

Conflict Update # 47

May 2nd, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Key Takeaways

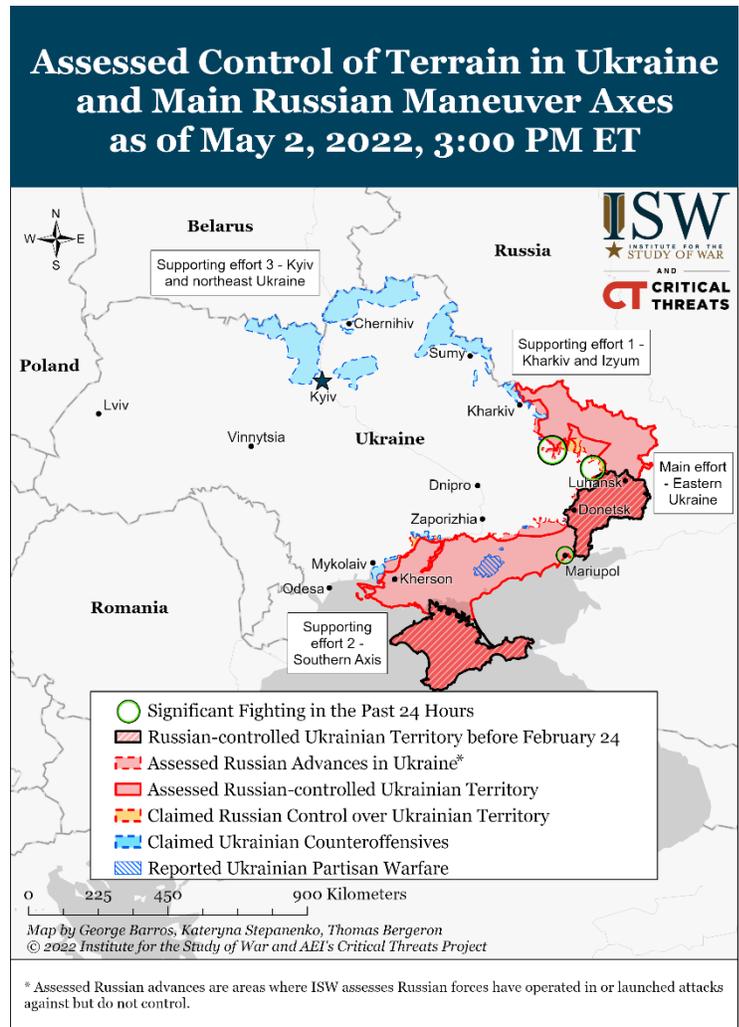
Russian forces did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks along any axes of advance and instead shelled Ukrainian positions on the frontlines.

The April 30 Ukrainian artillery strike on Russian command headquarters near Izyum likely disrupted Russian operations on the Izyum axis and may hinder Russian offensives from Izyum for the next few days.

Russian forces on the Southern Axis continued to regroup and reconnoiter likely in preparation for ground assaults in the direction of Kryvyi Rih, Mykolaiv, and Zaporizhia.

Subordinate Main Effort—Mariupol - Russian forces conducted naval artillery and air strikes on Mariupol while civilian evacuations from the Azovstal Steel Plant continued yesterday and today. Ukraine’s Military Law Enforcement Service reported that over 100 civilians were evacuated to Zaporizhia today, but Ukrainian defenders remain at the plant. The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Russian forces saved 80 civilians (whom it falsely asserted had been held hostage at the plant) and that 11 evacuees “volunteered” to remain in the Donetsk People’s Republic. Continuing bombardment of Mariupol belies Moscow’s claims that its forces have secured the city.

Subordinate Main Effort—Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts - Russian forces today shelled along the Donetsk-Luhansk frontline but did not conduct any confirmed ground attacks with their troops continuing to focus on seizure of Rubizhne and Popasna. Ukrainian General Staff forecasts that Russian troops will likely attempt to use these points to launch an offensive in the direction of Severodonetsk, and that they moved one battalion tactical group (BTG) to the Popasna area to improve their tactical position and prepare to advance toward Severodonetsk. Ukrainian General Staff also observed that Russian troops are setting conditions to advance on Slovyansk from the Lyman-Siversk frontline, which lies within 25 km to the east of Slovyansk, an observation consistent with ISW’s previous reporting of Russian troops making marginal southwestward advances around the Yampil area over the last few days.



Supporting Effort #1—Kharkiv and Izyum - Russian forces today continued to regroup and conduct unspecified offensive operations in the Izyum area, but did not make any confirmed advances. The April 30 Ukrainian rocket artillery strike on the Russian Airborne (VDV) and 2nd Combined Arms Army command post in the Izyum area may be continuing to disrupt Russian operations along the Izyum axis.

Russian troops, including elements of the 6th Combined Arms Army and Baltic and Pacific Fleet coastal troops, continued to shell Kharkiv City and surrounding settlements. Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar notably stated that Ukrainian forces suffered significant losses when they took control of Ruska Lozova (less than 10 kilometers north of Kharkiv City), suggesting that Russian troops saw sufficient value in this location to fight hard to hold it.

Supporting Effort #2—Southern Axis - Russian forces today continued to regroup, reconnoiter, and concentrate logistics likely in preparation for ground assaults on Ukrainian positions in the directions of Mykolaiv, Kryvyi Rih, and Zaporizhia.

Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces deployed an unspecified artillery unit to Tokmak that will likely support Russian attempts to seize Orihiv, Zaporizhia Oblast, on the intersection of several major highways.

Its seizure could allow Russian forces to push toward Zaporizhia city as well as Donetsk. Russian forces also reportedly established an equipment repair shop in an occupied Zaporizhia Oblast settlement.

