

# Conflict Update # 273

November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## Conflict Assessment

**Russian losses** – 86,150 (430) soldiers killed, 2,899 (+1) enemy tanks, 5,844 (+7) armored combat vehicles, 1,895 (+6) artillery systems, 395 (+2) MLRS systems, 209 (+0) air defense systems, 278 (+0) warplanes, 261 (+0) helicopters, 1,553 (+6) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 531 (+0) cruise missiles, 16 (+1) warships/cutters, 4,404 (+4) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 163 (+2) units of specialized equipment.

## Key Takeaways



**Iranian advisers killed aiding Russians in Crimea, says Kyiv** - Ukraine's top security official has confirmed that Iranian military advisers have been killed in Crimea, and warned that any other Iranians on occupied Ukrainian territory in support of Moscow's invasion would also be targeted.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security and defence council, said Iranians were present in Crimea to help Russia pilot the Shahed-136 armed drones supplied by the Tehran government, but did not say how many Ukraine had killed.

Reports in the Israeli press in October said that 10 were killed because of Ukrainian military strikes in occupied Crimea. Danilov made it clear that any further Iranian military presence would be targeted.

"You shouldn't be where you shouldn't be," Danilov said, in an interview in Kyiv. "They were on our territory. We didn't invite them here, and if they collaborate with terrorists and participate in the destruction of our nation we must kill them."

**Video shows 'massive' attack by drone boats targeting Russia's Black Sea Fleet** - Mikhail Razvozhayev, the governor of Sevastopol, told Russian state media that the city had been targeted in the "most massive attack" by unmanned aerial vehicles "and remote-controlled surface vehicles" since the conflict began, according to Al Jazeera.

**Germany's Scholz says Putin can no longer win in Ukraine** - Putin "can no longer win on the battlefield, that much seems clear," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Wednesday.

Appearing at a joint press conference with Cypriot President Nikos Anastasiadis in Berlin, Scholz called for an immediate end to Russia's "bombing terror against the civilian population."

"It is not only unbearable, but a blatant violation of international law that Russia has been dropping its bombs against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine for weeks," said Scholz.

The chancellor also said that Russia's actions showed once again "how ruthless and merciless" Putin is in the war which started nine months ago.

"That's why my appeal to Putin remains: stop the senseless killing, withdraw your troops completely from Ukraine and agree to peace talks with Ukraine." Scholz said.

**Power returns to nuclear plants** - Ukraine's four operational nuclear power plant sites now all have access to the national grid once more, a group of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors concluded on Friday following an inspection visit.

Earlier this week, the four sites lost off-site power amid Russia's intensified strikes targeting infrastructure.

The nuclear power plants of Zaporizhzhia, Rivne, South Ukraine, and Khmelnytskyi were disconnected from the grid and "forced to rely on emergency diesel generators for the electricity they needed to ensure their continued safety and security," Grossi said earlier.

Power has also been restored to Rivne, South Ukraine, Khmelnytskyi and Chornobyl, Grossi said. The IAEA concluded a week-long safety and security expert mission at the latter site.

## Putin

**Putin tells mothers of soldiers fighting in Ukraine he shares their pain** - Putin told a select group of mothers of soldiers who had been fighting in Ukraine the entire Russian leadership shared their suffering.

"I would like you to know that, that I personally, and the whole leadership of the country - we share your pain," Putin told the small group at the gathering at the Kremlin.

"We understand that nothing can replace the loss of a son - especially for a mother," Putin said, breathing heavily, and frequently clearing his throat. "We share this pain."

The mothers listened to Putin's remarks, but their own comments were not immediately shown in the recorded television clip.

Some relatives who did not get an invite dismissed the meeting as a publicity stunt.

"The president will meet with some mothers pulled out of his pocket, who will ask the right questions and thank him," said Olga Tsukanova, an activist mother whose son is deployed in Ukraine. "As usual," she added.

Anger and concern have built across Russia after Putin called up 300,000 reservists as part of a mobilization in September.

