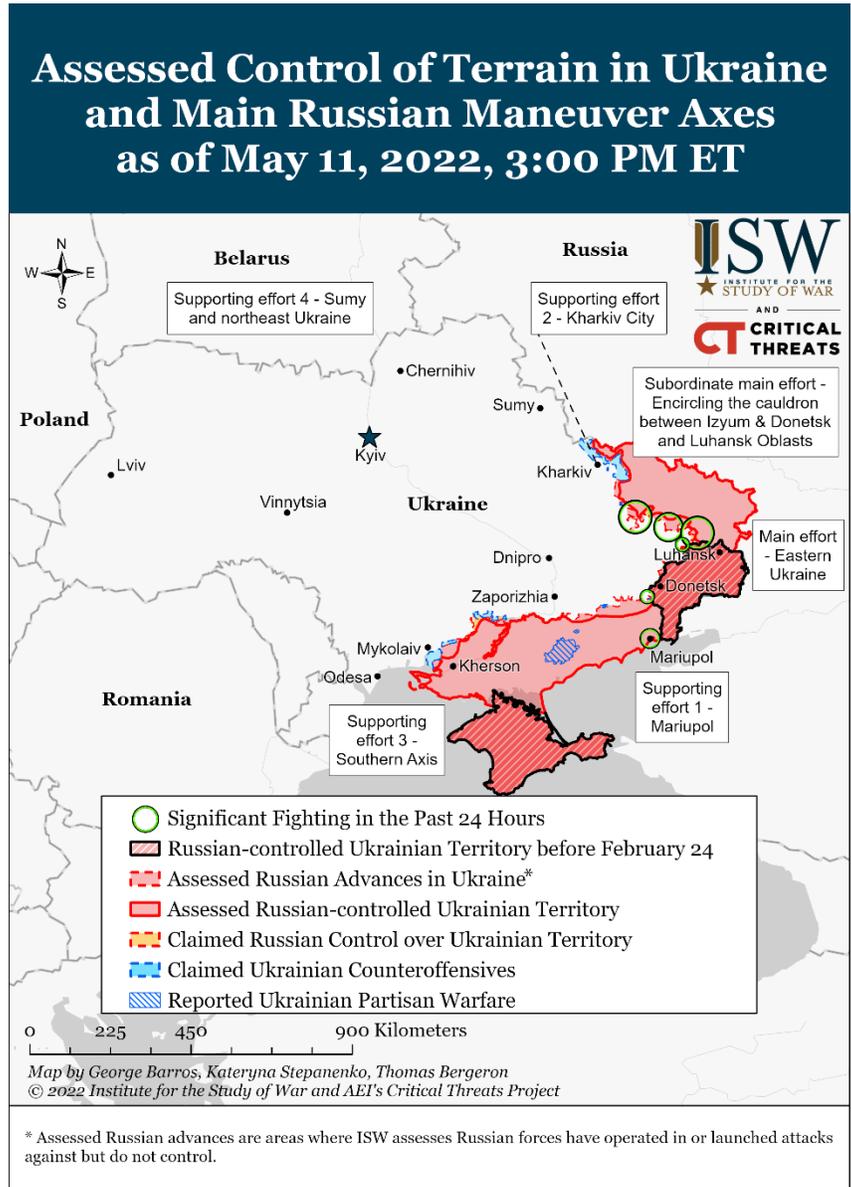
Russian forces may be initiating a new advance towards Bakhmut after capturing Popasna in order to secure highway access north to Slovyansk.

Russian forces are attempting to consolidate their positions in western Kherson Oblast to push into Mykolaiv Oblast.

Pro-Russian Telegram sources reported Ukrainian forces may be conducting a counterattack 40km north of Izyum to cut off Russian units in this key town, though ISW cannot confirm these reports at this time.

Subordinate Main Effort— Southern Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts

Russian forces fired at Ukrainian positions around Izyum but did not make any confirmed advances today. Ukrainian General Staff stated that elements of the Russian Airborne Forces (VDV), 1st Guards Tank Army, 20th, 29th, 35th, and 36th Combined Arms Armies, and 68th Army Corps focused on inflicting fire damage on Ukrainian troops around Izyum. The Deputy Chief of the Ukrainian General Staff's Main Operations Department, Brigadier General Oleksiy Gromov, additionally stated that Russian forces have moved to defense and deterrence actions around Izyum due to the successful Ukrainian defense. Pro-Russian media outlet Readkova noted that Ukrainian forces are attempting to cross the Severskyi Donets River by Chepil (about 40 kilometers northwest of Izyum) to cut off Russian ground supply lines to Izyum, although ISW cannot independently confirm this claim.