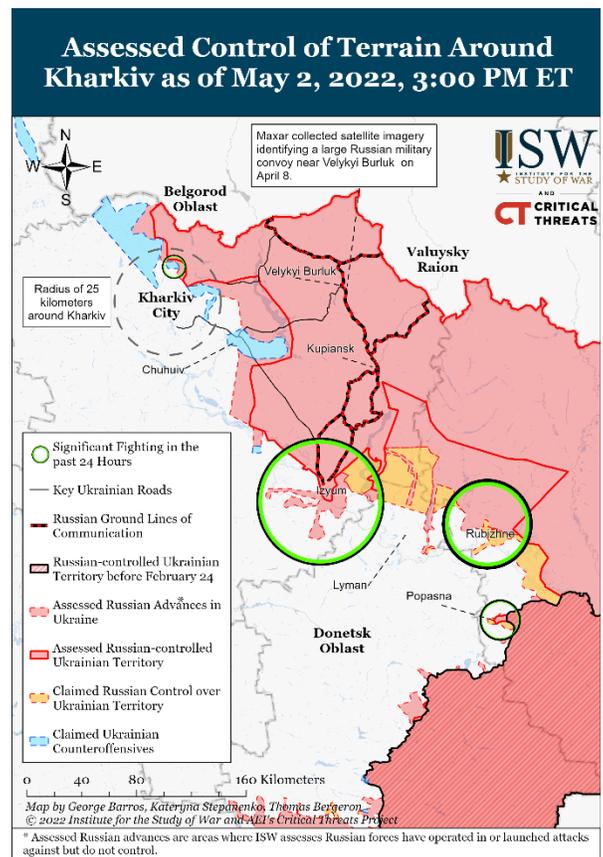
Ukraine’s Operational Command “South” said that Russian forces did not attempt ground offensives in southern Ukraine today but conducted periodic artillery and mortar shelling, reportedly launching a third rocket strike on the bridge leading over the Dniester Estuary to Romania. Ukrainian forces today claimed to have struck Russian ammunition depots in Chornobaivka, Kherson Oblast, and a video post on social media may corroborate that claim, but ISW cannot verify it with greater confidence. Ukrainian forces also destroyed two Russian Raptor-class patrol boats that reconnoitered the Danube River delta on May 2 (see below).

There were no significant situational changes in Transnistria.

Supporting Effort #3—Sumy and Northeastern Ukraine - There were no significant activities on this axis in the past 24 hours.

Immediate items to watch

- Russian attacks from Izyum will likely be at least temporarily disrupted by the attack on Russian command post in the area.
- Russian forces will likely attempt to starve out the remaining defenders of the Azovstal Steel Plant in Mariupol.
- Russian forces may be preparing to conduct renewed offensive operations to capture the entirety of Kherson Oblast in the coming days.



Ukrainian drones destroyed two Russian Raptor boats in the Black Sea near Snake Island where the Moskva was sunk. The boats were reportedly being used to evacuate Russian military personnel from Snake Island to replace them with new troops.

Raptors are designed for patrolling, search and rescue operations, and the transfer of troops in coastal zones, straits and river estuaries at a maximum distance of up to 100 miles from their base. They can also be part of a large amphibious assault ship or a universal amphibious assault ship, located in the docking chamber or on board.



Ukraine spokespeople posted videos of drones destroying the two craft whilst they were speeding across the water.

The vessels are fairly large at 23 tons and 60 feet in length, powered by Caterpillar diesel engines and waterjets. They can reach speeds of 22mph.

Ukrainian National Resistance System (Guerilla warfare) - Ukraine's National Resistance system consists of three elements: Territorial Defense (locally based conventional defense formations), a partisan-like Resistance Movement (RM), and military training for all people of Ukraine. The Resistance Movement is expected to operate in temporarily occupied territories and is coordinated by the Special Operation Forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The RM (i) prepares citizens to resist the aggressor, (ii) disrupts enemy activities, and (iii) participates in special operations.

Members of this movement enjoy benefits similar to UA SOF operators, like concealed identities and protection for their close family members. Also, they undergo specialized training under special forces instructors that goes far beyond the basic preparation given to army reservists.

Although the RM was still in the process of being set up when Russia's full-scale re-invasion of Ukraine began, these guerilla forces' development continued even amidst the war. And according to UA SOF Command, those efforts have already shown results in the territories Russia has occupied since hostilities exploded.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, RM members have captured several Russian military vehicles and soldiers, and with the help of coordination and targeting provided by UA SOF, they notably seized a Russian Rtu-BM electronic warfare (EW) station.

Local guerilla fighters have also contributed to correcting artillery strikes of the regular Armed Forces and cooperated with the UA SOF on eliminating high-priority targets (Sprotyv.mod.gov.ua, April 13). Such support, for example, made it possible for the UA SOF to destroy a vital bridge deep inside the Russian-occupied zone, near the small eastern city of Izyum (Novynarnia, April 14).

The Ukrainian Resistance Movement has already distorted Russian plans but could play an even more significant role in future battles by making additional trouble for the occupying forces.

Ukrainian army has destroyed more than 1,000 Russian tanks - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the Ukrainian army has already destroyed more than 1,000 Russian tanks, nearly 200 Russian aircraft, and almost 2,500 armored fighting vehicles.

Despite these losses, Russian troops still have equipment to launch additional attacks, Zelensky said. "The occupiers still have equipment in stock. Yes, they still have missiles to strike at our territory," he added. "But this war has already weakened Russia so much that they have to plan even fewer military equipment for the parade in Moscow."

U.S. says Russia's progress in Donbas has been "minimal at best" - The Pentagon assesses that Russia's progress in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region has been "minimal at best," with Russian forces continuing to suffer from "poor" command and control, low morale and recurring logistical problems, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Monday. "They'll move in [to an area], declare victory and then withdraw their troops, only to let the Ukrainians take it back," the official said.

Wagner mercenaries recruiting new soldiers to be sent into Ukraine - The Wagner group is recruiting soldiers and foreign fighters to be potentially used in Russia's war with Ukraine, said Britain's spy chief.