Moscow still downplays the war describing it as a "special military operation."

**Comment** – We have previously referred to the “Russian mothers’ movements” in Russia as a powerful group of vocal protestors who have historically voiced anti-government passions in years gone during Russian conflicts with high casualty rates.

Presently and largely restricted by draconian anti-speech laws with prison terms up to 15 years, mothers, sisters, wives and others are increasingly coming out and loudly proclaiming Putin and the Kremlin are not doing everything possible to protect Russian soldiers from dying in the Ukrainian war or “special military operation” as he still calls it.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> time Putin has met with mothers, even in this case where it was reportedly a staged event. But the very fact that he is taking time to address this vocal group of concerned Russians, tells a story on its own.

**Armenians protest Putin’s visit** - Hundreds of Armenians unhappy about Putin's visit to their country gathered at two separate rallies in Yerevan on November 23. In one of his rare recent trips abroad, Putin arrived in the Armenian capital for a summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) -- a Russian-dominated military bloc. One rally was organized by the pro-Western opposition alliance National-Democratic Pole, the other by civil-society activists and attended by Ukrainian expatriates. The protesters slammed Armenia's engagement with the CSTO, arguing that it did them no service in the recent conflict with Azerbaijan.

**Putin’s grip on regional allies loosens again after Armenia snub** - Armenia has asked the French president, Emmanuel Macron, to chair peace talks with Azerbaijan in a fresh challenge to Vladimir Putin’s increasingly loose grip on Russia’s regional allies in the wake of the war in Ukraine.

The snub from a traditional ally to Putin, who had hosted an inconsequential meeting of the warring countries’ leaders last month, comes immediately on the back of his disastrous summit with six former Soviet states.

During a “family” photograph of leaders of countries in the Collective Security Treaty



Organisation (CSTO) in Yerevan on Wednesday, Armenia's prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, stepped away from Putin, who had been standing to his left.

Pashinyan then refused to sign a summit declaration, as he railed against the recent failures of the CSTO, which ties Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan into a mutual defence agreement.

He expressed frustration at the lack of a response to his formal request for the CSTO to intervene on Armenia's behalf after his country came under fresh attack from across the border with Azerbaijan in September.

Tom de Waal, a senior fellow with the Carnegie Europe thinktank specializing in eastern Europe and the Caucasus region, said the damaging summit optics for Putin highlighted the increasing fragility of Russia's influence on its immediate neighbours, with the institutions through which the Kremlin asserts soft power failing and the true strength of its hard power being exposed in Ukraine.

He said: "It is part of a broad trend in which Russians still have this Soviet legacy of seeing their neighbours as kind of junior partners beholden to them, but they are sovereign countries. The CSTO is supposed to be a defensive organization, but as far as Armenia is concerned it hasn't lived up to its obligations."

Armenia's criticism follows comments from Kazakhstan's president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the UN general assembly in September during which he implicitly criticized Russia's war in Ukraine.

Emil Avdaliani, a professor at the European University in Tbilisi, Georgia, and director of Middle East studies at the Geocase thinktank, said Armenia was trying to diversify its foreign relations in light of Russia's weakness.

**Comment** – This "rupturing" of Russian relationships post-Ukraine invasion has been mentioned over the last few months in our Updates. Including in the article regarding fragmentation of Russia as a possibility.

**Even some of Putin's closest confidantes have reportedly lost hope and foresee Russia's 'very painful' war loss** - Russian news outlet Meduza, reveals how Putin's finally losing his country's "elites," who are cringing like crazy over what looks like an undeniable loss. Sources close to the presidential administration (AP) and the Russian Federation called recent events "very painful."

From there, Putin's also facing the embarrassment for not even being able to provide medical care for deployed troops, long after word spread that soldiers grew so frustrated that they threatened to turn their general into smithereens. It's not a great look when video emerges of Russians being told to raid tampon drawers because that's the only way that they'll be able to stop their own bleeding after being shot. Yep, no wonder this has turned into an undeniable disaster, but Putin keeps hanging onto the fight.