Russian forces today continued ground offensives westward in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast and also continued attempts to encircle the Rubizhne-Severodonetsk-Lysychansk area and Ukrainian sources reported intense fighting in Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne, Bilohorivka, Vojevodivka, Nyzhnie, Toshkivka, and Orikhove.[4] Russian forces are also likely preparing for a new line of advance towards Bakhmut, about 50 kilometers southeast of Slovyansk, along the M03 highway. Head of Luhansk Regional State Administration Serhiy Haidai stated that Russian forces are firing on the road that runs between Lysychansk and Bakhmut to interdict Ukrainian troops, which is consistent with claims made by a Russian war reporter that Russian forces are developing an offensive towards Bakhmut. Bakhmut lies just west of Popasna and the Donetsk-Luhansk Oblast border, which Russian forces reportedly crossed on May 10. The move towards Bakhmut is likely intended to gain access to the M03 highway and continue the northwestward push towards Slovyansk. Russian forces continued unsuccessful ground assaults around Donetsk City, as they have for the last several days.

Supporting Effort #1—Mariupol - Russian forces continued to conduct ground attacks against Ukrainian positions in the Azovstal Steel Plant with the support of air and artillery strikes on May 11. The Azov Regiment stated that Russian forces launched 38 airstrikes and 4 strategic bombing flights on Azovstal in the last 24 hours.

Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol Petro Andryushchenko claimed that Russian authorities are deporting those who are deemed to be “suspicious” during filtration measures in Mariupol to a detention camp in Olenivka, Donetsk Oblast. Andryushchenko compared the facility to a concentration camp and stated that detainees are subject to overcrowding, atrocious conditions, mass interrogations, and forced disappearances. ISW cannot independently confirm these claims, but they are fully in line with previously reported Russian “filtration” measures in occupied Ukraine.

Supporting Effort #2—Kharkiv City - Russian forces moved to the defensive in order to prevent further advances north to the Russian border by the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive around Kharkiv City on May 11. Pro-Russian media outlet Readkova reported that Ukrainian forces are preparing for an offensive in Kozacha Lopan and Tsupivka, both within 10 kilometers of the international border, confirming reports from May 10 that Ukrainian forces had advanced to within 10 kilometers of the Russian border. Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the Russian 6th and 41st Combined Arms Armies and coastal units of the Baltic and Northern Fleets are conducting reconnaissance against Ukrainian positions in northern Kharkiv to stymie further advances. The General Staff statement notably does not mention the Russian 1st Guards Tank Army, which was active in the area as of May 8. If confirmed, this may indicate that elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army withdrew to Belgorod to reconstitute and refit following losses sustained around Kharkiv City. Head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration Oleg Syneubov noted that artillery pressure against the northeastern suburbs of Kharkiv City has been alleviated, indicating Ukrainian forces have successfully driven Russian forces largely out of artillery range of Kharkiv City.

Supporting Effort #3—Southern Axis - Russian forces continued to shell Ukrainian positions along the Southern Axis but did not make any confirmed advances on May 11. Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces are attempting to take control of Bruskynske and Velyka Oleksandrivka to improve their tactical position in the South. These settlements lie within 15 kilometers of the Kherson-Mykolaiv border and would likely allow Russian troops to conduct offensive actions towards Mykolaiv. The UK Ministry of Defense stated that Russian troops are likely trying to reinforce their garrison on Snake Island off the coast of Odesa for increased access to the northwestern Black Sea. The situation in Transnistria remains tense but unchanged.

Supporting Effort #4—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine - There were no significant events on this axis in the past 24 hours.