In a rare public address during a visit to Australia, Sir Jeremy Fleming said it is "clear Russia is using mercenaries and foreign fighters to augment its forces."

This includes the Wagner group, a shadowy band of paramilitaries used by Russia to provide plausible deniability for riskier operations. "Recently, we have seen that Wagner is looking to move up a gear," said the head of Britain's GCHQ spy agency. "We understand that the group is now prepared to send large numbers of personnel into Ukraine to fight alongside Russians. "These soldiers are likely to be used as cannon fodder to try to limit Russian military losses."

Ukrainian prisoner of war confirmed dead days after Russian capture - Ukrainian prisoner of war Don Zvonyk was confirmed dead days after he was shown captured by Russian forces. CNN's Matt Rivers reports.

Video Appears to Show Russian Convoy With Stolen Ukrainian Equipment - Kremlin-backed Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's men are reportedly stealing Ukrainian agricultural machinery, according to a video posted by a Chechen opposition Telegram channel.

Amid recent reports that Russian forces have stolen "several hundred thousand tons" of grain in the areas of Ukraine they occupy, Telegram channel 1ADAT released a clip that it says shows equipment being taken by Kadyrovites—Chechen militias—to the territory of the occupied Chechnya. The video shows a long line of carrier vehicles and agricultural equipment, including tractors and spare tires.

"As you can see in the video, [it] is being taken to the territory of the occupied Chechnya under the protection of the local traffic police," the channel said.

It is reported that Putin has OK'd looting, rape and destruction by "mercenary forces" such as the Chechnyans in order to attract them to fight on behalf of Russia.

Ukraine kills 9th Russian General – We reported yesterday that another (unknown) Russian general had been killed by Ukrainian forces in the Kharkiv area when his command post was destroyed. Today Ukraine announced that 55-year old Andrey Simonov was the general killed. He is thought to be the Russia's leading electronic warfare expert.

This brings to 24 the number of Russian generals and commanders who have been killed in action by Ukrainian forces.

Ukraine operating behind enemy lines?

- **Blast at Russian Military Explosives Plant Kills 2** - Two workers were killed at an explosives factory in Russia's Perm region 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow, local authorities said today. The Perm powder plant makes explosives for Grad and Smerch multiple launch rocket systems, air defense systems, tanks and artillery, launch and acceleration stages for sea-based cruise missiles, as well as ball propellants for small arms.
- **'Powerful explosions' reportedly heard in Russia near Ukraine border** - Blasts heard overnight in three Russian provinces along Ukraine border. An ammunition depot in Belgorod region was reportedly ablaze while blasts were heard in the Voronezh and Kursk regions.

- **'Sabotage': Railway bridge collapses, explosions heard, and fires break out in Russia** - Unexplained explosions were heard, fires broke out, and a railway bridge collapsed near the Ukrainian border in Russia on Sunday and early Monday morning in three separate incidents, according to Russian officials.
- One person was reportedly injured after a large fire engulfed a **Russian military facility** in the Belgorod region of Russia on Sunday, according to the region's governor. Belgorod shares a border with northern Ukraine. No explanation was given for the cause of the fire by regional officials or the Russian Defense Ministry. The fire was followed by reports of explosions in the same region on Monday. In another region of Russia bordering Ukraine, a railway bridge collapsed on Sunday in what the governor is calling an act of "sabotage."
- **Russian Ministry of Defense fire** - On the same day, in the neighboring region of Belgorod, the region's governor reported that a fire had broken out at a Russian Ministry of Defense facility.
- **Army warehouses in border town Belgorod were aflame** overnight days after checkpoints in the Kursk region were targeted by Ukrainian drones.

Why the skies over Ukraine have proven so deadly for Russian pilots - As the Ukraine-Russia war drags on, military aviation experts are noticing that anti-aircraft missiles like the Stinger and Igla are not the only threats Russian pilots face in the skies over Ukraine. In fact, a dangerous combination of doctrine, training and equipment is partly to blame for the heavy losses the VKS, the acronym for Russia's air force, have sustained in the three-week-old war.

"Russia has not modified its ground-attack tactics and is conducting many of its attacks at low altitude, which puts Russian planes in the lethal envelope" of shoulder-fired man-portable air defense systems (MANPADs), wrote the Atlantic Council in an assessment on Wednesday, the same day low-flying Russian air tactics were covered by Forbes.

"Russia has still failed to establish air superiority and is suffering huge aircraft losses as a result," wrote the Atlantic Council, which estimated that it was "highly unlikely" that either side would establish air superiority over Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, or that Russia would be able to block Ukraine's supply lines with air or missile attacks. Many outlets including Task & Purpose have written about Russia's failure to achieve air supremacy, the term for making an enemy air force incapable of resistance, despite its combat air force being 15 times the size of Ukraine's. But recent experts pointed out that may be intentional, as a result of Russian air doctrine.

The "waves" of Russian invaders - Those who were able to leave the Kharkiv region after Russia's invasion of the region began say that young soldiers came there first.

First wave - There were many Buryats (people from the Republic of Buryatia in Siberia) who came to Tsupivka and asked the locals: "Is this Kharkiv?" They were amazed by the asphalt road and the new lighting along the route. These troops even helped one grandmother to treat her leg injured in the shelling. During the shelling, they jumped to hide in the cellars together with the residents. On one occasion, they drove into an armoured personnel carrier in one yard and demolished the gate to escape from the shooting.

Second wave - Then came the so-called LPR Militia from Luhansk. They started drinking, talking about "eight years of bombing Donbas" and all that sort of stuff. They didn't even have normal clothes, they wore spotted blue uniforms like security guards and makeshift boots. Some were in sneakers and rubber slippers. They oppressed the population the most, asking local drug lords in between drinking sessions if they had any supplies. Well, with no lights, power or ways to communicate in the occupied part of Kharkiv you would need to see them scrambling for deals.