Some of Putin's closest confidants are being blunt about what the retreat from Kherson means for them and the war with Ukraine moving forward.

Elites are coming to grips with the Russian military's withdrawal earlier this month, the Russian independent news outlet Meduza reported. Sources close to the presidential administration (AP) and the Russian Federation called recent events "very painful."

"There is an understanding that we lost the real war," said elites and entrepreneurs described as being part of Putin's inner circle. "People begin to think about how to live on, what place they would like to take in the future, what bet to make, what to play. [On the one hand] there will be revanchist sentiments. On the other hand, there will be a request for normalization and stabilization."

The AP's political bloc reportedly remains optimistic due to a potential Western collapse based on the needs for cheap energy, in addition to the military being more combat-ready due to mobilization.

## Impacts

**‘They grab their lunches and sit alone’: Russians shunned at global cyber confabs** - The frosty situation gives the world even less visibility into Russian cyber operations at a time when it is launching repeated digital strikes in Ukraine.

Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has raised the risk of a global cyber war — and turned Russia into even more of a pariah at summits to secure the world’s digital infrastructure.

Russia’s destabilizing cyberattacks are the elephant in the room as the Kremlin’s diplomats attend international meetings about keeping hackers out of critical computer systems like those powering hospitals and power plants. With Moscow constantly looking for ways to sabotage Ukraine’s power grid and threatening more far-reaching actions, other nations’ cyber diplomats aren’t going out of their way to welcome their Russian colleagues warmly.

“People put an empty chair on either side of the Russians and don’t sit next to them,” Nathaniel Fick, the U.S. ambassador at large for cyberspace and digital policy, said in an interview in his State Department office.

And the Russian diplomats appear to be reading the room: “At coffee breaks, they take their coffee sitting in front of their microphones when everybody else is milling around at tables. They grab their lunch and sit alone,” Fick said. “The isolation is palpable.”

The frosty situation gives the world even less visibility into Russian cyber operations at a time when it is launching repeated digital strikes in Ukraine — and leaves Moscow less beholden than ever to international pressure to crack down on gangs of cybercriminals based in Russia.

**Russians fleeing Crimea amid fears of Ukrainian advance** - Russians are fleeing Crimea amid fears that Ukraine will soon move to recapture the region that Vladimir Putin illegally annexed in 2014, according to local media reports.

Emil Ibragimov, the head of the Crimean project and educational platform Q-Hub, told Radio NV in a video published today Russians are fleeing from Crimea to the neighboring Russian region of Krasnodar because they fear Ukraine will eventually liberate the Black Sea peninsula.

Ibragimov said that many Russian citizens who settled in Crimea after it was occupied eight years ago had already left.

**Ukraine to open 6 more border points for rail freight to Europe** - Ukrainian Railways plans to open six additional border crossings for rail freight to Europe. Three facilities will be added on the border with Poland, two on the border with Romania and one on the border with Moldova. Some of the border points could be operative within three months, as it is just a matter of documentation work.

Ukrainian Railways plans to build three additional checkpoints on the Polish border, which will be at Rawa-Ruska, Grebenne and Starzhava – Krotsenko. Two more junctions are planned on the border with Romania, on the Delovo-Valea Visheului section, and one on the border with Moldova, at Berezino – Basarabasca.

**Kuril Islands** - A peace treaty formally ending World War II has never been signed by Russia and Japan, largely because of disputes over a group of islands claimed by Japan but occupied by Russia.

The Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan and Habomai islands of the Kuril Island chain were seized by the USSR at the end of World War II. Tokyo claims the islands as its "Northern Territories" and the issue has strained relations between Russia and Japan for decades.

According to the FSB agent, a "key stumbling block" between Moscow and Tokyo is the Kuril Islands.

Because of their location between the large Japanese island of Hokkaido and Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, the islands offer a number of military and political benefits.