Immediate items to watch

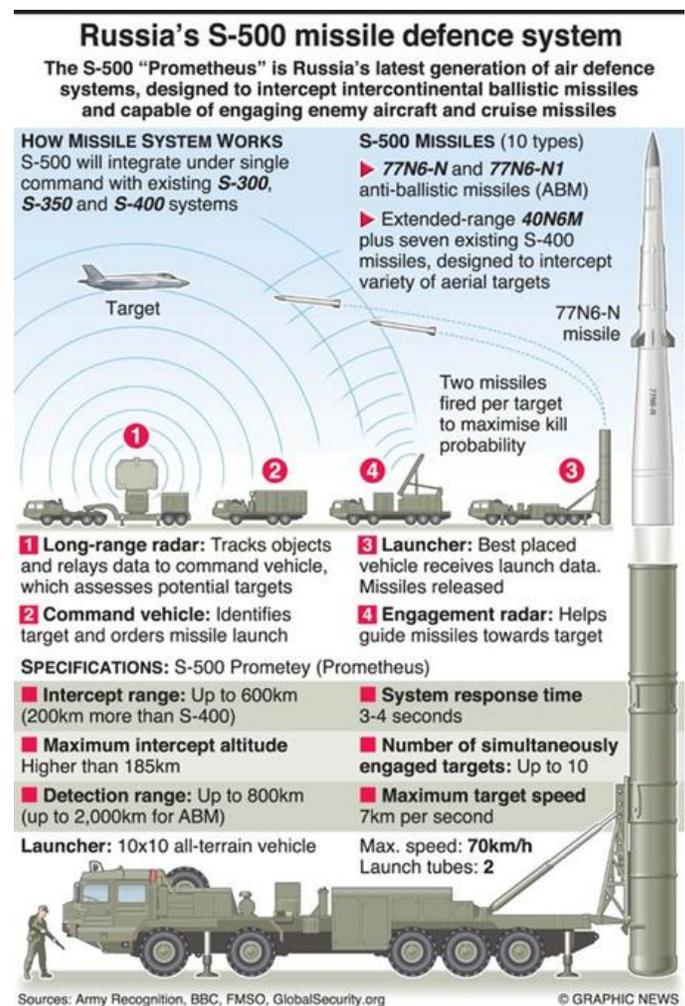
- The Belarusian Defense Ministry announced the second stage of rapid response force exercises, but Belarus remains unlikely to join the war in Ukraine.
- Russian forces will likely continue to merge offensive efforts southward of Izyum with westward advances from Donetsk in order to encircle Ukrainian troops in southern Kharkiv Oblast and Western Donetsk.
- Russia is likely setting conditions to integrate occupied Ukrainian territories directly into Russia, as opposed to creating proxy “People’s Republics.”
- Russian forces have apparently decided to seize the Azovstal plant through ground assault and will likely continue operations accordingly.
- Ukrainian counteroffensives around Kharkiv City are pushing back Russian positions northeast of the city towards the international border and will likely continue to force the Russians to reinforce those positions at the cost of reinforcing Russian offensive operations elsewhere.
- Russian forces may be preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.

Russian S500 Missile system - The S-500 Prometey, also known as 55R6M "Triumfator-M", [2] is a Russian surface-to-air missile/anti-ballistic missile system intended to replace the A-135 missile system currently in use, and supplement the S-400. The S-500 was developed by the Almaz-Antey Air Defence Concern. Initially planned to be in production by 2014, the first unit was finally delivered in 2021.

In May 2018, Russia conducted the longest range surface-to-air missile test to date with the S-500. According to reports citing unnamed sources familiar with U.S. intelligence on the program, the S-500 was able to hit a target 482 km (300 miles) away, which is 80 km further than the previous record.

On 4 June 2019, the Russian Ministry of Defense posted a video showing the successful launch of a new anti ballistic missile system in the form of a long range surface to air missile. Though the nature of the air defence system which was being tested was not mentioned it has been widely speculated to have been a test of the S-500 Prometheus long range surface to air missile system.

The S-500 radar was tested in late 2019, and is designed for intercepting and destroying intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as hypersonic cruise missiles and aircraft, for air defense against Airborne Early Warning and Control and for jamming aircraft.[citation needed] With a planned range of 600 km (370 mi) for anti-ballistic missile (ABM) and 500 km (310 miles) for air defense, the S-500 would be able to detect and simultaneously engage up to 10 ballistic hypersonic targets flying at a speed of 5 kilometres per second (3.1 mi/s) to a limit of 7 km/s (4.3 mi/s).



It also aims at destroying hypersonic cruise missiles and other aerial targets at speeds of higher than Mach 5, as well as spacecraft. The altitude of a target engaged can be as high as 180–200 km (110–120 miles). It is effective against ballistic missiles with a launch range of 3,500 km (2,200 miles), the radar reaches a radius of 3,000 km. Other targets it has been announced to defend against include unmanned aerial vehicles, low Earth orbit satellites, space weapons launched from hypersonic aircraft, and hypersonic orbital platforms.