Third wave - The last to arrive were other servicemen from the Russian Armed Forces. Who exactly? Many rumours said that they were Kadyrovites, in fact Ossetians. They raided nearby Tchaikyvka and left. Some people there had their passports confiscated and were forced to celebrate. All cellars with food were cleared out. Another local said that his brother's head had been smashed into his knee, then was forced to the ground and a machine gun fired near his head.

They gave him a shell casing as a souvenir, saying “If you lose it, we’ll kill you.” And when anyone asked to go to the hospital, they said, “Try Belgorod, (over the Russian border), if you get there.”

“They were nothing more than looters. They knocked on our door and sent us to the basement at 17 degrees below zero. We all got sick! They arrived in torn sneakers and changed into shoes found in the apartments. One bulky guy was in sandals. They took the things they needed.”

Oligarchs dying

6 Russian oligarchs have now died in mysterious circumstances. Here is the full list:

Sergey Protosenya - found hanging in a rented luxury villa in Spain on April 19, according to Spanish TV channel Telecinco. His wife and 18-year-old daughter were also found dead in the apartment with stab wounds.

Vladislav Avayev - found dead of a gunshot wound in his Moscow apartment on April 18, along with his wife and 13-year-old daughter, Russia's state-run TASS news agency reported.

Vasily Melnikov - found dead in his apartment in Nizhny Novgorod on March 23. He was stabbed to death, as were his wife and two sons, aged 10 and 4. Knives, believed to be the murder weapons, were found at the scene, the outlet said.

Mikhail Watford - found hanged in the garage of his home in Surrey, England, on February 28, according to the BBC.

Alexander Tyulyakov - was found hanged in an apartment's garage near St. Petersburg on February 25, according to the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

Leonid Shulman - found dead in a cottage in the same village in January, before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine, according to Russian media company RBC.

Putin

Putin does not care how many Russians are killed - The problem with Russia suffering “colossal losses” (Moscow confirms attack on Kyiv during UN chief’s visit, 29 April) is that this really does not matter to its leaders. You only have to look back at historic campaigns involving Russia and its satellites to see that one of its major tactics is to keep throwing men (and women) into battle until the other side runs out of steam.

Escalation of Lies and Threats Leaves Putin With Two Bad Choices - The deadlocked war with Ukraine has pushed Russia into an irreconcilable dilemma: it can neither accept reality nor keep denying it. This contradiction can be seen both in the official discourse on the unfolding disaster and the societal response to it. As one example, rampant patriotic mobilization persists alongside the pretense that normal life continues undisturbed.

Likewise, there is the contrast between the climaxing intensity of official propaganda on the one hand, and the war (still being described as a “special military operation”) supposedly progressing according to plan, on the other hand.

Finally, harsh repressions have discouraged anti-war protests, but the prevalent Russian attitude is actually confused indifference to rather than active support for the country’s brutal aggression against its neighbor (Meduza.io, April 24).

The bottom line is that neither the hysterical drum-beating nor the cynical minding of one’s own business is sustainable for much longer. And the approaching celebrations of May 9 Victory Day could mark the point where the neither-war-nor-peace stance acquires a more definitively one-sided and perhaps more dangerous character.

Mobilization is, indeed, needed to sustain Russia's high-intensity military operations; but even a limited expansion of the draft and dragooning of reluctant reservists come at a high economic cost (Forbes.ru, April 26). The government is struggling to minimize the scale of damage caused by the sanctions and cuts of multiple supply chains, but it apparently cannot invent a better scenario than an extra-deep recession lasting at least two years (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, April 27). The conditions to prevent an economic collapse require the sustained inflow of petro-revenues, but the Kremlin is firmly set on using Gazprom as an "energy weapon" against the presumably gas-addicted Europe, and each case of blackmail prompts the European Union to further curtail its consumption of Russian hydrocarbons.

Suspicious about the possible sabotage of mobilization orders by a corrupt bureaucracy and a disgruntled populace bring Putin back to the nuclear option. This is no longer treated in public discussions as catastrophic and unthinkable; rather, it is often perceived as advantageous for Russia, particularly as a way to pressure European neighbors.

Maximum propaganda spin was applied to the recent test of the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which, though still years away from production and deployment, is already useful for boosting Russia's deterrence posture vis-à-vis the United States (Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie, April 28).

Looting

Ukraine Alleges Russia Has Looted Art - Ukrainian officials allege that Russian forces have seized artworks and artifacts from collections around the country. In Mariupol, more than 2,000 pieces were stolen from three museums, according to the city council, the Washington Post report, including examples by artists Arkhip Kuindzhi and Ivan Aivazovsky.

Meanwhile, in the city of Melitopol, Russian officials have taken gold artifacts that date back to the Scythian empire more than 2,000 years ago, as reported by the NYT. Workers at the Melitopol Museum of Local History said that they had tried to hide the pieces in cardboard boxes in a basement area. The Russian military has named Evgeny Gorlachev the director of the museum, and he said on Russian TV that the objects "are of great cultural value for the entire former Soviet Union."

Russian troops steal \$5 million worth of John Deere farm vehicles from Ukraine, find they've been remotely disabled - Russian soldiers in the occupied city of Melitopol have stolen almost \$5 million worth of farm equipment from a John Deere dealership and shipped it more than 700 miles to Chechnya. But the entire operation was in vain: all the equipment was unusable as it had been locked remotely.

CNN reports that in addition to looting residences, Russian troops have increasingly been stealing farm equipment, hundreds of thousands of tons of grain, and building materials in Ukraine. The equipment is now said to be sitting on a farm near Grozny as consultants in Moscow try to bypass the remote locks. If they are unsuccessful, the only option would be to sell the machines for spare parts.