"For Japan, there is a cornerstone of its modern geopolitics here: its status as a World War II loser still prevents the Japanese from having an official military force, a foreign intelligence service and a number of other things. For the Land of the Rising Sun, the return of the Kuril Islands would actually mean a revision [or even cancellation] of its postwar status," they wrote.

Meanwhile, for Moscow, the islands are "a bargaining chip," the whistleblower continued.

"The Heavenly Kingdom (China) takes any attempted revisions to the postwar agreements very negatively, and a potential victory for Tokyo in the dispute over the Kurils is unacceptable to Beijing. It is so unacceptable that China would easily complicate Russia's life for making such a 'gift.'"

A whistleblower noted that former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was at the time already placing a strong emphasis on both trying to "negotiate" with Russia over the Kuril Islands issue and reforming the country's intelligence service.

"Historically, Japan's military intelligence has always been at a high level, but after the defeat in World War II it was simply abolished at the behest of the victors," they wrote.

**Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine is pushing out one of Russia's biggest tech giants** - Russia stands to lose its biggest tech company, which would throw a wrench in President Putin's plans to foster Russian-grown alternatives for Western technology.

Yandex, often referred to as Russia's Google, is the country's largest internet business best known for its search browser and ride-hailing apps. But its Dutch-based parent company, Yandex N.V., wants out of Russia because of the potential negative impact the Ukrainian invasion could have on its business, according to a report by The NYT.

The exit of Russia's biggest tech company would deliver a blow to Putin, who has made a concerted effort to produce Russian technology and goods as sanctions cut access to Western suppliers.

Yandex N.V. said Friday that its board had "commenced a strategic process to review options to restructure the group's ownership and governance in light of the current geopolitical environment."

The Bell, a Russian media group, had earlier reported that Yandex N.V. would move its new businesses and most promising technologies — including self-driving cars, machine learning, and cloud-computing services — outside of Russia, the Times reported, citing two anonymous sources familiar with the matter. Those businesses would need access to Western markets, experts, and technology, all of which is unviable while the Russian invasion of Ukraine rages on and Western sanctions remain in place.

Yandex's business, once hailed as a rare Russian business success story, has struggled since the invasion of Ukraine. The tech giant's story is not unlike those found in the Silicon Valley. Yandex employed more than 18,000 people, it was worth more than \$31 billion, and is often referred to as the "Google of Russia." It even had offices in downtown Palo Alto, California, at one point.

But since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, thousands of Yandex employees have left Russia, and the price of the company's New York-listed shares lost more than \$20 billion in value almost immediately after the war, before Nasdaq suspended trading in its shares. Meanwhile, Yandex's Moscow-listed shares dropped 62% in the past year.

Yandex's misfortune mirrors other Russian tech companies, which have struggled in the face of Western sanctions and the exodus of tens of thousands of Russian IT workers, according to an Al Jazeera report. It's something even Putin can't

deny, admitting that the Russian IT sector will experience "colossal" difficulties as the US and 37 other countries restrict Russia's access to technologies, like semiconductors and telecommunications equipment, via export controls.

## Russia declared a “Terrorist State”

**Wagner chief sends European parliament a bloodied sledgehammer in sick reference to Russian deserter his forces beat to death, after Europe declared Russia a 'terrorist state'** - The head of Russian Wagner private army has trolled the West showing a bloodied sledgehammer he wants to present to the European Parliament.

Putin's crony Yevgeny Prigozhin was responding to a vote to declare Russia a 'state sponsor of terrorism'.

The sick stunt relates to an episode in which a Wagner fighter from Russia was bludgeoned to death with a sledgehammer after defecting to Ukraine, before being exchanged back allegedly at his request.

Yevgeny Nuzhin, 55, was passed by Russian officials to Wagner operatives and a video appeared showing him being sledgehammered to death with a strike to the head.

The extrajudicial killing was purportedly punishment for the convicted murderer-turned-mercenary's 'treachery' in switching sides to Ukraine. At the time billionaire Prigozhin sought to justify the killing of the 'traitor', saying it was a 'dog's death' for a 'dog'.