Ukraine has proposed to Russia that badly injured defenders in the Azovstal steel plant in the southern port of Mariupol be swapped for Russian prisoners of war, deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on Wednesday. “There is no agreement yet. Negotiations are continuing,” she said in a post on Telegram.

Ukraine has claimed it has recaptured the town of Pytomnyk, north of Kharkiv and about halfway to the Russian border - The occupying forces moved to the defense in order to slow down the pace of the offensive of our troops,” Ukraine’s general staff of the armed forces said in its latest operational report.

In the course of successful actions of units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the settlement of Pytomnyk of Kharkiv region was liberated.”

“We are having successes in the Kharkiv direction, where we are steadily pushing back the enemy and liberating population centres,” Brigadier General Oleksiy Hromov, Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of Ukraine’s General Staff added.

Ukraine has said its military has destroyed pontoon bridges that Russian troops were using to cross a river in the eastern Luhansk region - The Ukrainian defence ministry published photos of what it said were destroyed Russian tanks and other armoury in the village of Bilohorivka, near the strategic Ukrainian-held city of Lysychansk.

Luhansk regional head Serhiy Haidai described Bilohorivka as a “fortress” that - like the city of Mariupol - was “holding back a great number” of Russian troops.

Heavy fighting has been raging in the region for days.

Retreating Russian soldiers leave behind Putin’s true plans for Ukraine - It was reported today that some Russian soldiers in Ukraine are in retreat, leaving behind information that gives a guide for Putin's ultimate goal.

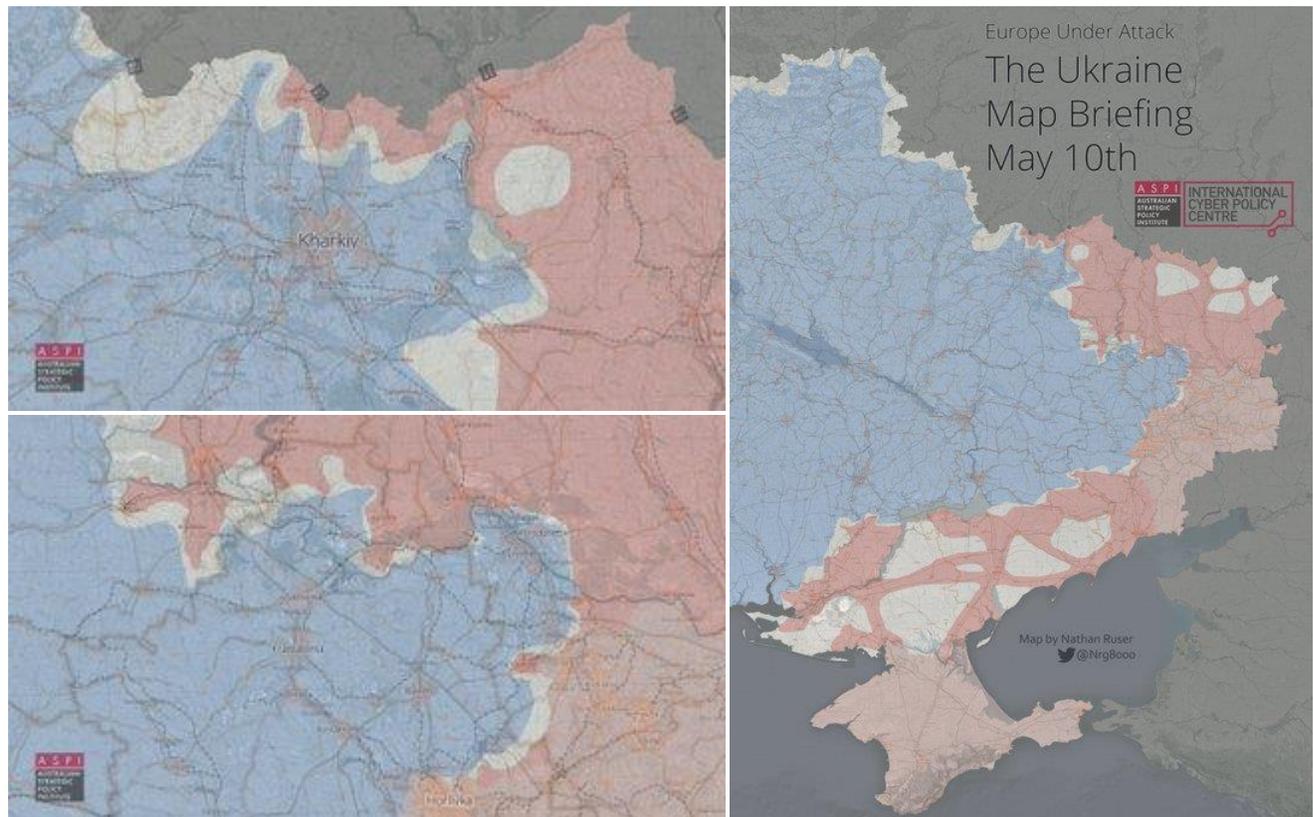
The Daily Beast reported that amid the rubble of the Ukrainian town of Trostyanets in Sumy Oblast, forces found documents showing the details about why Russia is focusing so much on attacks of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. Putin made it clear in his speech ahead of the invasion that he wants to reestablish the former Soviet Union.