Nuclear

Russian State TV simulates nuclear attack on Ireland - A television programme shown in Russian appears to demonstrate how Ireland would be completely destroyed by an underwater nuclear drone launched by one of its navy's submarines. It claims an explosion from the 100 megaton warhead would cause a "gigantic tsunami wave up to 500m high".

The Russian State TV programme, which is presented by Dmitry Kiselyov, showed a simulation of a nuclear attack on Europe, which it claims would decimate Ireland and the UK.

The simulation shows an underwater missile being set off just off the coast of Donegal. Showing the simulation, the presenter says: "Another option is to plunge Britain into the depths of the sea using Russia's unmanned underwater vehicle Poseidon.

"It approaches its target at a depth of 1km at a speed of 200km/h. There's no way of stopping this underwater drone. The warhead on it has a yield of up to 100 megatons.

"The explosion of this thermonuclear torpedo by Britain's coastline will cause a gigantic tsunami wave up to 500m high.

"Such a barrage alone also carries extreme doses of radiation. Having passed over the British Isles, it will turn what might be left of them into a radioactive desert."

Sanctions

More Of Europe's Crude Supply Is Coming From Deep In The Heart Of Texas - U.S. crude exports to Europe climbed in March and April as buyers across the Atlantic snapped up the country's light sweet grades to offset the expected loss of Russian oil.

As the EU weighs an oil embargo on Russia, U.S. exporters are ramping up shipments of U.S. light crude to Europe, helped by Washington's decision to release 180 million barrels of oil from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is flooding the domestic market.

U.S. crude exports bound for Europe are close to 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) so far in April, the highest in two years and one of the strongest months on record, said Matt Smith, lead oil analyst for the Americas at data provider Kpler. Most cargoes are carrying light sweet grades, he added, headed to European destinations including Spain, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Italy.

Hungary is set to flout any embargo on buying Russian oil - The European Commission may spare Hungary and Slovakia from an embargo on buying Russian oil, preventing them from vetoing Russian oil from being sold to the rest of the EU.

Hungary and Slovakia are highly dependent on imports of Russian oil and gas, with both hinting they could block an embargo via the EU's membership veto. But the EU may grant the two countries a way out, denying the member states from blocking the sanctions.

Russian clubs, national teams handed more sanctions by UEFA - European football governing body, UEFA has announced further sanctions on Russian clubs and national teams amid the country's continued invasion of neighboring Ukraine.

The senior women's team of Russia have been barred from competing in this year's women's Euro 2022. In a statement on Monday, UEFA approved for Portugal – who lost to Russia in the play-offs – to replace them at the competition, which takes place in July.

Russian clubs will also not participate in European club competitions next season, according to the announcement. UEFA also announced that Russia's bid to host the men's Euro 2028 or Euro 2032 tournaments is now ineligible.

India's top steelmaker will stop importing Russian coal due to 'uncertainties' created by Western sanctions on Moscow. India's top steelmaker said it would stop importing Russian coal due to "uncertainties" created by Western sanctions, the Financial Times first reported. Tata Steel was India's biggest importer of Russian coal in the first quarter, bringing in 617,000 tonnes, according to data from CoalMint cited by the FT. But Tata placed those orders before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Russia faces its biggest economic collapse since Putin rose to power - Russia is about to suffer the most severe economic collapse since Vladimir Putin rose to power at the turn of the millennium, as sanctions imposed on the country after he invaded Ukraine are expected to wreak more damage than any previous crisis the Russian strongman has faced.

On April 29, Russian central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina slashed the country's interest rates by three percentage points for the second time in less than a month, after forecasting a severe recession, soaring prices, and coming labor market upheaval as the country pays the price for its unprovoked war. "Supply is contracting more significantly than demand, which is intensifying inflationary pressure," she said.

Gross domestic product is expected to nosedive by a minimum of 8% this year, and could even shrink by as much as 10%, the most since 1994, according to the World Bank.

In a bid to isolate Russia, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to invite PM Modi to G7 summit - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz plans to invite Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as special guest to a Group of Seven leaders' summit next month as part of an effort to forge a broader international alliance against Russia.

Germany, which currently holds the rotating G-7 presidency, will also welcome the leaders of Indonesia, South Africa and Senegal to the gathering in the Bavarian Alps June 26 to June 28, said people with knowledge of the matter. The decision could be announced as early as Monday, when Scholz welcomes Modi for talks in Berlin and a joint German-Indian cabinet meeting.

Scholz was undecided on Modi's invitation until a few weeks ago given the prime minister's reluctance to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a jump in fossil fuel deliveries to India from Russia.

But Scholz has decided the G-7 should court India, with its growing population and long democratic tradition, as a potentially valuable partner in efforts to isolate Russia, according to the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Scholz also sees an opportunity to work closely with Modi in other policy areas such as climate change and defense.

UK Foreign Secretary Warns China Of Russia-like Sanctions By 'assertive' G7 Over Moscow Support - British Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss on Sunday voiced a clear warning to China against any potential support to Russia. Addressing reporters at Mansion House in London, Truss threw a highly confrontational message to China asking Beijing to "play by international rules." She further warned Beijing of economic retaliation penned by the Group of Seven (G7) nations. She also raised the prospect of "economic NATO", urging all G7 nations to come together in defense of their economies against aggression from Russia or China.

U.S. to seize Russian oligarchs' assets for Ukraine aid, Schumer says - A \$33 billion Ukraine aid package will include provisions for the U.S. government to seize and sell Russian oligarchs' assets, and give the proceeds to the invaded country, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said Sunday.

Putin's war imperils Russia's energy cash cow - For a man fixated on Russian grandeur, President Vladimir Putin is doing his best to sabotage the only economic sector that gives Moscow any claim to superpower status and that helps bankroll his war in Ukraine: oil and gas. His invasion puts all that at risk.