**Comment** – Only in Russia.

**Moscow slams European Parliament 'terror' label** - After EU lawmakers overwhelmingly backed a resolution naming Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism" over its war on Ukraine, Russia's Foreign Ministry said the move was an "unfriendly step."

This "has nothing to do with the real situation in the fight against international terrorism," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also claimed that the move was part of a "campaign carried out by the West against our country."

## Russian Mobilization

**Putin will 'mobilize another 2 million including 300,000 women' and 'impose martial law in Moscow' but may use crackdown to 'bow out in favour of handpicked successor'** - Speculation is swirling in Russia that Vladimir Putin will soon demand a massive new mobilisation drive in a desperate effort to halt calamitous defeats to Ukraine.

This comes despite Ukrainian President Zelensky warning Moscow that it must withdraw from all occupied territories if there is to be any lasting resolution to the war.

It's also been predicted that such a move could be a diversion tactic for Putin to step down and hand over power, with the leader reportedly suffering ill health in recent months.

Kremlin denials are only fueling speculation a move to go beyond the 300,000-plus already conscripted is not far away.

This is in part because Putin has failed to sign the necessary decree to end the first wave of mobilisation.

One version is that he could draft up to two million - including 300,000 women - in an attempt to turn the war into a national crusade.

The move is likely to be coupled with martial law in key cities, including Moscow, say Russian sources.

Such a scenario might act as political cover enabling him to hand over power in the event of worsening health, say some observers convinced he is terminally ill - despite regular recent appearances, including foreign travel to Armenia.

Rumors suggest Sergei Kiriyenko, 60, his authoritarian deputy chief of staff and an ex-PM, could replace Putin, while others focus on Dmitry Patrushev, agriculture minister, and son of the president's hardline chief security apparatchik Nikolay Patrushev, who would be power behind the new ruler.

**Mobilized conscripts engage in fighting between themselves** - Earlier this week, men mobilised by Vladimir Putin to Ukraine prepared for war by brawling in a Russian nightclub.

Shocking footage showed a fight in Yurga, Kemerovo region on a night out from a training camp ahead of the men being sent to Ukraine.

Uniformed conscripts are seen battling with civilians in the latest example of ill-discipline in Putin's ranks.

The club was laid waste as the soldiers battled one another ahead of reaching Ukraine.



## Containment

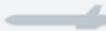
**Poland's surprise move to reject German air defence system causes stir** - An anti-missile system Germany offered to send to Poland should instead go to Ukraine, Warsaw said, raising concerns that such a move would signify an escalation of NATO involvement in the war in eastern Europe.

### The Patriot system – what you need to know

Patriot is a backronym for *Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept of Target*



• Offers protection against:

- Aircraft 
- Cruise missile 
- Larger drone 
- Short-range ballistic missiles 

Does not offer protection against low-flying or small drones which fly closer to the ground

### In numbers

- 3** The Patriot Advanced Capability launches the PAC-3 and older PAC-2 interceptor missile and variants 
- 15-22** Range in kilometers of the PAC-3 missile 
- 50** The system's detection radar tracks over 50 potential targets simultaneously over a 100km range 
- 4** Number of Patriot systems which the US pulled out of Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan in 2018 

Sources: SIPRI, Reuters, US Military, MDAA

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Others believe the Polish government's rebuff was a mistake.

Poland's surprising response to Berlin's offer was welcomed by Kyiv, desperate to protect its airspace as continued barrages of Russian missiles have knocked out power across the country.

But Germany's Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht stressed that the use of NATO defence systems outside its territory needs to be agreed upon by all member states.

"It is important to us that Poland can rely on allies to stand by each other, even in difficult times, and especially Poland in its exposed position," Lambrecht told reporters in Berlin.

"That's why we have offered to support air policing and Patriots, but these Patriots are part of an integrated air defence of NATO, that is, they are intended for NATO territory," the minister said.