“Investigators... found important documents of soldiers of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces that give a clear understanding that Russia was preparing to seize all the territory of Ukraine,” said Chief Oleksiy Sukhachev of Ukraine’s State Bureau of Investigation. “All this information will be studied.”

“We assess President Putin is preparing for prolonged conflict in Ukraine during which he still intends to achieve goals beyond the Donbas,” U.S. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines recently said when speaking to lawmakers.

NATO believes that while Putin might seem to be focusing on the Donbas and southern regions, which could allow for a land bridge to Crimea, he wants all of Ukraine.

Ukraine Maps Reveal How Much Territory Russia Has Lost in Just a Few Days - New maps have shown how much territory the Russian army has lost in Ukraine in the past few days as foreign intelligence agencies say that Russia clearly underestimated the resistance they would face from Ukrainians.



Nathan Ruser, a researcher for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), an independent non-partisan think tank, shared multiple maps on his Twitter page on Tuesday showing some changes in Ukraine in terms of territory control.

"Putin's war -- The May 10th Map briefing, relatively few changes," he said in a tweet alongside the pictures. "Ukrainian troops advanced into five abandoned villages near Kharkiv. Russian troops captured the town of Velkya Komyhuvakha near Izyum. Clean-up ops continue on the company of Russian troops that cross the Donets."

The maps indicate that the blue areas are under the control of Ukraine and the red areas are in control by Russian forces. Newsweek has not been able to independently confirm the veracity of the maps, however.

Earlier this week, other maps were shared on social media that indicated that Russian forces have been retreating from Kharkiv. This is while Ukrainian armed forces make significant advances north and northwest of the city, as shown in unverified maps tracking the invasion.

Ukraine forces pushing back Russian troops in Kharkiv - Ukraine's government has suggested Kyiv could expand its own war aims with an intensifying counteroffensive against Russia's forces, and said it would suspend the flow of Russian gas through its country to Europe.

With the war now in its 11th week and Russia pounding the vital port of Odesa with missile strikes in an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said late last night that the military was gradually pushing Russian troops away from the key city of Kharkiv and back towards the border with Russia.

The Ukrainian military's general staff said its forces drove the Russians out of four villages to the north-east of Kharkiv, a key city that has been under attack from the Russians since the beginning of the conflict.

Peace Talks

Peace talks harder 'with each new Bucha,' says Zelenskyy - Ukraine's President Zelenskyy warned Kyiv was running out of patience to hold talks with Russia, given the mounting evidence of atrocities committed by Russian forces in his country.

He added: *"With each new Bucha, with each new Mariupol, with each new city where there are dozens of dead people, cases of rape, with each new atrocity, the desire and the possibility to negotiate disappears, as well as the possibility of resolving this issue in a diplomatic manner."*

Zelenskyy also said he wanted to restore Ukraine's territory before an end of the war with Russia could be envisioned, adding: Once we recoup all that is ours, we will finish this. The war will end when Ukraine reclaims everything that Russia took from it, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has maintained.

Putin

Putin Appoints Acting Governors Of Five Regions After Predecessors Resigned - Putin has appointed acting governors to five regions of the country hours after their predecessors announced they were stepping down.