Sanctions restrict Russia's access to crucial Western technology and finance needed to help it drill oil from drawn-down, remote and inhospitable Siberian and Arctic fields. The departure of Western companies also cripples its ability to produce ultra-lucrative liquefied natural gas for the coming decade.

Humanitarian

Red Cross and UN are involved in evacuation negotiations, Mariupol mayor says - The United Nations mission and Red Cross are negotiating on securing the evacuation of hundreds of local people who are trapped in the Azovstal steel plant, Mariupol Mayor Vadim Boichenko says.

Speaking on Ukrainian television on Saturday, he urged "all international partners to unite for one goal — to save the lives of the locals, to save the fortress and those locals who are now hiding in the Azovstal bomb shelters."

'I Came To Identify My Son': In Bucha, Relatives Retrieve Bodies Of Loved Ones - Relatives of people killed in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha are trying to identify and retrieve the bodies of family members. Ukraine says more than 1,000 bodies have been discovered in or around Bucha since Russian forces withdrew in April, with many showing signs of torture.

Containment

Why Russia Hates The Javelin And NLAW 'Tank Killers' - The FGM-148 is a fire-and-forget platform that utilizes automatic infrared guidance that allows the user to take cover and avoid counter-fire immediately after launch. Its HEAT (High-Explosive Anti-Tank) warhead is capable of defeating modern tanks by striking them from above where the vehicle's armor is the thinnest. It can also be used against fortifications in a direct attack fight.



The Javelin's success at destroying Russian tanks has been credited to a number of factors, including that it has an effective range of about 1.5 miles. As it is a passive weapon, tank crews can't actually detect a Javelin in the area until it's fired. Because it produces very little backblast – especially compared to other anti-tank systems such as the BGM-71 TOW missile – Russian tanks often don't know that a missile was fired their way.

The Javelin is also a fire-and-forget weapon – unlike the wire-guided TOW where operators must stay put until the missile strikes – which means those firing the Javelin can do the "shoot and scoot" maneuver, where they can fire the weapon and then take cover before Russian tanks can return fire.

In 2020, Lockheed Martin introduced the Javelin FGM-148F, which featured an advanced multipurpose warhead. "The MPWH incorporates the latest generation shaped charged technology to defeat present and future advanced armored threats while adding a fragmenting steel warhead case to significantly improve lethality against soft targets and light armored vehicles," Lockheed Martin said.

US Assistance to Ukraine

Switchblade UAVs: 700+
Small, tube-launched and requiring little training, the Switchblade loitering munition is essentially a suicide drone packed with explosives designed to divebomb a target.

155mm Howitzers: 90
The relatively light-weight 155mm howitzer is designed to provide "direct, reinforcing and general artillery fire" and was jointly developed by the US Army and Marine Corps.

Javelin Systems: 5,500+
The Javelin is a man-portable, medium-range tactical missile designed to "defeat main battle tanks and other armored vehicles as well as personnel and equipment in fortifications."

Mi-17 Helicopters: 16
These Russian-made transport helicopters were purchased for Afghanistan but are now being shipped to Ukraine. It's an airframe with which Ukrainian pilots are already familiar.

Stinger Systems: 1,400+
The man-portable, surface-to-air weapon system has been so popular, and the US has provided so many, that there's lawmaker concern over America's own remaining stockpiles.

Phoenix Ghost UAVs: 121
While details are scant, the Phoenix Ghost loitering munition was developed by the Air Force in secret and, the Pentagon says, will be well-suited to fighting in the Donbas.

Other Equipment:

- 14,000+ other anti-armor systems
- 72 tactical vehicles to tow howitzers
- 200 M113 Armored Personnel Carriers
- 100s of other armored vehicles
- 7,000+ small arms
- 75,000 sets of body armor and helmets
- 14 counter-artillery radars
- 4 counter-mortar radars
- Laser-guided rocket systems
- Undisclosed # of Puma UAVs
- Undisclosed # of Coastal Defense Vessels
- 50 million+ rounds of ammunition
- 2 surface-to-air radars
- M16A1 Claymores
- C-4 explosives
- Tactical secure communications systems
- Night vision devices
- Thermal imagery systems, optics, rangefinders
- Commercial satellite services
- Explosive ordnance disposal gear
- CBRN protective equipment
- Medical supplies

Sources: US Department of Defense, as of April 22; US Army weapon descriptions; Weapon manufacturer information

BREAKING DEFENSE

Even if the United States is unable to continue to supply Ukraine with the Javelin, the besieged fighters are still being supplied with other anti-tank weapons. In fact, the Ukrainians have already received significant numbers – larger than the Javelin in fact – of the British-made NLAW.

Also known as the Main Battle Tank and Light Anti-Tank Weapon (MBT LAW), it is a single-shot, fire-and-forget, shoulder-fired disposable missile system that was designed for use by infantry. The shoulder-mounted weapon is capable of firing a single 150mm high-explosive anti-tank missile up to 2,600 feet. The joint British/Swedish-designed NLAWS, developed by Saab Bofors Dynamics, are currently built in Belfast, Northern Ireland, by Thales Air Defense.



The NLAW is a “soft-launch system,” which means that the missile is ejected non-explosively and can be used by infantry from within an enclosed space. Weighing just 27.5 pounds, it is easy to fire, and light enough that the operator can still carry an additional weapon such as a rifle. Much like the American Javelin, the NLAW can target the top of a tank’s turret, where the armor is usually at its weakest. Operators need to aim just one meter above the tank and the downward shaped charge can do the rest.

The time from target detection to engagement is approximately five seconds. NLAW can be used in an attack from almost any position, from up high in a building to behind a tree or even in a ditch/trench. Operators can fire down 45 degrees and can shoot from inside a building, from a basement, or from the second floor of a building out of the range of most tanks. In direct attack mode, the NLAW can be used against soft targets including trucks, buses, and helicopters, but can also be fired into buildings, where it will cause significant damage.