"If they are used outside the NATO area, then it has to be agreed with NATO and with the allies beforehand."

**Germany considering Polish push for Patriot delivery to Ukraine** - Germany said it was discussing Warsaw's request to deliver Patriot missiles destined for Poland to Ukraine instead.

Berlin initially insisted the missiles were only to be deployed within NATO.

It has since softened its stance after NATO's chief suggested the military alliance might not oppose such a move.

"We are talking with our allies about how to handle Poland's... suggestion," a German government spokesperson told reporters in Berlin on Friday.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said such deployments should be decisions for individual nations, taking into account rules around final users.

"The specific decisions on specific systems are national decisions," he told reporters in Brussels.

The Polish president said it would be better for Poland's security if they were on Ukrainian territory near the border.

"From a military point of view, it would be best if they were located in Ukraine to also protect Polish territory, then they would protect both Ukraine and Poland most effectively," Andrzej Duda told a news conference in Kaunas, Lithuania.

"But the decision rests with the German side."

**Stoltenberg assures Ukraine of NATO's continued support** - NATO will not let down in its support of Ukraine and also ramp up non-lethal aid for the country its Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"NATO will continue to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes. We will not back down," he said

Stoltenberg was briefing reporters in Brussels ahead of a foreign ministers' meeting of the alliance in Bucharest next week.

He said there would be no lasting peace in Ukraine if Russia won the war.

**UK pledges further financial support for Ukraine** - British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly earlier today has pledged millions of pounds in further support for Ukraine.

He met Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Kuleba in Kyiv this morning.

## Humanitarian

**‘We are Ukrainians. We’re strong’: morale the key in Kyiv as winter sets in** - Residents of Kyiv taking shelter in their local “invincibility station” were well aware that their own morale has become the central battlefield of the war, and it is not territory they are prepared to concede to Vladimir Putin.

The insulated grey tent set up on a street corner in the Pecherskyi district of Kyiv, one of thousands established around the country this week, was offering electricity, warmth, tea and sandwiches after the latest Russian onslaught.

“It’s like 24 February, when the invasion started, and the beginning of March, when people really came together,” said Maryna Honcharova, who was bundled up in a winter coat in the middle of the tent. If this was Putin’s grand plan for grinding down the will of the people, she added, it had backfired.

“It just makes the anger towards Russia grow stronger. We just curse and hate Russia more.”

There were murmurs of agreement from around the tent. Those who had been chatting in Russian earlier switched to Ukrainian to drive home the point.

**IIHF condemns Russian Ice Hockey Federation for 'propaganda'** - The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) condemned the Russian Ice Hockey Federation (RIHF) after Russian clubs promoted messages supporting Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The IIHF said it referred the case to a disciplinary board after the IIHF failed to stop "propaganda for the war in Ukraine by clubs and leagues under its jurisdiction."

According to the IIHF, there were instances of posters, billboards and signs with political context at clubs and venues.

The federation said those posters had pro-war messages and the signs held by fans at stadiums did not appear to be made by the fans themselves, suggesting heavily that those holding them were pressured to carry them.

Shortly after Moscow launched its war on Ukraine in February, the IIHF suspended all Russian and Belarusian national teams and clubs from participation in every age category.

**Comment** – Professional hockey leagues should one and all ban every Russian hockey player from any participation should they not publicly disavow the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine. South Africa was very effectively banned from all sports as part of the international action ban against Apartheid.

## Sanctions

**What's the effect of Russian oil price cap, ban?** - Western governments are aiming to cap the price of Russia's oil exports in an attempt to limit the fossil fuel earnings that support Moscow's budget, its military and the invasion of Ukraine.

The cap is set to take effect on Dec. 5, the same day the European Union will impose a boycott on most Russian oil — its crude that is shipped by sea. The EU was still negotiating what the price ceiling should be.

The twin measures could have an uncertain effect on the price of oil as worries over lost supply through the boycott compete with fears about lower demand from a slowing global economy.