The Kremlin said today that Putin met a day earlier with the officials he had chosen to appoint as acting governors of the Kirov, Ryazan, Saratov, and Tomsk regions, and the Republic of Mari El.

While Putin has often replaced officials ahead of elections with the aim of fielding stronger candidates backed by the Kremlin, the timing of the move has raised speculation that he may be frustrated at the failure of Russia's army to quickly defeat Ukraine after invading it in late February.

The Russian-controlled administration in the Ukrainian city of Kherson has said it plans to request annexation by Moscow, a move that would confirm the Kremlin's permanent occupation of Ukrainian territory captured since February. It is not clear whether the Kremlin will go forward with an annexation or is using it as a threat to put pressure on Kyiv.

Russia has signaled intent to end 'current phase' of invasion, cut losses with Kherson referendum - Russia has potentially signaled intent to end the invasion of Ukraine and integrate the Kherson region, an intelligence expert told Fox News Digital.

Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov told journalists that "residents of Kherson must decide for themselves" whether they will "appeal" for "integration of the region into the Russian territory," according to TASS.

Peskov refused to be drawn on the possibility of a referendum, saying he "stated what I wanted to state," but former DIA officer Rebekah Koffler argued that Moscow will proceed with a referendum to provide "legal justification" for Russia to integrate Kherson.

"This is standard Russian statecraft," Koffler explained. "In 2014, 95.5% of Crimean residents voted for joining Russia."

But Koffler, author of "Putin's Playbook: Russia's Secret Plan to Defeat America," further believes that integrating Kherson would be enough for Putin to say he achieved his goal for the current phase of the invasion, which Moscow has continued to call a "special operation" in Ukraine.

Sanctions

Russia Sanctions European Gazprom Units In Countries That Have Imposed Sanctions On Russia - Russia has imposed sanctions against units of Gazprom Germania and dozens of other companies based in countries that have imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine.

Under the sanctions, the 31 companies listed on May 11 by the Russian government are banned from conducting transactions and entering Russian ports.

But it notably includes local subsidiaries of Gazprom, which supplies more than a third of European gas.

The list also includes EuRoPol GAZ SA, the owner of the Polish part of the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline through which much of the Gazprom gas supply to Europe flows. Other EU firms as well as U.S. and Singaporean energy companies are also named.

Ukraine has said it will suspend the flow of gas through a transit point that it says delivers almost a third of the fuel piped from Russia to Europe through Ukraine. GTSOU, which operates Ukraine's gas system, said it would stop shipments via the Sokhranivka route from Wednesday, declaring "force majeure," a clause invoked when a business is hit by something beyond its control.

Russia Car Sales Sink 78.5% in April - New car sales in Russia sank by over 78% in April, industry data showed Wednesday after the country was hit by a barrage of sanctions over Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine.

Ukraine fires a warning shot in Russia gas dispute - The flow of Russian gas across Ukraine to the EU fell by a quarter on Wednesday after Ukraine's pipeline operator refused to continue taking gas from areas of the country under the control of Russian troops.

"Ukraine no longer bears responsibility for the transmission of Russian gas through Ukrainian territories under Russian military occupation," said Ukraine's state-owned gas company Naftogaz.

It's the first time since Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24 that Kyiv has threatened Russian gas exports; despite the destruction and bloodshed of the invasion, gas has continued to flow smoothly across Ukraine to customers in Germany, Italy, Austria and other European countries.

Ukraine is pressing the EU to stop buying Russian gas — which earns the Kremlin billions — but EU countries have only promised to wean themselves off Russian gas supplies "before 2030." Ukraine also earns about €2 billion a year from Russia's Gazprom in gas transit fees — crucial cash for a country devastated by war.

That patience came to an end Tuesday evening, when Ukrainian gas grid operator GTSOU said it was no longer able to control and monitor parts of its pipeline system in the eastern Luhansk territory occupied by Russian troops. The operator also accused occupying forces of interfering with the operations of the pipelines, "including unauthorized gas offtakes from the gas transit flows, endanger[ing] the stability and safety of the entire Ukrainian gas transportation system."

"Russian propaganda lied for years that Ukraine was stealing gas. In arbitration they could not provide a single proof," said Naftogaz CEO Yuriy Vitrenko on Wednesday. "As Russia occupied new territories 'pro-Russian separatists,' backed by [the] Russian army, are stealing gas that Ukraine was supposed to be responsible for. Ironic."