Most Americans support more Russia sanctions and Ukraine aid - Around 76% of the people who took a poll believe that the U.S. should provide more humanitarian support to Ukraine, and 67% support increasing economic sanctions on Russia.

Zelenskyy Says Australia Will Be Written Into Ukraine’s History Books For Helping Them Fight Russia - A very stoic Zelenskyy also took the chance to deliver a heartfelt thanks to the support received from Down Under. "I have to be very thankful to Australian people," Zelenskyy said. "You helped us already and it’s true, but we need more, it’s also true.

Impacts

EU Presses to Maintain Unity Over Putin’s Rubles-for-Gas Demand - European Union energy ministers tried to project a united front Monday in rejecting Russia’s demands to buy gas in rubles as the bloc tries to prevent Vladimir Putin from sowing divisions in the bloc.

Despite signs that at least one member state, Hungary, may accede to Moscow’s ruble demands, ministers said the EU will find a way to stick together.

“Speed is of importance here,” Irish climate minister Eamon Ryan told reporters. “This war now looks like it could be protracted, and we need to use every lever to try and shorten it. Better to go strong early and try to bring to an end.”

First Ship With Ukrainian Corn Departs Romania - Enough grain has made its way out of Ukraine to fill an export vessel in neighboring Romania, marking a small but important first step toward easing the backlog of crops the war has left piled up at home.

The panamax vessel Unity N departed early Friday from Constanta port, loaded with 71,000 tons of Ukrainian corn, said Viorel Panait, general director of Comvex, which operates two terminals there. It is bound for Spain and further cargoes are planned for early and mid-May, he said by phone.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shut most of the country's ports. That's dealt a huge blow to its agricultural sector, which typically ships about 5 million to 6 million tons grain per month for Asia, Africa and Europe. The slowdown from one of the world's biggest grain and vegetable oil suppliers has sparked worries of a worsening global hunger crisis, and nearby nations from Bulgaria to Romania and Lithuania have pledged to help ease the crunch.

The cargo departing Romania shows such moves are working, although logistical hurdles still abound. For example, railway sizes differ between Ukraine and the European Union, necessitating wagons to swap wheels or unload at the border. It took about three weeks to accumulate enough Ukrainian grain via trains and barges for the initial cargo, Panait said. That speed is improving, while further infrastructure development is needed.

Ukraine's next harvests will be smaller than usual because of the war, but the country still has millions of tons of last year's crops to sell. Crop shipments by rail in April have been running at about half the maximum capacity, amounting to about 10% of typical seaborne trade, data from the Ukrainian Agribusiness Club show.

Without a pickup in volumes, farmers will lack funds for seeds and other inputs needed for the next winter-crop plantings, which start as soon as late summer. That risks curtailing harvests of major staples like wheat in 2023, too, Kateryna Rybachenko, chief executive of agribusiness Agro-Region Ukraine said on a webinar Thursday.

Russia is losing the cyberwar against Ukraine, too - Not only has Russia seen setbacks on the battlefield in Ukraine, it's not faring well in the less-obvious cyberwar either. One reason: Russia's ally Belarus was still using Windows XP to keep the trains running on time.

Russia has also been fighting a quieter war against Ukraine, a cyberwar, deploying what had been considered the most feared state-sponsored hackers in the world. And in the same way that Ukraine has fended off Russia's military might, it's been winning the cyberwar as well.

The first loss Russia suffered in the cyberwar came at the very beginning of its invasion — in fact, even before the invasion began. Russia used the extensive railways of its partner in the war, Belarus, to rush soldiers, tanks, heavy weapons and other war materiel to the Ukraine border. Once the invasion began, it used the same railroads as a primary supply chain for its troops, and to send more tanks and weapons into Ukraine.

But then came the Cyber Partisans, a hacktivist group of exiled Belarus tech professionals that had for years been fighting Belarussian dictator Lukashenko. At the first signs of the Russian buildup, the Cyber Partisans attacked the Belarussian train system, slowing troop movements, supplies and weaponry. They worked in concert with Belarussian railroad workers and dissident Belarussian security forces. The "Washington Post" notes that they played "a role in fueling the logistical chaos that quickly engulfed the Russians, leaving troops stranded on the front lines without food, fuel and ammunition within days of the invasion."

Thanks to that chaos in the face of fierce of Ukrainian resistance, the Russians couldn't take the Ukraine capital Kyiv and other cities in the north of the country. Eventually they turned their attention to the south and east.

Lavrov's antisemitism means Israel no longer neutral on Ukraine-Russia - Jerusalem's best-laid plans to somehow stay above the war between Russia and Ukraine have been undone.

It has unraveled. The Israeli Foreign Ministry's summons of Russian Ambassador to Israel Anatoly Viktorov today to protest the egregious comments by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov saying that Hitler had "Jewish blood" marks the end of Israel's effort to somehow stay above the Russian-Ukrainian fray.

Lavrov's comments came in response to a question by an Italian radio interviewer about how he could call Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a Nazi, when Zelensky himself is a Jew. In addition, Lavrov said, "For a long time now we've been hearing the wise Jewish people say that the biggest antisemites are the Jews themselves."

Regardless of Israel's genuine interest in not wanting to antagonize Russia because this could boomerang against it in Syria, where the Russians hold sway and could cause Israel considerable damage, the daily horrors in Ukraine, moves in the international arena forcing nations to take sides, and words such as Lavrov's have made it impossible for Israel to remain "neutral."

Kremlin kids living it up in the West - The children of high-ranking figures in the Kremlin live a life of luxury in the West. Their lives are in stark opposition to the propaganda of their fathers in Moscow.

Imprisoned Kremlin opposition figure Alexei Navalny, put together a research team that has looked into the lives of the children of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

First, there is **Polina**, the stepdaughter of none other than Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Lavrov has recently likened the US to Napoleon and Hitler in reference to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, claiming that America has gotten Europe under control and that Europe is "just fulfilling a role."