Here are basic facts about the price cap, the EU embargo and what they could mean for consumers and the global economy:

### **What is the price cap and how would it work?**

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has proposed the cap with other Group of 7 allies as a way to limit Russia's earnings while keeping Russian oil flowing to the global economy. The aim is to hurt Moscow's finances while avoiding a sharp oil price spike if Russia's oil is suddenly taken off the global market.

Insurance companies and other firms needed to ship oil would only be able to deal with Russian crude if the oil is priced at or below the cap. Most of the insurers are located in the EU or the UK and could be required to participate in the cap. Without insurance, tanker owners may be reluctant to take on Russian oil and face obstacles in delivering it.

### **How would oil keep flowing to the global economy?**

Universal enforcement of the insurance ban, imposed by the EU and UK in earlier rounds of sanctions, could take so much Russian crude off the market that oil prices would spike, Western economies would suffer, and Russia would see increased earnings from whatever oil it can ship in defiance of the embargo.

Russia, the world's No. 2 oil producer, has already rerouted much of its supply to India, China and other Asian countries at discounted prices after Western customers shunned it even before the EU ban.

One purpose of the cap is to provide a legal framework "to allow the flow of Russian oil to continue and to reduce the windfall revenue for Russia at the same time," said Claudio Galimberti, a senior vice president of analysis at Rystad Energy.

"It is essential for global crude markets that Russian oil still finds markets to be sold, after the EU ban is operative," he added. "In the absence of that, global oil prices would skyrocket."

### **What effect would different cap levels have?**

A cap of between \$65 and \$70 per barrel could let Russia keep selling oil and while keeping its earnings to current levels. Russian oil is trading at around \$63 per barrel, a considerable discount to international benchmark Brent.

A lower cap — at around \$50 per barrel — would make it difficult for Russia to balance its state budget, with Moscow believed to require around \$60 to \$70 per barrel to do that, its so-called "fiscal break-even."

However, that \$50 cap would be still be above Russia's cost of production of between \$30 and \$40 per barrel, giving Moscow an incentive to keep selling oil simply to avoid having to cap wells that can be hard to restart.

### **What if Russia and other countries won't go along?**

Russia has said it will not observe a cap and will halt deliveries to countries that do. A lower cap of around \$50 could be more likely to provoke that response, or Russia could halt the last of its remaining natural gas supplies to Europe.

China and India might not go along with the cap, while China could form its own insurance companies to replace those barred by US, UK and Europe.

Galimberti says China and India are already enjoying discounted oil and may not want to alienate Russia.

"China and India get Russia's crude at a huge discount to Brent, therefore, they don't necessarily need a price cap to continue to enjoy a discount," he said. "By complying with the cap set by the G-7, they risk alienating Russia. As a result, we do believe that the compliance with the price cap would not be high."

Russia could also turn to schemes such as transferring oil from ship to ship to disguise its origins and mixing its oil with other types to skirt the ban.

So it remains to be seen what effect the cap would have.

## What about the EU embargo?

The biggest impact from the EU embargo may come not on Dec. 5, as Europe finds new suppliers and Russian barrels are rerouted, but on Feb. 5, when Europe's additional ban on refinery products made from oil — such as diesel fuel — come into effect.

Europe will have to turn to alternative supplies from the US, Middle East and India. “There is going to be a shortfall, and this will result in very high prices,” Galimberti said.

Europe still has many cars that run on diesel. The fuel also is used for truck transport to get a huge range of goods to consumers and to run agricultural machinery — so those higher costs will be spread throughout the economy.

## War Crimes

**Russian soldiers 'crazy' with 'Rambo syndrome' are raping and pillaging in Ukraine, says defector who describes horrific gang sex attack on mother and daughter** - Nikita Chibrin defected to the West and is now seeking political asylum in Spain and says Moscow's forces seemed to have 'Rambo Syndrome' as they raped and pillaged in Ukraine.