GTSOU demanded that Gazprom shift its gas flows from the interconnector known as Sokhranivka to a cross-border point farther northwest, known as Sudzha — an area still under Ukrainian control.

Humanitarian

Top EU Rights Official Says Russia Will Be Held To Account For Possible War Crimes In Ukraine – Russia will be held accountable for war crimes and violations of international law allegedly committed by its forces in Ukraine, a European Union official vowed, amid mounting Ukrainian and international efforts to gather evidence for future criminal investigations.

In an interview with RFE/RL at its headquarters in Prague, Eamon Gilmore, the EU special representative for human rights, also suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin might be put on trial one day, not unlike what happened with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic after the bloody and violent breakup of Yugoslavia.

"Milosevic never thought he would face a court or face a tribunal in The Hague when he was committing war crimes," Gilmore said in the interview, conducted on May 10.

"People who are responsible can be held to account no matter how long it takes," he said.

First Russian Soldier Suspected Of Murdering A Civilian In Ukraine To Face Trial - Ukrainian authorities are moving ahead with the first murder trial of a Russian soldier suspected of killing a Ukrainian civilian during Russia's unprovoked invasion.

Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Iryna Venediktova said on Facebook on May 11 that the suspect was charged with the killing of a 62-year-old civilian who was riding a bicycle in the village of Chupakhivka in the northeastern region of Sumy.

"The Prosecutor-General's Office sent to a court the case against Vadim Shishimarin, the commander of a unit of military brigade 32010, known as the Fourth Tank Kantemirov Division of the Moscow region," Venediktova wrote.

According to Venediktova, the 21-year-old suspect, who is currently in Ukrainian custody, may face up to life in prison if convicted of murder.

Last week, Venediktova announced the name of the first Russian soldier suspected of torturing and murdering civilians in the town of Bucha, near Kyiv, during weeks of occupation.

Three Russian prisoners of war accused of targeting or murdering civilians and a soldier who allegedly killed a man before raping his wife, are set to be in the dock in the first war crimes trials of the Ukraine conflict, the Ukrainian prosecutor general has revealed. More than 10,700 crimes have been registered since the war began by the office of Ukraine's prosecutor general, led by Iryna Venediktova, and a handful of cases have now been filed or are ready to be submitted.

Convoy of civilians destroyed near Kharkiv - Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office said in a statement that at least four people were killed when a convoy of 15 cars tried to evacuate to Kharkiv near Saryi Saltiv village. The wreckage of the convoy was found on Friday. One member of the Ukrainian military known by the nom de guerre "Spanish" said the convoy was probably shot with an "automatic gun" and that one car had been hit by a cannon from a "tank or an infantry fighting vehicle". Just one kilometre away from the convoy, a Russian state-of-the-art tank was destroyed with a grenade launcher used by Ukrainian troops. Rubizhne resident Galina Kitsenko was happy to see the Ukrainian flag on her local council building again after Russian troops left the village.

NATO

China Takes Aim At NATO - China increasingly sees the war in Ukraine -- and the roles of the United States and its NATO allies in backing Kyiv against Moscow -- as a reflection of future tensions to come between the military bloc and Beijing in the Indo-Pacific.

Ever since Russian tanks first crossed into Ukraine on February 24, Beijing has walked an awkward line between not giving outright support to Moscow's invasion while accusing the United States and other NATO countries of provoking the war by allowing the security alliance to expand eastward despite protests from the Kremlin.

Now, as the war continues to grind on with the Russian military suffering major setbacks on the battlefield, China has ramped up its rhetoric to warn about NATO and the United States' footprint in Asia.

"NATO, a military organization in the North Atlantic, has in recent years come to the Asia-Pacific region to throw its weight around and stir up conflicts," Wang Wenbin, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, said in late April. "NATO has messed up Europe. Is it now trying to mess up the Asia-Pacific and even the world?"

Wang's comments were in response to earlier remarks from U.K. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who called for boosting NATO in the wake of the Ukraine war and warned China that it should "play by the rules."

The added focus on NATO from Beijing comes as both China and the United States see Russia's invasion as a foil for future tensions between the two countries in Asia. NATO said last year that it intended to focus more on China and Beijing is expected to play a large role in the bloc's strategy moving forward.