Jelizaveta Peskova, daughter of Dmitri Peskov, spokesperson for Vladimir Putin. While Jelizaveta enjoys a life of luxury, her father has spouted the Kremlin's anti-Western message. But his daughter leads a life that her father officially opposes.

Sofia Abramovicha, daughter of oligarch Roman Abramovich - Sofia is the daughter of Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, known outside Russia as the owner of Chelsea, a Premier League football club in London.

'Now in shambles': Turkey's tourism revival fades on Russian war - The projected low number of Russian tourists is a major cause of concern for Turkey's vital sector amid ongoing economic crises.

Ukraine Formally Closes Seaports Captured by Russia - Ukraine has formally closed its four Black and Azov sea ports, which Russian forces have captured, the Ukrainian agriculture ministry said on Monday. The Azov Sea ports of Mariupol, Berdiansk and Skadovsk and the Black Sea port of Kherson were closed "until the restoration of control", the ministry said in a statement.

Post Conflict

What would victory actually mean now for Ukraine – and for Europe? - It is clear that Putin has failed to compel Kyiv to capitulate. Russia's plans to annihilate Ukraine and annex more of its territory have cemented Ukraine's will to fight and win this war. What does victory actually look like?

For Ukraine's government, it means first that the Russian army is defeated on the battlefields of Donbas and is pushed back to where it was stationed before 24 February 2022. Polling, meanwhile, indicates consensus among the people regarding the return of Crimea and Donbas to the control of Kyiv and opposition to a truce with Russia until it fully withdraws its troops.

What is needed is the creation of an effective diplomatic forum to negotiate further Russian withdrawal from the occupied parts of Donbas, a settlement over the future of Crimea, financial compensation for the damage it has inflicted, prosecution of individuals who have committed war crimes (Ukraine's prosecutor general has already registered more than 8,000 suspected cases), the prospect of EU membership for Ukraine, and the creation of viable NATO-compatible armed forces that can defend the country in a coalition of willing nations.

What would defeat look like? Put simply, anything that results in a long-term simmering conflict that locks Ukraine in a grey zone of instability. An inconclusive outcome that still gives Russia an upper hand to conquer and annex more territory is unacceptable. The Kremlin is planning a new annexation of the Kherson region under the name of North Tavriya. Kyiv's official recognition of Putin's territorial gains at gunpoint would lead to Zelenskyy's political demise and further endanger the Ukrainian state.

Victory won't be easy, but Ukrainians increasingly believe they can achieve it. That confidence, which seemed like lunacy at the start of the war, has been vindicated by combat success and the total mobilization of Ukrainian society. This has convinced key western allies that "Ukraine can win." The UK's foreign secretary, Liz Truss, resolutely stated that "we will keep going further and faster to push Russia out of the whole of Ukraine."

Ukraine's objectives coincide with those of its allies. More to the point, those goals are now backed by a newly approved Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act under which the US government will allocate \$33bn, mostly for military support. A coalition of 40 countries has set up a permanent defense advisory group to coordinate this assistance.

Ukraine must defeat Russia in what, after all, should be considered a colonial war. The restoration of Ukrainian territorial integrity and, ultimately, peace will mean the collapse of Putinism as a doctrine and an end to Russian claims to territorial dominance elsewhere in eastern Europe and Central Asia. Demonstrating that a "gathering of historic Russian lands" is doomed to failure is the only solid basis for sustainable peace and security in Europe.

Ukraine's victory would also prevent future wars. Russia uses newly conquered territories to stage further conflicts. Annexed Crimea was indispensable for its military operation in Syria, and now for its assaults on Mariupol and Kherson. The breakaway entity of Transnistria in Moldova, propped up for decades by Russia, is a de-facto arms depot, with a military base that could be used to attack Odesa. Belarus is already being used to launch missiles on Kyiv.

Let's not forget we're also talking about the world's food system. A Ukrainian victory would reduce the risk of a mass famine. The lifting of sanctions in response to a full Russian withdrawal from Ukraine would also lead to a more stable and predictable Russian economy. Ukraine and Russia are critical suppliers of food across much of the global south. In some countries, such as Somalia, Russia and Ukraine account for 100% of wheat imports. The UN projects that 8-20 million people will now be left hungry from the knock-on effects of soaring prices and broken supply chains for grain, cooking oil, fertilizer and fuel.

Settling this war in a sustainable way means millions of Ukrainians will be able to return home, lifting the burden of caring from countries that host them. More than 5 million people are scattered across European cities and the bill for supporting them is €17bn. Most are desperate to return home. And Ukraine needs these people for its future modernisation and economic growth.

The outcome of this war will either lead to a brighter future or bog down millions of people in struggle and misery – and not only in Ukraine. That is why we must give Ukraine's victory a fighting chance.

Widening of conflict and war

Russia 'paving the way to expand war with Moldova invasion' - Ukrainian forces fear Russia is set to open a new front against tiny state Moldova which has an army of just 3,250 soldiers.

The new strategy comes amid rising tensions in Transnistria - a Russian-controlled region of around 470,000 people in the former USSR state which has declared itself independent.

If Russia took Moldova it would allow Putin to attack Ukraine from the West in the port of Odessa, lengthening the odds against President Zelenskyy's forces.

A source told the Times: "We believe the Kremlin has already taken the decision to attack Moldova."

"The fate of Moldova is very crucial. If the Russians start to take control, we will, militarily, be an easier target and the threat to Ukraine will be existential."

The region is close to Odessa - where eight Ukrainians, including a three-month-old baby, were killed in a recent Russian missile strike.

It comes amid fears the region could be dragged into Russia's war with Ukraine. President Sandu said certain forces in the region were in "favour of war".

Transnistria authorities have said the explosions this week targeted their state security headquarters in Tiraspol, a Soviet-era radio mast that broadcasted Russian news and a military unit in a village outside Tiraspol.