Nikita Chibrin, 27, told of one horrific case where four of his fellow invading soldiers raped a mother and her daughter in the Ukrainian town of Andriivka.

The atrocities in Bucha were discovered in April after Russian forces pulled out of the region surrounding Kyiv, having failed to seize the Ukrainian capital and overthrow the government. Mass graves were found, and bodies littered the streets.

The 27-year-old says he is willing to tell all he knows to an international court. Chibrin served under notorious commander Azatbek Omurbekov whose troops were accused of massacres and of raping of women and girls around Bucha.

Putin later promoted Omurbekov from Lt-Col to full Colonel. He has been dubbed the 'Butcher of Bucha' for the actions of his troops in the town.

Ukraine specifically identified members of his 64th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade as being responsible for murders.

'They went crazy,' said Chibrin about the Russian troops under Omurbekov's command. 'They said: 'We have the power, we have the tanks, we have infantry fighting vehicles, weapons' and so on.

'Rambo Syndrome' was on, he said.

In addition to the rapes, Chibrin said soldiers in the unit looted houses for valuable items. 'They stole household decorations and mobile devices,' he said.

**Russian commanders aware of sexual abuse and crimes** - There is evidence that Russian commanders in several instances were aware of sexual violence by military personnel in Ukraine "and in some cases, encouraging it or even ordering it," according to an international criminal lawyer assisting Kyiv's war crimes investigations.

British lawyer Wayne Jordash told Reuters that in some areas around the capital of Kyiv in the north, where the probes are most advanced, some of the sexual violence involved a level of organization by Russian armed forces that "speaks to planning on a more systematic level." He didn't identify specific individuals under scrutiny.

The previously unreported findings by investigators about the alleged role of commanders and the systematic nature of attacks in some locations are part of patterns of alleged sexual violence that are emerging as Russia's war in Ukraine enters its ninth month.

**Ukrainian maternity ward struck by Russian missile** - Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has called for the urgent U.N. Security Council meeting to discuss Russia's latest attacks targeting Ukraine's infrastructure.

"Murder of civilians, ruining of civilian infrastructure are acts of terror," Zelenskyy said on Twitter.

In a letter seen by VOA U.N. correspondent Margaret Besheer, Ukraine is asking that Zelenskyy address the council meeting by video since he can't attend in person.

Pictured at right is a hospital demolished by Russian missiles during an attack yesterday.



**Russians accused of burning bodies at Kherson landfill** - The landfill site on the edge of Kherson offers some visible hints here and there, among the piles of rubbish, to what locals and workers say happened in its recent past. Russian flags, uniforms and helmets emerge from the putrid mud, while hundreds of seagulls and dozens of stray dogs scavenge around.

As the Russian occupation of the region was on its last legs over the summer, the site, once a mundane place where residents disposed of their rubbish, became a no-go area, according to Kherson's inhabitants, fiercely sealed off by the invading forces from presumed prying eyes.

The reason for the jittery secrecy, several residents and workers at the site told the Guardian, was that the occupying forces had a gruesome new purpose there: dumping the bodies of their fallen brethren, and then burning them.

The residents report seeing Russian open trucks arriving to the site carrying black bags that were then set on fire, filling the air with a large cloud of smoke and a terrifying stench of burning flesh.

They believe the Russians were disposing of the bodies of its soldiers killed during the heavy fighting of those summer days.

"Every time our army shelled the Russians there, they moved the remains to the landfill and burned them," says Iryna, 40, a Kherson resident.

Some believe that burning bodies of their own soldiers was the easiest way to get rid of the corpses as bridges over the Dnipro River when Russians were virtually cut off on its western bank were too fragile to hold trucks.

Dozens of other Kherson residents corroborated the reports of their neighbours, but Ukrainian authorities have not so far spoken. A local official who requested anonymity said: "We are not interested in the burial sites of the enemy. What interests us is to find the bodies of Ukrainians, tortured, killed and buried in mass graves here in the Kherson region."