Likewise, Washington is increasingly convinced that the conflict provides it with an unexpected advantage in the long term, with Bloomberg reporting on May 10 that U.S. officials believe that bolstered European defense spending and a weakened Russia could allow it to accelerate a security shift toward China.

Those aims are part of the shared distrust toward NATO and the United States that has led Beijing and Moscow to become closer in recent years and why many analysts believe that China has not abandoned Russia throughout its brutal war in Ukraine.

Similarly, experts and Western officials warn that Beijing is closely watching the response to Russia's invasion and drawing potential lessons for any tensions over Taiwan, which China claims as its territory and has threatened to invade if Taipei refuses to submit to its control.

Finnish president, Sauli Niinistö, announced his country's intention to join NATO - Finland is not yet a member of the intergovernmental military alliance, but Niinistö said joining would be to "maximize security" and not be in any way offensive.

Niinistö said Russia's invasion of Ukraine had pushed his government and country to think about its security. Niinistö was speaking at a joint news conference with the UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, after signing a new security agreement that would involve Britain providing military assistance if Finland was attacked.

Boris Johnson has promised to support Sweden and Finland against potential Russian threats in any way necessary. The UK prime minister travelled to both countries to sign mutual security agreements, with their governments mulling NATO membership in the wake of the Ukraine invasion.

Impacts

New Marine Insurance Report Studies Impact Of Russian Aggressions On Shipping - The shipping industry has been affected on multiple fronts by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with the loss of life and vessels in the Black Sea, disruption to trade, and the growing burden of sanctions. It also faces challenges to day-to-day operations, with knock-on effects for crew, the cost and availability of bunker fuel, and the potential for growing cyber risk.

The invasion has further ramifications for a global maritime industry already facing shortages. Russian seafarers account for just over 10% of the world's 1.89 million workforce, while around 4% come from Ukraine. These seafarers may struggle to return home or rejoin ships at the end of contracts. Meanwhile, a prolonged conflict is likely to have deeper consequences, potentially reshaping global trade in energy and other commodities. An expanded ban on Russian oil could contribute to pushing up the cost of bunker fuel and impacting availability, potentially pushing ship owners to use alternative fuels. If such fuels are of substandard quality, this may result in machinery breakdown claims in the future. At the same time, security agencies continue to warn of a heightened prospect of cyber risks for the shipping sector such as GPS jamming, Automatic Identification System (AIS) spoofing and electronic interference.

Ukraine War Insurance Report Takeaways

- The war has caused widespread disruption to global shipping, and is likely to exacerbate ongoing supply chain disruption, port congestion and crew crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- As of the beginning of April 2022, numerous merchant vessels were trapped in Ukrainian ports along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. For those that remain, the (IMO) [5] called for the urgent establishment of a blue safe maritime corridor to allow the evacuation of seafarers and ships from the high-risk and affected areas in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. However, it is uncertain whether it will be safe for vessels to leave.
- Marine insurance losses from the war in Ukraine are currently limited, although the conflict is likely to create uncertainty and legal questions for affected hull and cargo policies. at risk from sea mines, rocket attacks and the threat of detention.
- The Ukraine invasion had ramifications for the global maritime workforce, which is already facing shortages as it comes out of the pandemic. Over a thousand seafarers from over 20 countries were thought to be stuck on vessels trapped in the Black Sea following the outbreak of the Ukraine invasion.
- The range of sanctions against Russian interests presents a sizable compliance challenge.

Kazakh President Emphasizes Importance Of China-Europe Transportation Route Bypassing Russia - Kazakh President Toqaev said after a visit to Ankara for talks with Turkish President Erdogan that a new transportation route connecting China with European markets bypassing Russia is important for the two nations.

Toqaev said today that his visit opened opportunities "for further strengthening cooperation in political, trade, economic, investment, cultural, military, and other areas." The most important thing for the two states "is using the potential of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR)," he added, a day after the visit.

The TITR, known as the Middle Corridor, is an international development linking China's rail freight transport networks with the European Union, bypassing Russia.

Launched in 2017, the project links Caspian Sea and Black Sea ferry terminals with rail systems in China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Poland.

A Chinese former ambassador to Ukraine, Gao Yusheng, has strongly criticized Russia's invasion. In a speech which was reported on by the Chinese press before quickly being taken down, Gao said Putin's frequent "violations" of former Soviet states' territory were "the greatest threat to peace, security and stability in Eurasia."